

Framing Memory: The Bombings of Dresden, Germany in Narrative,
Discourse and Commemoration after 1945.

by

Meghan Kathleen Bowe
BA, Simon Fraser University, 2009
BFA, Simon Fraser University, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

© Meghan Kathleen Bowe, 2011
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

Framing Memory: The Bombings of Dresden, Germany in Narrative,
Discourse and Commemoration after 1945.

by

Meghan Kathleen Bowe
BA, Simon Fraser University, 2009
BFA, Simon Fraser University, 2009

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, (Department of History)
Supervisor

Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, (Department of History)
Departmental Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, (Department of History)

Supervisor

Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, (Department of History)

Departmental Member

As a controversial and violent act of bombing a civilian city, the Dresden raids of 13 to 15 February 1945 persist in public memory and academic discussions as a symbol of destruction and whether strategic and/or area bombings are justified and necessary acts of modern war. The various ways in which the Dresden bombings have been remembered and commemorated has contributed a great deal towards this city's enduring legacy. This thesis examines the wartime bombings of Dresden to investigate how the memory, commemoration and narrative of the Dresden raids have been shaped and framed in public and academic discourses since 1945. To do so, this study focuses on the city of Dresden during the phase of Allied occupation, the period of East Germany and briefly beyond reunification to demonstrate the ongoing and changing discursive legacy of this controversial event.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Background and Context.....	11
The Air War.....	11
Dresden, 13 – 15 February 1945.....	18
Commemorating Dresden, Competing Narratives.....	25
Chapter 2: Historiography.....	32
A Brief Historiography of the Air War.....	34
Germans as Victims of the Air War.....	46
Dresden: A Short Historiography.....	58
Chapter 3: Dresden and Framed Memory.....	76
Narrative.....	80
Commemoration.....	91
Place.....	103
Conclusion	123
Epilogue: Dresden, A Contested ‘Site’ of Memory.....	129
Commemorating 65 years, February 2010 and February 2011, Looking forward	137
Bibliography.....	140

Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Oliver Schmidtke for his guidance, patience and direction. He provided me with the opportunity to share my work at an early stage and continued to encourage me as my work progressed from the research stage to writing. Thank you to Dr. Kristin Semmens and Dr. Perry Biddiscombe for agreeing to look over my work as it entered its final stages and many thanks to both Dr. Biddiscombe and Dr. Matt James for agreeing to be a part of my defense committee. I would also like to thank the entire faculty and staff from the Department of History and my fellow colleagues at the University of Victoria. Thank you all for your ongoing encouragement, feedback and support.

My thanks also goes out to the organizers and delegates of “The New Research in the History of Warfare International Graduate Conference” that was held at the University of Cambridge in August 2010. I presented an early and shortened version of my work there and received encouragement and support. My deepest gratitude and a special thank you to all the staff at the *Stadtarchiv* and the *Militarhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*, both in Dresden, Germany, for helping me this past summer while I was conducting research. Finally, thank you to my family for always being there for me and especially these past two years; without your ongoing support, I would be nowhere near where I am today. And most importantly, to my mother because I promised her long ago that I would dedicate this to her.

Dedication

*Mom, for always being there for me,
I dedicate this and all my work that follows to you.*

INTRODUCTION

The Air War was one of many traumatic episodes of the Second World War, where hundreds of cities were bombed. Coventry, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Warsaw, Leningrad, Dresden, and many more similar incidents, evoke collective and individual memories of loss, destruction and death. In the case of Dresden, Germany, this particular city's memorial landscape is inscribed with and compiled of various official and public memories of the Dresden bombings (13 – 15 February 1945). From the immediate events to the present day, perceptions of this incident have changed as a result of various influences shaping narratives, memories and commemoration practices.

Why Dresden? Why has Dresden been remembered so vividly in public memory and academic history? Why are memory practices in Dresden still so important? Who remembers and what are they trying to remember? Dresden was not a particularly unique attack in terms of numbers of bombers, bombs dropped, the composition and ratio of incendiaries to high explosives, the percentage of destruction or the thousands who were killed. Yet the memory of Dresden remains particularly controversial and prominent among hundreds of civilian cities that were targets of bombers throughout the course of the Second World War, as a result of how the Dresden raids have been treated historically since February 1945.

In part, what makes Dresden a unique case study are the various interest groups and individuals invested in remembering and commemorating this event. It is also due to the complex history and memory landscape that Dresden occupies, as a result of its geographic location – having been a part of Nazi Germany, then the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and later unified Germany. Rather than signifying a particularly unique

bombing event, Dresden became a unique place of memory – inscribed with layers of Soviet, East German and unified German memories as well as public and academic narratives about the raids from German and English-speaking scholars. This makes Dresden stand out in the larger memory landscape that marks spaces throughout Europe as memory sites recalling the Air War and the Second World War more generally.

Shortly after the bombing raids of 13 to 15 February 1945, Dresden – the capital of Saxony – quickly became, and remains to this day, a symbol of the Air War and the controversial act of aerial bombing. As a result, Dresden is lodged in a discourse on the morality and ethics of modern warfare, so that even now, Dresden is present and contested in public and academic discussions on bombing from the skies. The bombings of Dresden, therefore, provides the basis for a fruitful and informative case study due to this ongoing controversy. It is also an attractive target of interest because of the extensive availability of material in English and German, both academic and public literature. Published works on the Dresden bombings, however, have focused primarily on the controversy surrounding the city, by recounting the events, the ambiguity of Allied motives, as well as evaluating whether or not Dresden was a ‘just’ or legitimate military target. Considerably less attention has focused on the reconstruction, memory and commemorative efforts that followed the events of February 1945 and the attempts made over the past several decades to preserve, honour and mourn the memory of this tragic event.

The wealth of historiography on the Dresden bombings, furthermore, has helped reinforce the city’s notoriety by examining how air campaigns were executed, why, where, what the ethical and moral implications were and how effective they were as a

military tactic. In the public domain as well, images and narratives of Dresden are readily available. Dresden, as a result, remains a topic that was and is present in historical and public discussions on the Second World War.

How was Dresden remembered and commemorated after 1945? The memory of Dresden's extensive air bombardment near the end of the Second World War was shaped in an emerging Cold War climate and in an environment of complete and utter destruction and ruin, both of which played important roles in shaping and framing the memory of Dresden. In other words, memory of past events serves needs of the present.¹ The divergence of memory in East and West Germany further demonstrates the role that political ideology played in shaping memory and modes of remembrance, such as the construction of memorials and commemorative practices, which formed an important part of the Dresden story and East Germany's memory culture as both memory and commemorative practices were state regulated.

During the years of occupation following the Second World War, the memory of Dresden's bombing was shaped and framed by both Nazi propaganda and the occupying powers, reflecting a tone that was not yet set into the ideologically divided landscape of the Cold War. In the early decades of the German Democratic Republic, the memory of the bombing raids of 13 to 15 February 1945 was politicized and framed by the state, creating a seemingly 'set' conduct of memory. In the last decade of the GDR, commemorative practice allowed for more reflection as East Germany worked towards better relations with West Germany and the West. Since reunification in 1990, residents

¹ Jörg Arnold, "Beyond Usable Pasts: Rethinking the Memorialization of the Strategic Air War in Germany, 1940 to 1965" in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, edited by Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 26.

and local individuals have come together to create a new memory initiative, which records and publicizes their memories of the war and the bombing of this particular city with a new framework for remembrance. Despite these various shifts in the framing of Dresden's memory, the city remains a resonant example and symbol of the destructive power of modern warfare.

Since 1945, in one form or another, the memory of Dresden has been maintained through commemorative practices alongside guidelines or frameworks for remembering the February bombings raids, further demonstrating that the Second World War had a profound impact on Cold War society and continues to do so in a post-Cold War world. Localized experiences, such as the bombings of Dresden, were mythologized and this myth was spread around the world, helping to share communal and mutual experiences of pain, devastation and loss among nations on both sides of the war and the postwar political divide. In turn, a realization of how the memory of Dresden was formed is just as important as how it was used as a political tool, by whom, when and where – all crucial questions to investigate in order to address why Dresden was and continues to be remembered and commemorated to such a great extent, even to this day.

Throughout the Cold War, furthermore, the recent past (that of Nazi Germany and the Second World War) was used as an instrument of propaganda on both sides of the divide – including the memory and history of the Allied bombardment campaign over Germany. In response to political pressures and tensions during this period, the memory of the Air War, and Dresden in particular, was used in different ways, and at different times, in order to reinforce the political divide, as well as to foster better East/West and German/German relations. Commemorative practices in Dresden, as a result, were partly

shaped in practice and tone by the political atmosphere of the Cold War. This in turn influenced the official and public memory of Dresden's destruction and consequently also influenced larger narratives of the Second World War and the Nazi German period.

Focusing on the bombings of Dresden and the events that followed, this thesis examines the extensive discourse on the Allied bombardment campaign against Nazi Germany, seeking to examine the various ways in which the memory and narrative of the Second World War, in East Germany especially, was shaped and framed by the experiences of war. We can then discuss the bombings of Dresden within present academic discourses of German suffering, memory, and the ongoing process of coming to terms with the National Socialist past. This work is intended as an exploration of both public and academic commentary on the various ways in which East Germans attempted to preserve and memorialize the memory of Dresden's destruction within a larger framework dealing with both the legacy of National Socialism and the Second World War where Germans were seen as both victim and victimizer. As a result, this case study investigates the events of February 1945 but primarily comments on how memory and history are formed, shaped, and framed by later circumstances, in this case by the political climate of the Cold War.

Thus, what I am interested in examining is how this very controversial event has been remembered and commemorated, and how various memories and narratives were shaped during the political climate of the Cold War period, with a brief look at the post-reunification years. Official memory plays a prominent role here as it illustrates the importance of memory in shaping the way societies remember the past. Secondly, spatial

memory provides a new lens in which the Dresden raids can be examined.² This paper, consequently, examines various memory practices, including postwar memorials and commemorations, in order to demonstrate the importance of commemoration and space in sustaining memory and show how a changing political climate shifted and shaped such phenomena. Memory practices, including the construction of memorials and spaces for remembrance as well as creating modes of commemoration, supported the memory of Dresden's bombing by creating public space in which individuals and collectives could remember this past – in this case in a framed and politicized manner. These practices during the Cold War can be placed into the larger context of the Air War and German memory and the shifting interpretations of Germany's difficult past, by linking memory studies to commemorative practice, as the latter provides a spatial dimension for the construction and preservation of Dresden's memory on the city's landscape. In doing so, this paper examines and reflects on the different ways in which the events of 13 to 15 February 1945 have been appropriated for different causes in order to trace political and social influences that have shaped and framed this historic event.

As warfare is such a constant in history,³ and the experience and memory of war forms a fundamental and fruitful part of studying its history, investigating the ways in which societies, institutions and groups remember and deal with war and military experience is important. It is here – in the realm of memory, narrative, commemoration and coming to terms with war, whether at home or abroad, among soldiers or civilians –

² Memorial spaces in Dresden have been overlooked by scholars, yet they play an important role in commemorating Dresden each year. While studying in Dresden I was able to visit some of Dresden's most notable memorial and commemorative sites, which inspired this aspect of my work.

³ Recognition here must go to the organizers and delegates of "The New Research in the History of Warfare International Graduate Conference," 7-8 August, 2010 at the University of Cambridge. Fruitful and informative discussions on the nature and historiography of warfare were thought-provoking.

that I would like to situate myself. In this particular case, I am interested in examining the aftermath of the Second World War (and specifically on Dresden) in what became East Germany, as the war played a central and important role in Germany's twentieth century history, for which we are still collectively contending with.

This thesis originated from the question: How has the memory of the bombings of Dresden been shaped and framed over sixty-six years of history and discourse?⁴ My personal interest in this issue stems from a larger interest in the role of memory and history, the relationship between the two and the function of narrative in both. This thesis aims to examine how Dresden has been remembered throughout the postwar decades of occupation, division and peace in order to contribute to a larger discourse on Germany's process of working through the past, as well as reflecting on how societies remember and use the past as a tool of the present.

In doing so, I make extensive use of English-translations, and their interpretations of commemoration in Germany, alongside select German sources, which both form and influence the lens through which I view and access my research materials. I also chose to focus on memory and commemoration purposely because these themes have received less attention from scholars (writing on Dresden or otherwise), but remain important to the local efforts in Dresden to remember the bombings. Memory and commemoration efforts in Dresden were visible upon both my trips to the city in the summers of 2009 and 2010. The city itself and the public initiatives at play in Dresden provided the direction for this thesis as I recognized the importance of bringing a wider awareness of the present tone and practices in the city of Dresden to a larger audience. These current efforts,

⁴For the elegant and clever phrase "shaping and framing," which I use a countless number of times throughout this work, recognition must go to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Oliver Schmidtke.

moreover, have remained largely absent in the academic discourse on Dresden, which continues to focus on the immediate events of February 1945.

Although this is a short study, I hope to examine both academic discussions and local efforts in Dresden that document the history, memory and narrative of the bombings, as these efforts continue to parallel each other. To accomplish this goal, my research engages with recent works in the field of German memory, memorialization and commemoration in order to place Dresden into a larger discourse by bridging the history of aerial bombing with discourses on memory and commemoration, as well as viewing the events of February 1945 from various few points from 1945 to the present. It is also the aim of this paper to bring awareness to new threads of research and interest to the discourse on Dresden *beyond* discussing the city as a legitimate or illegitimate military target.

The intention of this study is to examine both public and academic discourses on the bombings of Dresden as they appeared in the immediate aftermath of the event and throughout the Cold War period, briefly touching upon reunification and practices in Dresden today. Looking from 1945 forward understandably covers a large time frame. Drawing an arbitrary line to examine a more manageable period, however, proved inappropriate, as this is still a current issue. The memory and history of the bombings of Dresden are still debated and resolution of these debates, if they ever could or should occur, has yet to come to pass. Thus the recent sixty-sixth anniversary (with the seventieth only four years away) provides another opportunity for reflection in order to pose questions about the place of Dresden in local and national Germany history, memory and commemorative culture, as part of a larger discourse examining the place

and importance of 1945. As a result, the time frame of my project starts in the immediate aftermath of February 1945 and ends with an epilogue reflecting on practices in Germany today.

This method requires a political – social lens using both primary and secondary sources, including newspapers, academic articles, military documents and images, as well as academic and public sources. Starting in 1945, I look at immediate reactions to the bombings as they appeared in local and international media, including journals, newspapers and radio broadcasts, followed by a selection of secondary sources that were written about Dresden after the events. With regards to the Cold War period, I look to memorials, commemorative practices and specific sites in the city, and following reunification with ongoing commemorative practices and a published commission report on the history of the Dresden raids. This approach is a modest attempt to contribute to the discourse on Dresden and more generally to the issue of Allied and Axis bombing of cities to investigate and propose new themes of research for future historians interested in the social-cultural ramifications of history, identity and memory following traumatic episodes of bombing civilian cities during periods of conflict and war.

Organized thematically, chapter one provides a brief background on the Air War, the bombings of Dresden, and the popular narrative of Dresden that continues to be commonly dispensed to the public through the Internet, newspapers and texts. Chapter two provides a historiographical discussion of the Air War (focusing on the Allied campaign over Germany), literature on German memory of suffering in the Air War, and a historiography of the debates about Dresden. Finally, chapter three looks at the framing of memory through commemorative practices and places in Dresden during the early part

of the Cold War, reflecting on how the Air War and the city of Dresden have remained central to the narrative, memory and history of Dresden's bombing and the Second World War, as well as their respective roles in changing and shaping Dresden's remembrance and commemorative practices. By looking at representations of the past as transmitted through memorials, spaces of memory and commemorative ceremonies, as well as the work of historians over the past several decades, this chapter seeks to examine the interplay between memory, commemoration and space. A brief conclusion follows, summarizing my findings and reflections from these three chapters. Finally, an epilogue concludes this work by reflecting on present-day practices in Dresden, discussing ongoing controversies, new and old traditions and responses to the Dresden raids, to reiterate the message that this is a present and ongoing issue for both locals and academics alike.

Chapter 1: Background and Context

THE AIR WAR

The Air War was extensive and fought largely between 1940 and 1945, as British, German, Allied and Axis cities were bombed in an effort to demoralize and cripple the enemy. Dresden was one of these cities targeted and bombed to deliver the effects of war to the home front. In Western Europe, where the Allies had limited ability to conduct ground warfare, the Air War became the main means to combat, drive back and defeat the enemy, “partly through the stomach, partly through the pocket, and partly through the spirit.’ Air power was the means to do this” – and not just to the army but the nation as a whole.¹ Air power in the Second World War enabled armies to move past the front line trenches which had previously shielded government, industry and civilians from the enemy.

Aerial enthusiasts and advocates of strategic bombing were able to sell the idea of taking the war to the enemy by bombing Germany ‘around the clock.’² The result was the Strategic Air Campaign against Germany, which was executed in part by the Anglo-American Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO). In 1939, however, the RAF and its Bomber Command entered the war unprepared. In terms of numbers of aircraft and trained aircrews, equipment and operational tactics, the Royal Air Force (RAF) was deficient and undersupplied. Except for the conviction of the necessity of an air offensive for ultimate victory, the RAF was ill equipped for war.

¹ Excerpt from Basil Liddel Hart, *Paris: Or the Future of War* (London, 1925) quoted in Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang’s *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 7.

² The Allies bombed Germany “around the clock since 1942,” quoted from Marshall De Bruhl, *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden* (New York: Random House, 2006), 76.

According to Webster and Frankland, it took four years to close the technological and strategic gap between theory and practice.³ By late 1939, British daylight raids were being abandoned due to the strength of German air defenses. Nighttime raids were adopted by 1940, as a result of the recognition that the bomber in fact would not always get through, especially if undefended against German fighter planes and a strong German air defense.⁴ The early years of nighttime bombing, however, were also limited in their effectiveness because of the inaccuracy of bombing and insufficient navigational equipment to aid aircrews.

In response to the Butt report from the summer of 1941,⁵ in which the accuracy and effectiveness of the aerial raids over Germany up to mid-1941 were evaluated, a new bombing directive was issued in February 1942. On 14 February, three years prior to the American raids on Dresden, Britain's Bomber Command defined the new bombing policy: "The new primary objective of your operations should now be focused on the morale of the enemy civilian population and in particular of the industrial workers."⁶ Eight days later, 22 February 1942, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris was assigned his new post as Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command. By 1942/3, new equipment and aircrews from Commonwealth nations, along with the combined help of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), helped boost the number of Allied raids and the accuracy of each drop. The spring of 1942 marked the beginning of troubles for the German Luftwaffe, as the combined Allied aerial effort was able to transfer the Air War

³ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945, vol. 3: Victory* (London: Frank Cass, 1961), 285.

⁴ De Bruhl, 21.

⁵ The Butt Report was prepared by D.M Butt, a member of Britain's war cabinet and it was ordered by Frederick Lindemann, one of Churchill's wartime advisors, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of Britain's air raids over Germany in the early years of the Air War.

⁶ De Bruhl, 99

from British territory to German. This in turn propelled the Luftwaffe's switch to defensive tactics and put on hold for good the German invasion of Great Britain.⁷

From 1941 onward, the Combined Allied Aerial Offensive carried out day and night bombing raids that slowly crept deeper into Germany territory, making their way eastward from the Ruhr region to central and eastern Germany. From early 1943 to the spring of 1945, this air offensive continued to progress as Allied technology improved, allowing for longer distances and heavier bomb loads, paired with the weakening of German air defenses. By the winter of 1945 the Allies were regularly bombing Saxony. Furthermore, as the war progressed, there was a gradual broadening of aerial targets: "the constraints on aerial targeting, such as they were, had fallen away gradually and incrementally in response to the problems of finding and hitting targets accurately, and as a consequence of the downward pull of the vortex of total war."⁸

By 1943, aerial technology had developed to the extent that whole cities could be set ablaze and reduced to rubble, ensuring the deaths of thousands in the course of an evening. Bombers dropped four to ten ton 'block busters' and high explosive 'cookies' along with fire starting incendiaries over European skies, bringing war into the home – then destroying it – for the first time ever. In doing so, bombers aimed at knocking out utilities – heat, water and electricity – essential to everyday living for German civilians as well as blocking roads and disrupting railway, communication and transportation networks. These conventional high explosives were dropped to penetrate the roofs of

⁷ Webster and Frankland, 287- 288.

⁸ Tami Davis Biddle, "Reality, History and Memory," *The Journal of Military History* 72 (April 2008), 429.

buildings, providing open spaces for the incendiaries to spread the fires that were created as a result of the thermite mixture that ignited and started to burn when falling from the skies.⁹

By the spring of 1944, a double-strike combination of night and day raids were being executed in preparation for a Western front ground invasion.¹⁰ As early as August 1944, Operation Thunderclap proposed an extensive bombing campaign against eastern German cities, focusing on the capital Berlin, but targeting Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz and other eastern European cities as well. By mid-1944, Dresden had been little affected by the Air War, which had been raging over more western skies since the fall of 1939. Thunderclap was shelved on 16 August 1944, however, due to resources needed on the Western Front, so that by the last year of the war, Dresden had been largely spared from the massive bombing raids that had been experienced in multiple cities throughout other parts of the country and the European continent.¹¹

By December 1944, optimism was crushed that the war would end by the close of 1944, which Allied leaders had conveyed confidence for, since the allied landings in June. In fact, December and January were surprising and bloody months for the Allies. The winter German counter-offensive in the western theater brought about high casualties and marked a fear that the Germans were refueling for another phase of the war.¹² In the air, the final stage of the Combined Bomber Offensive started on 16 September 1944

⁹ Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 115.

¹⁰ Webster and Frankland, 285- 6.

¹¹ Dresden had been largely spared from earlier bombings, but not completely. Dresden's first air attack was on 7 October 1944, when 29 American B17s dropped 70 tons of explosives over the city.

¹² According to Tami Biddle in *Reality, History and Memory*, there were 74,788 casualties on the Western front in December and 61,692 in January. See Biddle, 425.

and ended on 5 May 1945.¹³ By mid January of 1945, Allied leaders accepted that refugees could be used as “a lever against the Wehrmacht’s ability to wage war”¹⁴ by using strategic bombers to create a barrier of debris, chaos and bodies, preventing the Germans from resupplying the Eastern Front. February 1945, according to Tami Biddle, was arguably “the darkest month in the most violent and deadly year of the twentieth century.”¹⁵ American casualties on the Western Front by the end of the first week of February were a staggering 27, 242; by the 22nd, there were an additional 18,982.¹⁶ According to Biddle, this shift in tempo and mood of the Allied war effort from the summer of 1944 to the winter of 1944-45 is important in understanding the timing of the Dresden raids.¹⁷

Following the German offensive in the Ardennes and the Russian offensive in the East, in what was hoped to be the last winter of the war, Germany witnessed increased bombings on its central and eastern cities as refugees started fleeing westward. In January 1945, Operation Thunderclap was revived, although reorganized into a series of smaller coordinated attacks against cities in the communication zones of the Eastern Front, with identified “chock points” including Berlin, Dresden, Chemnitz and Leipzig. In other words, the CBO acted as a third front, aiding the advance of the Red Army in the East, which demonstrated the coordination of inter-Allied efforts and helped to re-emphasize the contribution of strategic bombing to Allied victory.¹⁸

¹³ *The Strategic Air War Against Germany, 1939-1945*. Introduction by: Sebastian Cox (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 23. Executive command for this final phase was delegated to the Commanding General of the United States Army Air Force and the Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal Air Force.

¹⁴ Biddle, 449.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 430. See Biddle 429-30 for a discussion on the winter of 1944-45 as a time of renewed fears and efforts to bring the war to an end and avoid dragging it into 1946.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 449.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 429.

In the winter of 1945, increased air raids on eastern German cities also intensified the fear and confusion caused by the approaching Russian advance and the flood of refugees from the East.¹⁹ At the Yalta conference (4 – 11 February 1945), a bomb-line was proposed and established, running from Stettin to Berlin, through Ruhland, Dresden, Brno, Vienna and Maribor to Zagreb. All American-British air raids on or east of this line required 24 hours notification to the Soviet Army.²⁰ By the last winter of the war, in other words, the expectation and fear of total destruction from the air was a well-practiced reality, as well as everyone's nightmare.

On 8 February 1945, the Red Army crossed the Oder River, bringing the Eastern Front a mere 50 miles from the German capital and 70 from Dresden. During this last phase of the Air War, Dresden was one of many cities targeted in an effort to bring the war to an end. According to Allied reports, Dresden was an important chemical, munitions, armament, aviation, oil refinery and transportation center.²¹ Dresden was also Germany's seventh largest city (c. 1939) with a wartime population of 642,000, which rose close to a million by the end of the war with thousands of refugees from the east. As early as 1942, war industries had started relocating to Saxony where they were expected to be safe from the war; the location of Saxony "seemed a natural protection against Allied bombing raids."²² This in turn contributed to the later transformation of Saxony into an economic leader in the GDR.²³ Dresden was also an important railway center,

¹⁹ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lee Cate, *The Army Air Forces In World War II: Volume Three, Europe Argument to V-E Day* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 725.

²⁰ Taylor, 217.

²¹ Air Force Historical Studies Office, *Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February 1945 Bombing of Dresden*. USAF Historical Division, Research Studies Institute Air University. N.d.

²² Claus-Christian Szejnmann, *Nazism in Central Germany: The Brownshirts in 'Red' Saxony* (New York: Berghan, 1999), 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

linking the Berlin-Prague-Vienna line, as well as connecting Munich to Breslau, and Hamburg to Leipzig and Prague. In fact, Saxony had the seventh longest rail network in the Third Reich and was third in the weight that it transported.²⁴

Success in the Air War was eventually achieved as a result of the introduction of new equipment, technology, weapons, aircraft, and operational techniques.²⁵ By the war's end, an estimated seven percent of the total British manpower used in the Second World War was directed to the Strategic Air Offensive.²⁶ Approximately 81,000 Allied air crew personnel and between 360,000 and 410,000 German civilians died as a result of the Air War.²⁷ This range of civilian deaths represents roughly six percent of Germany's total wartime losses, which was a combined total of 6.35 million German soldiers and civilians. Germans living in cities and towns were "hit by heavy bombs, torn apart by explosives, burnt to death in their homes, suffocated in cellars or died of lack of oxygen,"²⁸ resulting in a 2:1 ratio of civilian to soldier air raid deaths.²⁹

How do the bombings of Dresden fit into the history of the Air War and the Combined Bomber Offensive that bombed German cities throughout the Reich? As more and more cities were bombed to rubble, in Britain, Germany and across Europe, these bombed-out ruins symbolized the escalation of aerial warfare conducted by the world's leading air powers.³⁰ The raids on Dresden were a part of a larger Allied design to

²⁴ De Bruhl, 184. Also see the USAAF's *Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden* report, section II part eight. Dresden was also an important river port and center of freight traffic on the river Elbe, which connected Dresden to Hamburg and the North Sea, as well as reaching into Czech occupied territory as far as the Polish border.

²⁵ Webster and Frankland, 287.

²⁶ Bill Niven and Chloe Paver., ed., *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2010), 27. According to Bashow this number rose to a high of 12% in late 1944-45. See, David L. Bashow's *None but the Brave: The Essential Contributions of RAF Bomber Command to Allied Victory during the Second World War* (Kingston: Canadian Defense Academy Press, 2009), 121.

²⁷ Jörg Arnold in Niven and Paver, 27, and Bashow, 122.

²⁸ Jörg Arnold in Niven and Paver, 27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ De Bruhl, 101.

carry out smaller coordinated attacks against cities in the communication zone of the Eastern Front, creating chock-points to delay the movement of troops, goods and information to and from the east. Due to organized planning and prime weather conditions, the February raids were deemed particularly ‘successful’ by the Allies and in turn were later utilized as a symbol of sorrow and destruction. The city retains a great deal of this resonance to this day.

DRESDEN, 13 – 15 FEBRUARY 1945

Between the night of Tuesday the 13th and the afternoon of Thursday the 15th of February 1945, four distinct and destructive air attacks were carried out over the city of Dresden, by a combined Allied effort of the American 8th USAAF and Britain’s RAF Bomber Command. On the evening of the 13th –Shrove Tuesday – just minutes before 10:00 pm, red target indicators (TIs) were dropped over Dresden’s historic *Altstadt*.³¹ That evening, Britain’s Bomber Command flew the 1100 kilometer and 10 hour flight round trip to drop 882 tons of high explosives (HE) and incendiary bombs (IB) on Dresden’s city center. The first two of the four raids were organized and executed by the RAF as a double-strike, attacking with two waves of Avro Lancaster bombers, sent three hours apart – the first wave bombed late on the 13th and the second in the early morning hours of the 14th. Each Lancaster carried 7-tons of IB and HE devices.³² The first wave to arrive was the 627th squadron, made up of RAF Havilland and Mosquito pathfinders, tasked with identifying and marking ground targets (including the *Neustadt* Sports

³¹ Dresden’s ‘old city’, or *Altstadt*, is the historic city center of Dresden, located south of the Elbe. “Sachsen: Dresden, Chemnitz, Leipzig, Zwickau, Plauen” in *Sachsen im Bombenkrieg (3)*, from the Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr. Dresden, Germany. Hereafter referred to as MhM.

³² Taylor, 2.

Stadium) for the Lancaster bombers. With a cruising speed of 220 miles/hour at an altitude of between 17,000 and 19,000 feet, the first Lancasters arrived minutes later, with a large payload of incendiaries and high explosives.³³

The weather conditions leading up to 13 February, however, were less than favorable. Cloud cover and a cold winter limited aerial operations to eight days in the month of January. By mid-February, Saxony was experiencing sunshine during the day and dry, cold, cloudless nights – ideal conditions for both night and day raids. Dresden’s *Fliergeralarm* (air raid alarm) sounded for the first time on the night of 13 February at 9:51 pm, giving residents only minutes to seek shelter from the bombs. Dresden, however, lacked a sufficient number of air raid shelters to house the residents of the city. The public shelter beneath the *Hauptbahnhof* (main railway station) that night housed 6,000 when it was built for 2,000.³⁴ Thousands of eastern European refugees provided additional stress on Dresden’s already limited shelters and were instead housed in local schools and gymnasiums as a way to try to shelter them.

Dresden also lacked sufficient air defenses, having received a small portion of the national defense budget. Aircrews that night reported ground defenses as “light opposition” with “light to moderate anti-aircraft defenses.”³⁵ Armaments prior to the Christmas of 1944 had also largely been moved out of the city and relocated to territory considered of higher priority or closer to the Eastern Front.³⁶ German fighter-pilot strength was also diminished at this point in the war, to such an extent that British

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Ibid., 4. Due to the strain on Dresden’s limited shelters, refugees also stayed in open fields on the outskirts of the city, as not all refugees could be sheltered in the city.

³⁵ Les Powell, “The Bombing of Dresden.” CBC Radio Broadcast, 14 February 1945. CBC Digital Archives Online, Duration 6:15 min. [http:// archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/15845/](http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/15845/).

³⁶ See Taylor, pages 203 to 205, for a brief discussion on the changes in armaments and air defense in Dresden from the summer of 1944 to the Dresden raids in February 1945.

bombers could use their navigation lights from take off to as far as Luxemburg.³⁷ The raids on Dresden also marked perhaps one of the few moments of the war when both East and Western fronts were visible from the sky during the same flight, providing Allied aircrews a strong visual impression of the Third Reich's diminishing territory. In addition to bombing Dresden on the night of 13/14 February, air raids were also carried out in Magdeburg, Bonn and Misburg (near Hannover), in order to confuse and distract Nazi air defenses for as long as possible.

The second strike arrived in Dresden at 1.31am, giving German ground crews just enough time to start fighting the flames before seeking shelter once more. This second wave of 529 Lancasters dropped an additional 1755 tons on the city,³⁸ targeting smaller existing fires to help strengthen and merge the growing flames into a vast and powerful firestorm.³⁹ To create this storm of fire and wind, a first wave of Mosquitoes released target indicators to demarcate the darkened city. Next phosphorous sticks and incendiary bombs were dropped as igniters or "fire-starters" for the third wave of planes to drop the "fire bombs,"⁴⁰ setting the city ablaze. Considering the combined tonnage dropped of high explosives and incendiaries – usually close to a 60:40 ratio – the congested city layout and buildings with wooden roofs in the heart of the city, Dresden provided an

³⁷ Biddle, 418.

³⁸ MhM, "Sachsen: Dresden, Chemnitz, Leipzig, Zwickau, Plauen" in *Sachsen im Bombenkrieg (3)*.

³⁹ I use the term "firestorm" to refer to the deliberate and tested strategy of setting cities aflame. Cities and towns with dense row housing, narrow streets and wooden roofs were particularly good targets. Following the 'success' of the Hamburg bombing in July 1943, which was one of the earliest and most extensive firestorms, the Allies tested and honed this strategy to bring destruction to other German cities. Due to variable factors, including weather conditions (cloud, wind and rain), the ratio of incendiaries to bombs and the layout of the city, firestorms were not always achieved as planned. "Spillage" often occurred if the conditions were not exactly 'right,' resulting in scattered bomb drops and missed targets, in which case small fires failed to merge into one vast fire. Randall Wakelam's, *The Science of Bombing: Operational Research in RAF Bomber Command* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009) provides a detailed read on the science and technique of aerial bombing during the Second World War.

⁴⁰ Paul Addison and Jeremy Crang, *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 69. Also see Götz Bergander page 230 and Frederick Taylor pages 136 to 138 for discussions on the role of air raid cellars in the air raids in Dresden.

effective target. Temperatures reached over 1500 degrees Celsius (2700 F) and flames shot skyward to 15,000 feet and were seen from hundreds of kilometers away.⁴¹ Visible to the soldiers on the Eastern Front, 70 miles (113 km) to the East, the German Army continued to fight the Soviets with their backs to the flames, standing on the western bank of the Oder River. City water reservoirs also became blocked by ground rubble, making them inaccessible, and in some cases the water became so hot that it boiled and evaporated.

Furthermore, the limited money for defense that was made available to Dresden went to building corridors between already existing underground cellars.⁴² These “networks of inter-connected cellars,” however, helped fuel and spread the flames of the firestorm, worsening ground conditions by channeling smoke and fumes from one underground cellar to the next.⁴³ Oxygen levels became dangerously depleted in these conditions as hurricane strength windstorms⁴⁴ swept up the oxygen to fuel and intensify the scorching fires, leaving high levels of carbon monoxide on the ground and in the underground cellars. Between these two raids, 796 bombers dropped nearly 1500 tons of High Explosives and 1200 tons of Incendiary Bombs.

Just past noon on the 14th, a third air raid, this time carried out by 311 American B17s and 24s, dropped an additional 771 tons of “fire bombs” onto the still burning city.⁴⁵ The last of the four raids took place on 15 February, which was also carried out by

⁴¹ Biddle, 436.

⁴² Ibid., 421.

⁴³ Addison and Crang, 69.

⁴⁴ Alan W. Cooper, *Target Dresden* (Bromley: Independent Books, 1995), 180.

⁴⁵ “Firebombs”, as well as air mines and incendiary bombs, were dropped from the skies in order to ignite firestorms. Fires burned at extreme temperatures, destroying buildings made of wood and even stone, sucking all the oxygen out of the streets and causing severe windstorms. Sandstone is a particularly porous stone that cannot withstand extreme heat. Several of Dresden landmark sites were constructed either whole or in part with sandstone, including the famous Frauenkirche.

the USAAF at mid-day, but because of heavy cloud cover, several bombs hit Dresden suburbs southeast of the city center as well as nearby towns of Meissen and Pirna. The collapse of the iconic sandstone-built Frauenkirche (The Church of our Lady) on the third day symbolized the complete destruction of the city.

Communication centers were destroyed, railway and ground transportation disrupted – all in an effort to prevent the Germans from resupplying the Eastern Front and disrupt the movement of refugees westward. The city was reduced to a landscape of wreckage, with over 80% of the city center destroyed and surrounding areas receiving up to 50% complete destruction.⁴⁶ A total of twelve to thirteen square kilometers of mostly the historic city center lay in complete ruins. What was left was a brick wasteland, a void, with an estimated 25,000 deaths;⁴⁷ although this number would continue to be disputed throughout much of the postwar period.⁴⁸ With a total of 3,000 HE and 25,000 IB tons of bombs dropped over the city, death was primarily caused by extensive burns, carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation in and outside the ‘protective’ air raid shelters.⁴⁹ Altogether, there was approximately ten million cubic meters of rubble, thousands of cindered bodies and a landscape of skeletal buildings that marked the city for weeks, months and years to come.

At the outbreak of the war, Dresden was a primary center for military activity, preparing and supplying German units of Army Group South for the invasion of Poland.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ The National Archives, London, United Kingdom. Hereafter referred to as NA. AIR 34/606. A collection of British Interpretation Reports on the Dresden raids from February to April 1945.

⁴⁷ The city’s official report, *Tagesbefehl* (Order of the Day) No. 47, was published on 22 March 1945 and included a total of 20,204, whereas numbers that were leaked to the neutral press’ featured figures ten times, up to 200,204. Addison and Crang, 75.

⁴⁸ NA, CAB 146/351 – enemy documents section. Ranging from 20,000 to 500,000, authorities and historians have published various totals since the end of the war.

⁴⁹ Cooper, 179.

⁵⁰ Anthony Clayton and Allan Russell, eds. *Dresden: A City Reborn* (New York: Berg, 1999), 34-5.

Between late 1939 and 1944, Dresden played a secondary military role. As a result, Dresden was excluded from the Führer's order of October 1940, which directed the construction of bombproof shelters in 81 other German cities and towns following the first air raids over Berlin.⁵¹ Despite this exclusion, there were barracks for training and housing troops located north of the *Neustadt* in Dresden, as well as factories scattered throughout the city, which produced shell fuses, aircraft components, gas masks and daily goods including cigarettes, soap, radio receivers, baby powder and alcohol.⁵² The city later became a center for telegraph communications following the invasion of the Soviet Union. Like many other German cities, big and small, the military role of Dresden changed with the demands of the war.⁵³ Dresden's exposure to the war also increased as it dragged on: younger and older men were conscripted into the army, slave and prison laborers were sent to work in local factories, food rationing and shortages of fuel and goods brought the war to the residents of Dresden. In the summer of 1944, refugees also starting making their way westward, often traveling through Dresden, and generally through the Saxon region. In a state mobilized for total war, Dresden was integrated into the military machinery of the Third Reich.

Dresden was the Saxon capital, a historic center and a city of sandstone palaces, castles and baroque apartment blocks.⁵⁴ Recognized throughout the world for its iconic silhouette along the Elbe river, Dresden was nicknamed the *Elbflorenz* (the German Florence), or more commonly, "the Florence on the Elbe."⁵⁵ In its historic city center, many world famous buildings fell victim to the bombs, including the royal palace,

⁵¹ Taylor, 136.

⁵² Ibid., 35. Dresden's *Neustadt* or 'new city' is located on the north side of the Elbe River.

⁵³ For discussions on war related industry in Dresden see Taylor pages 148-165 and Cox pages 53-61.

⁵⁴ Taylor, 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 30.

Semper Opera House, Frauenkirche, Zwinger, Taschenberpalais and Sophienkirche. Added to this was the destruction of approximately forty percent of Dresden's housing, with a further thirty-six percent slightly damaged, and only twenty-four per cent counted as livable and intact.⁵⁶

In the immediate aftermath of the raids, clearing the rubble and uncovering, identifying and burying dead bodies became the city's first priority. As a result of the mass destruction and disruption to everyday life, burial practices took shape in the form of public burnings and mass graves, as labour and materials were in short supply. Such shortages prevented the removal and burial of individual bodies. As time passed, fear of disease also led to the organization of mass burnings. Shortly after the Soviets reached Dresden, a public cremation of 6,865 bodies took place in the *Altmarkt* – just a minute's walk from the site of the Frauenkirche and two blocks south of the Elbe – right in the heart of the old city. The last official record counted 22,096 dead in April 1945, of which 21,271 were buried in the Heidfriedhof cemetery, just north of the *Neustadt*.⁵⁷ A further 1,858 bodies were found in the years following, during reconstruction.⁵⁸

In the months and years that followed the war, clearing the rubble, reconstructing housing and cultural sites, as well as commemorating the events of February 1945, remained key priorities for the city. Both Dresden's reconstruction and commemoration practices were heavily influenced by Soviet policy, which saw the construction of Soviet-style apartment blocks in an effort to ease the housing shortage, as well as, supporting conservative reconstruction of select cultural sites to their exact pre-war form. Memorials

⁵⁶ Gerd Künzel, *13 Februar: 60 Jahrestag der Zerstörung Dresdens Erinnern, Gedenken, Mahnen, Versöhnen*. Translated by: Gary Bodily (Dresden: Union Drunkerei GmbH, 2004), 31.

⁵⁷ Addison and Crang, 75. Bodies that were difficult to retrieve from the rubble were cremated in place, with flamethrowers.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

were also constructed and commemorative ceremonies held in Dresden, escalating to a national ceremony in the 1950s. Following reunification in 1990, memorial and reconstruction efforts continued to mark Dresden's memory landscape. A memorial and commemorative plaque for the public cremation of 6,865 Dresdeners was inaugurated on the *Altstadt* cremation site as recently as 13 February 2009. It reads: "The Horror of the War that went out from Germany into the world came back to our city. After the air attack on Dresden of 13-14 February, 1945, 6865 dead bodies were cremated at this location."⁵⁹ Until 2006, a concrete parking lot was located on this spot.

COMMEMORATING DRESDEN, COMPETING NARRATIVES

References to and discussions of the destruction of Dresden, however, are often riddled with misconceptions and taken out of context, blurring the boundary between history and myth. The public narrative (and popular memory) of Dresden, as a result, tells a particular, and somewhat different story from the city's official narrative and from academic histories, resulting in a multitude of various narratives. Dresden, for example, was bombed more than once during the war, as was the case with most major German cities, yet the attacks on the night of 13/14 February, and to an extent the two raids following on the afternoons of the 14th and 15th, are central to the memories of Dresden's wartime role and consequent destruction. As a result, Dresden is often remembered and perceived as a single attack, when in fact eight raids were carried out over Dresden, of which the four raids between 13 and 15 February were the most destructive, but by no means the only raids that caused damage and death in this particular city during the war.

⁵⁹ This is the inscription on the memorial to the cremation of bodies from the February 1945 bombings in Dresden's Altstadt. The original German text reads "*Damals kehrte der Schrecken des Krieges, von Deutschland aus in alle Welt getragen, auch in unsere Stadt zurück. Nach dem Luftangriff vom 13. bis 14. Februar 1945 auf Dresden wurden an diesem Ort die Leichen von 6865 Menschen verbrannt.*"

Dresden experienced its first air raid warning on 28/29 August 1940. Sirens went off several times through 1941 and 1942, but the Air War was still being fought over more western skies. Nighttime air raids tapered off through 1943 and 1944, as local hope grew that Dresden would get through the war without being directly hit. Until October 1944, Dresden was spared from aerial attack. The first air raid that dropped a payload of bombs over Dresden took place on 7 October 1944, hitting western parts of the city. Executed as a daytime raid by 29 B17s of the American 8th, the bombers dropped 72 tons of high explosives between 12.34 and 12.36 in the afternoon, killing over 400 civilians.⁶⁰ This was Dresden's only raid in 1944. Of the total eight air raids over Dresden, seven took place in the last year of the war.

The idea that Dresden, with the exception of February 1945, was untouched – a virgin target in the war – remains a myth. Dresden was also one of many aerial targets in Saxony and Eastern Germany, yet the February bombings were perceived as a surprise and a needless act because of the city's location and reputation as an innocent city as well as the fact that the air raids occurred so late in the war. As a result, Dresden is often framed as one raid rather than a series of consecutive raids; the raids that preceded and followed 13 – 15 February rarely receive recognition at all. This narrative of a one-off event was in part sustained by the construction of memorials in Dresden and plaques that recorded 13/14 as the night of Dresden's destruction. Newspaper and published articles also identified the night of the 13th as the time of the bombing and articles to this day,

⁶⁰ The air raid on 7 October 1944 targeted the Hauptbahnhof railway yards, near the city center. The Americans targeted Dresden again on 16 January 1945 with 133 bombers dropping 279 tons of HE and 41 tons of IB. MhM, "Sachsen: Dresden, Chemnitz, Leipzig, Zwickau, Plauen" Report from *Sachsen im Bombenkrieg* vol. 3.

are published annually on 13 February as an act of commemoration. Victims of the bombs in Dresden before or after February, on the other hand, have not received the same treatment, having no commemorative practices or memorials of their own.

Dresden is also remembered as an atypical episode, whether for the timing, location, choice of target or techniques carried out over the city.⁶¹ This in turn has contributed to the myth that Dresden was a one-off attack and helped to reinforce the notion that the Dresden raids were unique compared to other more destructive raids of the Second World War. A Soviet request to bomb Dresden during the Yalta conference also became one of many Cold War myths surrounding Dresden.

As the Saxon *Kunststadt* (city of art),⁶² Dresden had a reputation for culture, history, art and architecture. The bombing of such an important cultural center (and perceived non-military city), helped reinforce the memory of Dresden's bombing as a senseless crime, committed against an innocent civilian city that became a victim of cruel Allied actions. By the last winter of the war, Dresden was being overrun with refugees moving westward from the Russian front. The fact that the city sheltered refugees, along with troops and administrative services on evacuation from the Eastern Front,⁶³ served to further reinforce the image of Dresden as a civilian occupied, non-militant city in the middle of a war with which it was not integrally involved.

Dresden up until the evening of 13 February 1945 is remembered as an untouched, innocent city, and completely removed from Nazi Germany's war effort, when the city was supposedly systematically destroyed on one night, that of 13/14

⁶¹ Biddle, 415.

⁶² Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 50.

⁶³ Taylor, 3.

February. This blow came as a complete surprise to locals and Germans abroad, as Germans commonly believed that Britain had pre-selected Dresden as their administrative capital for the postwar period, and for this reason many thought Dresden was going to survive the war untouched.⁶⁴ There were also stories that Churchill had a family connection to Dresden, an aunt living in the city, which further prompted speculation that Dresden would survive. Within Germany, Dresden was also proclaimed a ‘fortress zone,’ which helped create the misperception that Dresden would remain safe from Allied bombers.⁶⁵ By the winter of 1945, furthermore, atrocities committed by the advancing Red Army – news of which were revealed to the German people via radio, newspaper, newsreels and interviews, showing the devastation, ruins and “brave determination of those still eager to resist the enemy”⁶⁶ – increased fears of a Soviet assault. As the proximity of Dresden to the front lines increased, fears shifted from Allied bombers attacking from the skies to the “Reds” advancing and occupying territory from the east. The focus on the Eastern Front also furthered the notion of a ‘surprise’ from the west.

Even though Dresden received a few stray bombs in suburbs south of the city and took part in several air raid alarms since early 1940,⁶⁷ the city was still considered “a virgin city” and safe from the harm of the war by German authorities as late as January 1945. This in turn helped contribute to the myth of Dresden after the war, even though Dresden was not a virgin target but rather an integrated city in the war effort. The perception of Dresden as an innocent city was also first portrayed by Nazi propaganda,

⁶⁴ Ibid.,14.

⁶⁵ Clayton and Russell, 36.

⁶⁶ Taylor, 12-13.

⁶⁷ By Bergander’s counter there were 299 air raid alarms in Dresden over the duration of the war. Götz Bergander, *Dresden im Luftkrieg* (Vorgeschichte Zerstörung, Fliegen (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1994).

which helped create the myth of Dresden as an untouched city, removed from the war. In turn, the myth of 13 February today conveys that nothing was targeted or hit in Dresden before or after 13 February and that the city was destroyed in one night of complete devastation. As a result, selective commemoration has remembered and mourned the loss of life in the city for this particular night, as is demonstrated annually on 13 February and to which several memorials testify. There were, however, additional American raids near the city in the later part of the war and on Dresden in October 1944, January and April 1945, yet due to the selectivity of history and memory, these raids are often neglected to the popular raid of 13 February and the three that followed on the 14th and 15th of that month.

In popular memory, the Dresden bombings often symbolize a moment of escalation in strategic bombing to a new and ruthless level, evoking comparisons of the Dresden raids with the dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima.⁶⁸ Both Allied and Axis publications following the immediate events contributed to this escalation theory, thereby marking Dresden as a “ratcheting up of Allied bombing policy.”⁶⁹ A press correspondent dispatch from a Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) conference in Paris (16 February 1945) helped reinforce this popular memory by naming the Dresden raids an act of “terror bombing.”⁷⁰ Dresden also partly owes its popular memory to Nazi and Communist propaganda, which labeled the event a *Terrorangriff* (terror raid)⁷¹ while also emphasizing the city’s reputation as a cultural center that was ruthlessly destroyed by Western hands. Both sides, in other words,

⁶⁸ Addison and Crang, 210.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 211.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 106. The Associated Press war correspondent was Howard Cowan.

⁷¹ De Bruhl, 101.

contributed to classifying and remembering the Dresden raids as particularly destructive, atypical and ruthless compared to other raids by both Allied and Axis powers throughout the war.

Leaking important information to the Swiss and Swedish press, Nazi Germany first escalated the death toll to a quarter of a million by adding an additional ‘0’ to the official reports.⁷² Although lower estimates were later published, high numbers continued to circulate throughout American, German and British press reports and literature throughout the postwar period, ranging from 20,000 to 500,000.⁷³ Continued controversy over Dresden’s death toll is in part responsible for its enduring legacy. East German discourse, for example, maintained the inflated death toll for Dresden as a means to emphasize the violence of Western Powers, whereas the West did the same as a way to downplay the destructive power of the Atomic Bombs dropped in Japan. The exaggerated death toll has also contributed in part to Dresden overshadowing larger and more destructive raids, including Hamburg and Tokyo,⁷⁴ as well as contributing to the ‘uniqueness’ of Dresden. According to Biddle, these “grossly inflated figures” have contributed to removing “the history from the documented records and plac[ing] it, instead, in the realm of propaganda and politics.”⁷⁵ This lack of agreement about a clear death toll provided further ammunition for political banter, which in the West helped downplay the destructive force of Atomic power whereas for the East it became the basis of political propaganda, used against the Capitalist “war-mongering West.”⁷⁶

⁷² Addison and Crang, 211.

⁷³ NA, CAB 146/351. Britain’s Cabinet Office recorded and documented the casualty figures for the Dresden raids. The variety of sources and numbers documented showed a broad range for the total casualties from the February raids.

⁷⁴ Biddle, 448.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 424.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Corwin, “The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German Accounts, East and West” in *UCLA History Journal*, 8 (1987), 82.

In the West, the publication of David Irving's *The Destruction of Dresden* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* also helped sustain Dresden in the Western consciousness (and American popular culture) during a period of growing anti-Vietnam sentiment and intense polarization with the Soviet Union, winning in turn, a central place in the history of the Second World War which it arguably retains to this day.⁷⁷ These texts, moreover, have contributed to reinforcing this complicated and misunderstood episode of the Air War, branding Dresden for "future generations as a cautionary tale about the brutalizing effects of modern war."⁷⁸ Furthermore, with East German officials, Dresden was used not only for propaganda messages directed to the West, but as a way to excuse the slow progress of reconstruction in the city.⁷⁹

By looking at the common narratives of Dresden, as well as the memory and commemoration practices surrounding Dresden's bombing, this thesis attempts to provide a better understanding of how the bombings of Dresden have been shaped and framed in academic and official discourses on memory, and argues that local and state memory and commemorative practices for the bombings of Dresden were shaped by socio-political influences of the Cold War (and in the final months of the Third Reich). These influences shaped the myth and symbolism surrounding Dresden and the aerial raids executed over this city near the end of the Second World War.

⁷⁷ David Irving's *The Destruction of Dresden* (London: William Kimber, 1963) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (New York: Dial House, 1969). Biddle, 448- 449.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 416.

⁷⁹ Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch, *Bombs Away! Representations of the Air War Over Europe and Japan* (New York: Rodopi, 2006), 120.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY

*“History is a curious thing. Some events are lifted up and remembered, while others – which at the time were equally salient – fall away into obscurity.”*¹

– Tami Davis Biddle from Addison and Crang,
Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945.

The Air War, of the Second World War remains a subject of great controversy in academic and public discussions for intentionally bombing civilian targets, including women, children, the elderly, cities and homes. Bombing cities also blurred the line between war and home front and has stirred debates over bombing as an act of punishment and retribution, as well as whether or not aerial bombing was and is a war crime or a justifiable act of modern warfare. Also, because the discourse surrounding aerial bombing has focused so long on questions of morality and ethics, it remains an important historical issue inscribed with intense controversy, with little resolution. At the center of the Air War debate remain two fundamental questions: was bombing justified and did it work?² Moreover, as Dresden remains a prominent symbol for the destructive and controversial nature of twentieth century air power, the bombings of Dresden remain deeply embedded in this highly contested discourse and central to questions of ethics and morality at the hands of aerial technology.

The Air War, strategic bombing and the bombings of Dresden have all received extensive attention from German and Western scholars, as well as prompting local and international public attention over the past several decades. In order to place the events of

¹ Tami Davis Biddle, “Wartime Reactions.” In *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945*, edited by Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 119.

² Randall Hansen, *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany, 1942-45* (Doubleday Canada, 2008), 269.

February 1945 within historical context, this chapter provides a historiographical commentary on the developments and changes in the discourse on the Air War, covering English, American and German contributions, before discussing the specific discourse on the Dresden raids as developed by scholars since the early postwar period.

In German scholarship, both East and West, memory of the Air War was politicized by the Cold War climate and wrapped up in the founding myths of both postwar German states, where the experience of being attacked, defeated and suffering immeasurable losses was a part of the process of memorializing and preserving the memory of the Second World War. On the other hand, until recently in western scholarship on the Air War, there was a reluctance to relate ethical questions of aerial bombing to the German experience of the Air War – with the exception of Dresden, which was often cited as the example of the ethical conflict in bombing civilian targets.³ This reluctance, in turn, created and reinforced a studied distance between the bombers in the sky from those experiencing the bombings on the ground. As a result, only since the early 1990s have questions of memory, suffering and victimization entered the mainstream English-speaking discourse, helping to reshape the discourse as a whole. In the case of Dresden, this shift is opening up new fields of research where historians are able to move beyond the narrative, strategy and impact of the Dresden raids to new themes and questions, examining the memory, myth and memorialization of Dresden. In

³ What I mean by this statement is that Western scholars in the Cold War decades neglected to look at the bombing campaign from the perspective of the Germans and what the bombings could have meant beyond the statistical charts of what and how much was destroyed. When historians began to make this connection, they were interested in the immediate aftermath of the raids, looking at how Germans struggled with everyday living as a result of the bombardment campaigns. My research, on the other hand, is interested in looking at the longer term and how the destruction of a particular city affected the memory and identity of Dresden in the years that followed February 1945 as a way to access the importance of memory and commemorative practices in and on the city, especially throughout the decades of the Cold War.

so doing, they create cross-connections to discourses on German memory and commemoration. It is here that I hope to provide some early connections, by bridging the experience of war, conflict and destruction to issues of memory and commemoration in the postwar era, as East and West Germany faced the difficult task of rebuilding their cities and towns from mounds of rubble. During the Cold War, they sought to remember and commemorate the Nazi past in diverging and politicized ways.

The following chapter is sub-divided into three component parts. First is a brief discussion of American and British contributions to the discourse on the Air War. Second is a discussion of recent German (and English) contributions to this discourse, focusing on themes of victimization and memory, which emphasizes the shift in thematic focus in the last few decades. Finally, the third section examines the historiography on Dresden and poses directions and themes for future investigation. In structuring the chapter in such a fashion, I hope to provide a platform for future directions in the discourse on Dresden and to contribute to the ongoing debates over the ‘right’ and proper place of German memory.

A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE AIR WAR

Aerial bombing was first used in the First World War.⁴ Although these early raids caused small scale and limited destruction, they generated widespread controversy and created a collective fear of warfare being waged overhead as war was no longer limited to the confinements of the battlefield. As Minister of Munitions⁵ late in the war, Winston

⁴ The first bombing raids on cities took place over Paris and London during the First World War. The Germans used Zeppelin airships to deliver small bomb loads to the enemy. The first raid over London took place on 31 May 1915 and Paris on 21 March. By 1918, a total of 556 deaths had occurred as a result of the German Zeppelin air raids. See De Bruhl, chapter 1.

⁵ Churchill was Minister of munitions from July 1917 to January 1919.

Churchill recognized that the use of air created a new front, making “it possible that death and terror could be carried far behind the lines of the actual armies, to women, children, the aged, the sick who in earlier struggles would perforce have been left untouched.”⁶

Only five years after the conclusion of the First World War, the League of Nations and leading world powers convened to outline the future acceptable uses of air power for the next war. The Hague Conference of 1 December 1922 to 19 February 1923, proposed a ban on aerial bombing as a means of terrorizing civilian populations⁷ and created a guideline for acceptable bombing, outlining military and industrial installations, battlefields and territory outside towns and cities as legitimate military targets. The proposal was intended to prevent future damage to civilian populations and metropolitan cities.⁸ At the end of the conference, however, the convention was never ratified.⁹

During the period between the two World Wars, aerial bombing also remained on the minds of Europeans. From discussions of air theory to public entertainment, civilian populations were exposed through various media including, newspapers, literature and films, to various depictions of the possible and probable devastation of future wars, as aerial bombing came to symbolize modern warfare.¹⁰ The prominence of air power in future conflicts was also realized by Western politicians. On 9 November 1932, Lord

⁶ Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*. Edited by Allison Brown. New York: Columbia University, 2006), 51.

⁷ Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 87.

⁸ Taylor argues this proposal would have limited bombing to battlefields, military or industrial installations outside city boundaries, thereby nullifying most of the advantages of having a bomber fleet. Taylor, 87.

⁹ “Draft Rules of Aerial Warfare, The Hague Conference, February 1923” Excerpt of Articles XXII to XV. <http://www.dannen.com/decision/int-law.html>.

¹⁰ Literature of the interwar period depicted the use of modern military weapons in future war, helping instill fear and anxiety that the next war could be the last. Examples include H.G Wells, *The Air War*, Ernst Jünger’s *Storm of Steel* and films such H.G Well’s *Things to Come*. See Addison and Crang, chapter 1 for a discussion on the role of literature and film in depicting the future of airpower during the Interwar period. Also see Taylor, chapter 9.

President of the Council (also Britain's Prime Minister, 1923-1924, 1924-1929 and 1935-1937) Stanley Baldwin delivered a speech titled "A Fear for the Future," in which he stated that "the bomber will always get through."¹¹ On 26 April 1937, Guernica provided the German Luftwaffe with its first testing ground, resulting in the city becoming the first casualty of extensive civilian bombing. Guernica, in turn, provided an all too real example of the destructive force of air power and aerial bombing, which had already been depicted by authors and moviemakers throughout the interwar period as a dangerous and forceful weapon of limitless destruction. As a result, even before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the bombing of civilian cities was not unexpected among civilian populations. When the war started, civilian populations throughout Europe started drilling extensively in self-protection in case of air raids: "Cellars, gas masks, sirens, blackouts, and fire-extinguishing drills were emergency procedures familiar to millions and millions of Europeans."¹² Air raid shelters also quickly became an important state expenditure as a further measure of protecting its citizens.¹³

Between the wars, three prominent military theorists also helped advance the theory of air power. Italian General Giulio Douhet, Marshall of the Royal Air Force Hugh Trenchard and American Army General William "Billy" Mitchell all contributed to the theory of air power, which came to be defined as the use of *offensive* air power to fly behind enemy lines to strike at the heart of the enemy, targeting its war production,

¹¹ Taylor, 92.

¹² Here Friedrich argues that active preparation for air raids by civilian populations of all the major powers suggests that none disapproved of targeting enemy civilians. Friedrich, 50. I argue that interwar efforts suggested that Europeans accepted rather than approved that city bombing was likely to occur and so took the necessary precautions to educate and prepare themselves for what was to come.

¹³ In Germany, the construction of air raid shelters in more than 80 major cities was ordered in 1940.

transportation and communication networks as well as cities.¹⁴ In Britain, Hugh Trenchard, air theorist and founder of the British RAF (1918) proposed that air power should be a combined offensive and defensive venture, with tactics and equipment to support both. Trenchard also argued that air power could provide future wars with the means to break military deadlocks on the ground.¹⁵ On a similar note, Italian theorist Giulio Douhet, in *The Command in the Air* (1921), argued that only aircraft would be needed in future wars as aerial warfare could break *any* deadlock, thereby making all other military arms irrelevant. Douhet also suggested, however, that bombers should be employed as offensive rather than defensive weapons of terror and used to devastate enemy cities and industrial centers.¹⁶ Civilian casualties were justified for Douhet, in that bombing would save lives in the long run and shorten future wars. American theorist Billy Mitchell, in *Winged Defense* (1925), argued that the twentieth century would come to be defined as the “aeronautical era” where the skies know no limits.¹⁷ In order for air power to lead the way, however, Mitchell advocated the independence and equal-footing of the American Air Force with that of the country’s Army and Navy, as well as the continued development of aerial technology and instruction.¹⁸ The bombings of Dresden

¹⁴ In theory, bombing cities was seen as a tactic to demoralize the morale of the enemy by creating fear and anxiety among civilian populations, thereby reducing the will of a nation to fight. William Mitchell, *Winged Defense* (Washington: Kennikat Press, 1925), 126-127. Also of note, defensive measures in air power were overlooked in the interwar period as airplanes were regarded as offensive weapons, used to charge the enemy, similar to the use of the cavalry before the advent of airplanes.

¹⁵ Taylor, 84.

¹⁶ Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*. Translated by: Dino Ferrari (London: Faber and Faber, 1943), 19.

¹⁷ Mitchell, 3-4.

¹⁸ Unlike the RAF or Luftwaffe, the AAF was not an independent arm of the United States military but under the command of the Army. Both Mitchell and Douhet advocated for the independence of the Army, Navy and Air force, arguing that dependence on one another would restrict freedom of action and diminish effectiveness.

would later come to be identified as a pinnacle in the deployment of this air theory, even when compared against the Atomic Bombs dropped over Japan later in the war.¹⁹

Air theorists also thought that Air War would undermine civilian morale. The “shock and awe of bombing” played upon ideas of classism in the interwar period by identifying those who would be “less resilient” to bombing.²⁰ Proponents of strategic bombing further argued that bombing would shorten the war, thereby saving lives, which in turn was used as justification for causing civilian casualties through raids on cities.²¹ These prominent air theorists of the Interwar period, in other words, helped reinforce images of terror from the skies.

The chasm between theory and technology, however, was too large to ignore. By the eve of the Second World War, aerial enthusiasts, as well as Allied and Axis air staffs,²² believed that flying to the enemy to drop thousand ton bomb loads on strategic military targets and then returning largely unscathed was feasible, but it was not. In September 1939, the actual tactical and numerical strength of the German, British and American Air Forces relegated much of the interwar theories on air power beyond the reach of aerial practice.²³ As a result, much of what Douhet, Mitchell and Trenchard theorized, and what Europeans feared, could not as yet be carried out in practice.

Furthermore, the size and strength of the Luftwaffe, RAF and USAAF were all smaller and more limited in scope than any wished to admit. In *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden*, Marshall De Bruhl goes so far as to argue that the USAAF

¹⁹ See Thomas Fox, 113 in Wilms and Rasch for references to Dresden as the “German Hiroshima.”

²⁰ Addison and Crang, 10.

²¹ Clayton and Russell, 37.

²² Here Allied and Axis air staff refers specifically to the USAAF, RAF and Luftwaffe during this period, not to the exclusion or omission of other air powers of the time.

²³ This gap was particularly prominent for the USAAF. The gap between theory and practice for the United States Army Air Force extended up to the moment the United States entered the war in late 1941. The RAF and Luftwaffe as a result had almost two years advantage in production and practice over the Americans.

and the German Luftwaffe were “shop-window”²⁴ air-forces, displaying more power in numbers and strength through appearance and propaganda than they actually had.

By the war’s end, a total of 131 (and 32 major) German cities and towns were bombed, with an estimated civilian death toll of between 360,000 and 410,000. Over 800,000 non-combatants were wounded, 81,000 airmen were killed, 2.5 million plus bombs were dropped and 7.5 million Germans lost their homes.²⁵ Postwar Germany – both east and west – had to rebuilt its cities brick by brick, as these various urban sites had been reduced to rubble. As a result, the strategic and area bombing of Axis targets, including oil, industrial and military plants, communication centers, transportation networks and civilian cities, played a significant role in the Air War and, in turn, also during the process of reconstruction in shaping the memory and identity of the two respective postwar Germanys.

Literature on the Air War, as a result, is extensive and wide-ranging. The focus in the following pages, however, is limited to a few select texts that represent this large discourse and the arguments, themes and questions that it has posed since the early postwar years. Just a few years after 1945, historians and ex-military men began writing on the Air War, focusing on their personal experiences, the legitimacy of various targets and the morality of their leaders decisions. Until recently, however, Western scholarship on the Air War created a limited narrative from the skies, as told and experienced by the Allies, where strategy, tactics and the effects of the bomber war were thoroughly examined to the neglect of the destruction and perspectives from the ground. Several

²⁴ Marshall De Bruhl, *Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden* (New York: Random House, 2006), 52.

²⁵ W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Translated by Anthea Bell (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), 3- 4. Sebald estimates the civilian deaths as running as high as 420,000 to 600,000.

questions were central to this discourse. How decisive was the Air War and did it bring the war to a faster end? Issues of morality, legality and the question of war crimes have also remained central to the attention of Anglo-American historians over the past several decades.

From official air force combat histories to various chronologies documenting aerial dogfights, early scholarship was often written by ex-military airmen and traditional military historians, who focused on the development of strategic bombing, its purpose, impact and legitimacy as an act of modern war. Sir Arthur Harris contributed to the discourse with the 1947 publication of *Bomber Offensive*, a semi-autobiographical and strategic recount of Britain's bombing campaign as a military operation, attacking the enemy from above.²⁶ Harris briefly addressed the Dresden campaign, arguing that the February raids were consistent with the policy of Bomber Command since February 1942, which set out to destroy the military-economic structure of Germany with systematic attacks on German industry as well as its cities.²⁷ Linking the Dresden raids to the February 1942 switch of strategy helped create a narrative whereby Dresden was the height of success in the bombardment campaign that lasted from Harris's appointment to the end of the war. The Dresden raids, as a result, became a part of the general Air War discourse early in the course of the historiography and were often used as a model to exemplify the destructive force of bombing, or on the other hand, to demonstrate the legitimacy of Bomber Command's policy, which supposedly contributed to the final defeat of Nazi Germany. Anthony Verrier's *The Bomber Offensive* (1967) provides another example of a personal and detailed chronological narrative of the Allied air

²⁶ Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Command* (London: Collins Clear-Type, 1947).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

campaign as an offensive military strategy, tracing the changes in strategy from the early years of aspiration through to the years of success.²⁸

Focusing on the strategic value and impact of Allied raids, Larry Bidinian's 1976 publication, *The Combined Allied Bombing Offensive against the German Civilian, 1942-1945*,²⁹ provides a background history on area bombing and examines the outcome achieved against the German enemy, but completely avoids a discussion on the morality or ethics of the air campaign. Instead, Bidinian focused on delivering an Allied perspective on a military campaign executed in conditions of total war.³⁰ In other words, any means necessary was legitimate in order to bring about the total surrender and defeat of the German forces.

In the 1970s and '80s, a new thread also emerged that shifted the focus from a combined historical survey of the Air War against Germany to examining the RAF and USAAF as autonomous powers in the sky. In British contributions, 'Bomber Harris' became the primary military tactician who planned and executed the bombing campaign over Germany from 1942 to the end of the war. In *Bomber Command* (1979), British Historian Max Hastings offered a critical account of Harris and his bomber war.³¹ In "*Bomber*" *Harris and the Strategic Bombing Offensive, 1939-1945* (1984), Charles Messenger too emphasized Harris's role as Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command

²⁸ Anthony Verrier, *The Bomber Offensive* (London: B.T Batsford, 1967). Titles from parts II and IV.

²⁹ Larry J. Bidinian, *The Combined Allied Bombing Offensive against the German civilian, 1942-1945* (Lawrence Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976).

³⁰ Although not addressed by Bidinian, the Dresden raids have divided scholars. Some, (including Frederick Taylor) consider Dresden as being strategically valuable and a legitimate target in conditions of total war. On the other hand, others see Dresden as a militarily valueless city in the Third Reich. The later argument originates from early German propaganda that depicted Dresden as an innocent city. This, is further discussed later in the chapter.

³¹ Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (London: Michael Joseph, 1979).

in the later half of the war, although perhaps with a little more sympathy.³² As a result, Harris remains a contentious figure of the twentieth century. Furthermore, immediately following the war, Harris missed out on military honours granted to other military leaders of similar rank.³³ The controversial 1992 erection of a statue of Harris in London, England, then, can be seen as a belated attempt to make amends with the treatment Harris experienced after the war and it also served as a way to honour the efforts of Bomber Command. The raising of Harris' statue was received with considerable controversy.³⁴

By the 1990s, American scholarship was focused on distancing the USAAF from the blemished and controversial reputation of British wartime bombing. The pursuit of accuracy bombing, according to Conrad Crane in *Bombs, Cities and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II*, (1993) “remained a primary goal throughout World War II, influencing American tactics and technology during that conflict and setting precedents for later wars.”³⁵ Focusing on American contributions to the Air War, Crane supports the distinction between RAF and AAF tactics. In the 2003 book, *Strategic Bombing by the United States in World War II: The Myths and the Facts*, Stewart Ross contributed to this thread arguing that, “the RAF would use its Bomber Command with a purposeful vindictiveness against German civilians never matched by the USAAF’s – nor, indeed, by the Luftwaffe in 1940.”³⁶ Strategic and or precision bombing, both terms

³² Charles Messenger, “Bomber” Harris and the Strategic Bombing Offensive, 1939-1945 (London: Arms and Amour Press, 1984). Harris was Commander-in-Chief from February 1942 until 1946.

³³ Tami Davis Biddle, “Bombing by the Square Yard: Sir Arthur Harris at War, 1942-1945” in *The International Historical Review*, Vol. 21, 3 (September 1999), 657. Following the conservative election victory in 1951, Churchill as Prime Minister offered Harris military honours, which were considered by some as long overdue. However, Harris refused to accept the honour and returned to South Africa.

³⁴ Tami Biddle also identifies Harris as “likely to remain one of the twentieth century’s most controversial figures.” See Biddle, “Bombing by the Square Yard,” 626. The inauguration of the Harris monument was met with a storm of controversy from Germans, including Dresden residents.

³⁵ Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 5.

³⁶ Stewart Ross, *Strategic Bombing by the United States in World War II: The Myths and the Facts* (Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2003), 1.

which have been used to describe Allied, and particularly, American tactics employed during the Second World War, helped create an image of World War Two bombers being able to cause pin-point destruction against enemy targets. Due to the technical limitations of the bombers of the 1930s and '40s, however, as well as to the limited scientific knowledge and strategy of bombing from the skies, Allied raids were restricted in target accuracy. Other factors such as weather and navigational difficulties also hindered Allied aircrews' ability to accurately identify, locate and bomb the enemy.

The technology of aerial bombing, in turn, has also been thoroughly discussed, and contributed to framing Dresden as one of the most destructive wartime air raids. In the early years of the war, and throughout for Marshall De Bruhl, the policy of strategic or precision bombing was little different in practice or accuracy than area bombing,³⁷ as the technology of the day limited the distance and precision at which the bombers could fly and drop their payloads. Area bombing is defined here as dropping unguided bombs on indiscriminate targets over a wide-ranging area, usually targeting cities, as they were easier to locate and hit. In fact, in the RAF's Butt Report (June/July 1941), only 5% of strategic bombs dropped over the target zone were able to hit the intended target, at best, within a 5 km range. By 1945, this was improved to 3 km.³⁸ In "Dresden 1945: Reality, History and Memory," Tami Biddle argues that weather, especially cloud cover, prevented the Americans from executing regular precision drops, instead forcing them to practice area bombing in order to bomb Germany as often as weather permitted.³⁹

³⁷ De Bruhl, 304. Despite the argument made that there was little difference between strategic and area bombing, the USAAF continued to distinguish its tactics from those of the RAF. Whereas Britain's Bomber Command conducted nighttime area raids, the Americans persisted that they executed precision bombing in daylight raids.

³⁸ Alan Cooper, *Target Dresden* (Bromley: Independent Books, 1995), 64.

³⁹ Tami Davis Biddle, "Dresden 1945: Reality, History and Memory" in the *Journal of Military History* 72 (April 2008), 433.

On the other hand, Hew Strachan argues that while precision bombing was legal, it could not effectively be carried out in practice at any point during the Second World War, whereas area bombing could be executed but it was not legally mandated.⁴⁰ For the USAAF, despite a persistence of language defining American bombing raids as ‘precision’ drops, the bulk of American raids were in fact area bombings. This debate over the language of aerial bombing, in turn, has contributed to the myth of Dresden as a city that was completely destroyed by area bombing – which conveyed (and still does) starker images of senseless and absolute destruction. The bombing raids conducted by both the RAF and, arguably, the USAAF, were effectively area bombings, marking area raids as the most controversial issue of aerial bombing and as such, playing an important role in shaping the discursive legacy of Germany’s bombed-out cities in both East and West German postwar histories.

Added to this controversy is that aerial bombing, whether identified as ‘strategic’ or ‘precision,’ was able to do little better than hit a target within a 3 to 5 kilometer range of accuracy. By the war’s end, precision bombing managed to attain 42% consistency for targets within this range.⁴¹ So whether bombing of this period should be rightly called strategic or precision – or suggesting that it differed little from area bombing – adds to the controversy. Bombing also remains controversial as a result of the difficulty in proving its effectiveness: according to Gian Gentile, “evaluating the effects of strategic bombing on vital enemy targets is especially difficult because the evaluation requires not merely an assessment of physical damage but an analysis of the entire enemy system.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Addison and Crang, 11.

⁴¹ This report on Allied bombing accuracy was documented at a conference in March 1945, for the winter of 1944-45. Addison and Crang, 102.

⁴² Gian P. Gentile, *How Effective is Strategic Bombing?: Lessons Learned from World War II to Kosovo* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 2.

Richard Overy's *The Air War, 1939-1945*,⁴³ published in 1980, provides a general history of the Air War by looking at questions of how and where the Air War was executed, focusing on how the Allies won the Air War and the role it played in Allied victory. On the other hand, Overy's text provides one of the first accounts to examine *both* sides of the Air War – although with an obvious favoring of the Allied narrative. Overy also addresses the Dresden raids, arguing that the city symbolized the fact that the Air War alone could not win the war;⁴⁴ that despite the destructive force of bombing from above, bombers could not bring about the total defeat of Nazi Germany. Published in 2001, Robin Neillands *The Bomber War: Arthur Harris and the Allied Bomber Offensive, 1939-1945*, provides a critical history of bombing from the First World War to the Second, and examines the impact and destruction of German industry and its cities, again, from an Allied perspective, arguing alongside Overy that bombing alone did not win the war.⁴⁵

In both British and American scholarship, as a result, there was an apparent continuity in the tradition of focusing on the Air War as a bomber war, told from the Allied perspective, while focusing on the narrative and effectiveness of various bombing campaigns. Questions of intention, morality, outcome and German suffering, consequently, were subsequent to examining the technology, production, planning and execution of these air raids.

In the early 1990s, however, the discourse began to shift towards moral and ethical questions of the Air War while still maintaining a dialogue with more traditional

⁴³ Richard Overy, *The Air War, 1939 to 1945* (London: Europa Publications, 1980).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁵ Robin Neillands, *The Bomber War: Arthur Harris and the Allied Bomber Offensive, 1939-1945* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2001). Both Neillands and Overy's works are recognized for their more critical stance on the effectiveness and success of the Air War. Earlier works were more descriptive than critical.

histories. An early contribution was Stephen Garrett's *Ethics and Airpower in World War Two* (1993),⁴⁶ which questioned RAF intentions and the ethics of Britain's air campaign. Garrett provides an analytical and moral critique of Bomber Command, arguing against the ethical implications of the bomber offensive. McCaffery's *Battlefields in the Air* (1995) devotes a minor chapter to "life under the bombs," providing an early account of what it must have been like for German civilians during and after the air raids.⁴⁷ Hermann Knell's *To Destroy a City: Strategic Bombing and its human consequences in World War II* (2003), provides an overview from the beginning of the bomber war through to Hiroshima to evaluate the overall effectiveness of strategic bombing to the war effort. To support his arguments, rather than focus on larger well-known raids, Knell looks to smaller raids on cities such as Wuppertal and Elberfeld, and focuses on the moral/ human dimension of bomber warfare – of which the Dresden raids are frequently a part of. This transitional moment also demonstrated to Western scholars the sizable gap in the literature that had so far examined and retold the experience of the Air War from a very selective, Allied viewpoint.

GERMANS AS VICTIMS OF THE AIR WAR

More recently, in the introduction of Mary Nolan's 2005 article, "Germans as Victims of the Second World War: Air War, Memory Wars," two important questions are posed. First, has the discourse on the Air War reshaped German understandings of the past? And second, has this discourse been influenced by the politics of the present?⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Stephen Garrett, *Ethics and Airpower in World War Two: The British Bombing of German Cities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

⁴⁷ Dan McCaffery *Battlefields in the Air* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1995).

⁴⁸ Mary Nolan, "Germans as Victims During the Second World War: Air Wars, Memory Wars" in *Central European History*, vol. 38, no.1, 2005, 7.

To Nolan's first question, discussions of the Air War have influenced German perceptions of the past as well as the perception of Germans in the war. To the second question, I would respond with another question: How did the politics of the Cold War and Post-Wende influence and shape the discourse and what role will today's politics have on the discourse of tomorrow? I would further propose an extension to these questions by asking: has the discourse on the Air War contributed to a greater understanding of the National Socialist past for Germans, academics and history as a discipline.

In terms of content, themes and arguments, the political climate of the Cold War played a prominent role in shaping the German discourse on the Air War. In East Germany, the memory of German suffering was readily used for political purposes and commemorative practice. Themes of loss, suffering and victimization in context of the Allied Air War were memorialized in bombed-out ruins, and constructed memorial sites, through annual commemoration ceremonies and East Germany's official narrative and founding myth, which framed its citizens as victims of Nazi Germany, the Western Imperialist powers and the Second World War. This myth took shape as part of a larger anti-fascist political ideology.⁴⁹ Dresden, as a result, was presented as an "atrocious proportion that allowed the idea of 'German as victim' to be set in the account book against the crimes to which the German people stood accused."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In *Ambiguous Memory, The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport: Prager Publishers, 2001). Siobhan Kattago argues that East Germany universalized its past, whereas West Germany internalized the past, thereby recognizing the latter as inheritors of the Third Reich. Furthermore, the GDR built its founding myth upon two ideas: victimization and Anti-Fascism. See the introduction and especially chapter four for a further discussion on the role of the GDR's founding myth on the memory and commemorative practices of the Second World War in East Germany. Also see chapter two of Robert Moeller's *Searching For A Usable Past*, for a similar discussion.

⁵⁰ Cooper, 138.

In East Germany, furthermore, the Air War was a part of the public record and collective memory. In fact, memory and commemoration practices in East Germany addressed, remembered and confronted the aerial bombardment of Germany and used this memory for political purposes amidst the backdrop of the Cold War. By examining the commemoration practices of the Dresden raids, the following chapter will demonstrate the extent to which the Air War was maintained in public memory and discourse in the GDR, a process in which the Dresden raids played a prominent role. As a result, in the East German context, “silence on the Air War is misplaced.”⁵¹

In West Germany, on the other hand, memory of the recent past was internalized with a specific *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* discourse, according to Siobhan Kattago, creating a tension between an acceptance and burden of the National Socialist past.⁵² As a result, West Germany participated in a discourse on memory that looked at questions of guilt and responsibility, as well as German suffering throughout the Cold War period. Themes of suffering and victimization, however, were minimized and remembered selectively, where the rape of the East, Jewish suffering and the displacement of millions of East Europeans, as well as the Air War, was remembered alongside various memories of German induced suffering. In turn, historians have regarded this selective remembrance as a process that created a silence around certain memories of the war, or for having marked the ‘German as victim’ discourse a taboo subject. Perhaps a better question to ask about this discourse is, where and how was German suffering discussed and why only recently is it being (re)addressed by historians?

⁵¹ Nolan, 16.

⁵² Kattago argues that this tension was the result of the internationalization process in West Germany, through which Germans were identified as the perpetrators of the war and the FRG as the inheritor of the Third Reich. See Kattago 79-81, and all of chapter three.

Scholars have argued that there was a collective silence concerning the Air War and the willingness or ability of postwar Germans to self-identify as victims. Were all Germans – East and West – silent about the Air War in the early postwar decades of occupation, division and reconstruction? According to W.G Sebald, there was a silence in postwar West German literature on the Air War. In Ruth Wittlinger’s “Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?”⁵³ Wittlinger argues that this silence resulted in the subject becoming taboo, as the postwar West avoided studying the subject and memory of the Air War. For Nolan, the Air War was not taboo but at most for West Germans an “inhibition shared unevenly across generations and positions on the political spectrum.”⁵⁴ As a result, in West Germany, the memory of German suffering was “not at the forefront of public memory debates,” whereas it [was] “problematically positioned in the East.”⁵⁵

At the same time, according to Robert Moeller in *War Stories: The Search for a usable past in the Federal Republic of Germany*,⁵⁶ it was selective amnesia in the early Cold War decades that made Germans (specifically West Germans) forget about the suffering they had caused to others, and remember the suffering they themselves had experienced during the war and its immediate aftermath. As a result, in the early postwar period German victimization became a readily used myth in West Germany to reject notions of guilt by focusing on German victimhood. This narrative helped shape West German identity, as the memory of German victimization became West Germany’s

⁵³ Ruth Wittlinger, “Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?” in *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 14:3, December 2006, 201-212.

⁵⁴ Nolan, 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁶ Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a usable past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

“usable past.”⁵⁷ In the 1950s, the FRG made use of this ‘usable past’ in order to construct a new collective identity free from the taint of Nationalist Socialist rhetoric.⁵⁸ This past, in turn, was constructed and synthesized to create a collective identity based on selective memories of trauma and suffering. Narratives of the rape of Germany, the loss of the East, Soviet treatment of POWs, the plight of Eastern expellees and even victims of the Allied bombardment campaign all helped foster this “framework of collective memory” that remembered German suffering rather than the suffering that Germans caused.

This postwar discourse on German victimization and suffering, in literature and memory, which was present throughout the Cold War, was able to fully transgress the former political divide and take hold following German reunification. In *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*,⁵⁹ Bill Niven argues that only since reunification has Germany successfully examined this particular past, leading to “an increased awareness on the part of today’s Germans of the true extent and nature of the crimes committed during the 1933-1945 period.”⁶⁰ This process of renegotiating the past in a unified Germany has also led to a broader understanding of the term “perpetrator” and the degree of involvement of “ordinary Germans.” At the same time, there is also a wider range of victims identified than previously recognized. Renegotiating the past, as a result, has also helped dissolve the dichotomy between victim and perpetrator.

German perspectives on the Air War have long addressed questions of German suffering, Germans as victims of the Air War and more generally, the Second World

⁵⁷ From the title of Moeller’s text, *Searching for a ‘usable’ past*.

⁵⁸ Moeller, 5-6.

⁵⁹ Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 233.

War and Hitler's Germany.⁶¹ These questions, in turn, were successfully and recently introduced to a Western audience following the German publication, and subsequent English translations, of W.G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction* (1999), Günter Grass's *Crabwalk* (2002) and Jörg Friedrich's *The Fire: Bombing Over Germany, 1940-1945* (2002). Each of these publications provided the Air War discourse with new questions and issues, as well as a German perspective of the Air War, helping shift the Western focus from air strategy to impact and from German atrocities to German suffering. As a result, the growing global discourse on the Air War, the bombing of German cities and the Third Reich more generally – since reunification, or there about, has become more encompassing, dynamic and reflective for those involved.

German scholar W.G. Sebald's *Luftkrieg und Literatur* was published in 1999, then translated into English and published in 2003 as *On the Natural History of Destruction*,⁶² two years after Sebald's death in late 2001. Drawing from a series of lectures delivered in the fall of 1997, Sebald argued that the "German as victims" discourse – referring to postwar Germans self-identifying as victims of the Second World War, including the Air War – only appeared in West German literature after decades of silence.⁶³ Focusing on the Western tradition, Sebald positioned himself in the discourse by arguing that the firestorms were perceived by Germans, East and West alike, as acts of

⁶¹ Questions of German suffering had been addressed by East and West German scholars for decades. Following reunification questions and themes specific to the East German discourse entered the Western discourse on the Air War, making them appear new to those less familiar with the East German tradition, rather than renewed by reunification and the joint process of renegotiating the recent past.

⁶² W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Translated by Anthea Bell (New York: Random house, 2003).

⁶³ Sebald identified the late 1940s and 1950s as the 'decades of silence,' but suggested that such silence persisted to an extent even after the coming of the generation of the 68ers. See chapter one, "Air War and Literature."

punishment and retribution for Nazi crimes. Looking to the collective memory and trauma of the Allied bombardment campaigns, rather than to the actual events, Sebald examined the lack of literary responses, in the postwar West to the Air War, even though this particular aspect of the war was experienced by millions of Germans. As a result, literary responses were not addressing the Air War, letting them instead fall out of public consciousness.

On a similar note, Dagmar Barnouw's *War in the Empty Air* (2005)⁶⁴ examined postwar memory of the Air War, arguing that particular memories of the war were not allowed public access, resulting in a silence or omission in the public sphere, leading to the consequent loss of particular memories due to the "instability and fragility of memory processes" which were given a "protective shield to form between the acceptable present and the unacceptable past."⁶⁵ Questions about the Nazi past in Germany and abroad, however, have yet to cease. In fact, Günter Grass's protagonist in *Crabwalk* recognizes that Germany's preoccupation with the Nazi past will never end but will continue to take different shapes, assuming new forms and looking at different parts of this recent past.

In "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?"⁶⁶ Ruth Wittlinger argues that this taboo or silence on the subject of German wartime suffering is now broken. As a result, the post-millennial discourse on "Germans as victims" is now forming a synthesis by embracing both the "acknowledgement of responsibility for victims of the Germans as well as mourning

⁶⁴ Dagmar Barnouw, *The War in the Empty Air: Victims, Perpetrators, and Postwar Germans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

⁶⁶ Ruth Wittlinger, "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?" in *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 14:3, 2006, 201-212.

Germany's own victims."⁶⁷ In May 2006, during a commemorative ceremony in the Bundestag for the 60th anniversary of the war's end, Federal President Horst Köhler summarized this new synthesis by stating that, "we are mourning all of Germany's victims – victims of violence which originated from Germany, and also victims of violence which struck back at Germany."⁶⁸

Published in 2002 and translated into English four years later, German historian Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand*, or *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*,⁶⁹ caused an immediate uproar among academic and public communities, in Germany and abroad, resulting in public discussions of German victimization and suffering from the Second World War.⁷⁰ As an independent scholar, Friedrich provided Western readers with a visceral and graphic account of what happened on the ground both during and after the bombing of various German cities. Giving attention to various cities that were bombed, and not just the largest raids of the war, Friedrich created an emotional narrative by recounting events from the moment Allied bombers took flight, to the dropping of the bombs, and through to the moment of impact and the devastation that followed. From the language, tone and conceptualization of the Air War, *The Fire* was received with mixed reviews and controversy. Friedrich once again caused a fuss with the 2003 publication of *Die Brandstätten*, a coffee table book of gruesome and graphic photos of bombed out

⁶⁷ Ibid., 206.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 206.

⁶⁹ Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*. Translated by Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁷⁰ In the 1990s controversy arose over the Goldhagen debate, which looked at questions of guilt and responsibility following the publication of Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Friedrich's text shifted public and academic attention from questions of culpability and guilt to questions of suffering and victimization. This recent shift, furthermore, is just one of many in the German memory discourse. What makes this current focus distinct from those of past decades is the greater attention paid to German perspectives of the Allied bombings.

cities and incinerated bodies. The book was only published and sold in Germany and Austria.⁷¹

In conditions of total war, Friedrich argues that everyone and everything is a potential target. The Second World War was a total war, whereby the belligerent powers mobilized their entire nations into the business of war. As a result, civilians, regardless of their proximity to military installations, became targets. With the use of aerial power, bomber fleets were able to take the war to the home of the enemy, making everyone a potential target. At the same time, however, Friedrich argues that Dresden was not a legitimate military target as it was too late in the war for the city to play any important role in the military efforts of the Third Reich.⁷² Similar sentiments from other scholars have contributed to highlighting Dresden as a particularly senseless attack because it occurred at such a late date in the war.⁷³

The Fire narrated such a visceral and graphic account of German suffering at the hands of the Allies, that it used vivid language conjuring images of gas ovens and cremated bodies; language not unfamiliar to discussions and writings on the Holocaust. Friedrich's text examined the moral justifications of the air raids and questioned whether or not Britain's wartime actions were war crimes. In fact, he went even further and questioned why there was no international court to try all powers involved in the war. Although he did not convict Harris and Churchill, who had long been identified as key figures in the Air War, he did argue that war trials should have been conducted. In addition to the controversy which followed Friedrich's publication, questions about

⁷¹ Jörg Friederick, *Der Anblick des Bombenkriegs* (München: Propyläen Verlag, 2003).

⁷² Friedrich, 3.

⁷³ The timing of the Dresden raids are further discussed in part three of this chapter.

German victimization (re)appeared in academia, public memory forums and even the media as a result of the shift in the discourse from German culpability to German victimization. This shift has also led to the increased willingness of Germans to identify themselves and their ancestors as victims of the Allied bombing campaign.

Recognizing Germans as victims of the war that was started in Germany, has also created a voiced opposition against narratives of German suffering that could lead to an *Aufrechnung*,⁷⁴ a fear that a settling of accounts could create a moral balance sheet, “allowing Germans to avoid guilt and responsibility for Nazi atrocities.”⁷⁵ At the same time, in *Facing the Nazi Past*, Bill Niven argues that Germans are now less disposed to identify with the self-pitying notion that they were also victims of Hitler, resulting in less inclination to place the suffering of German expellees or the victims of Allied bombings above that of Jews.⁷⁶ This realization, in turn, is contributing to a more inclusive, yet less hierarchical identification of who was a victim of the Third Reich. By accessing various perspectives and experiences of the bombardment over Germany, the discourse on German victimization and guilt has helped advocate and construct a more complex history of the Air War and the Second World War more generally.

Since 2002, furthermore, the discourse on the Air War has also shifted to issues of Allied intentions, German memories and properly contextualized histories,⁷⁷ which have in turn facilitated a better engagement with Nolan’s two questions, introduced at the beginning of this section. According to Nolan, there is an ongoing collective obsession

⁷⁴ *Aufrechnung* is defined by Robert Moeller as a reckoning of, or settling of accounts, in *The Search For A Usable Past*, 150.

⁷⁵ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory. Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War Two*. Translated by Haim Watzman (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2-3.

⁷⁶ Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 233.

⁷⁷ Nolan, 8.

with the Air War, which she attributes to a variety of reasons, including a continued fascination with the Second World War. The Air War also continues to have a present-day resonance due to the politics of memory and its intersections with current politics, the generational experiences of the war and enduring questions and concerns over law and morality.⁷⁸

Nolan's work, as a result, is helping to integrate discourses on 'Germans as Victims' and 'German memory of wartime suffering' to the history and memory of the Air War, by facilitating the inclusion of the Air War – and the Dresden bombings – into the larger discourse on German memory and the Nazi past. At issue, furthermore, is not the extent of destruction or the nature of Allied strategy, but rather German memories and the process of properly contextualizing the history of the Air War.

In "Air Wars, Memory Wars," Nolan provides an overview of this current debate and seeks to problematize the Air War discourse by proposing several questions worthy of investigation. Of particular interest: "Were Germans after the war silent about the air war in the early decades of reconstruction?" And "Why have public memories of World War Two focused their attention on POWS and expellees rather than to the greater number who were bombed?"⁷⁹ In posing such questions, Nolan is helping to reinforce the shift in the Air War discourse from questions of intentionality, legality and whether the bombing of civilian cities was pursued to excess in exchange for examining the treatment of the bombardment campaign in the memory and history of the two postwar German states.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9.

As a result, the current Air War discourse is situated within a new German victim-centered view of the past, but at the same time maintains a balance with discussions of German guilt. Nolan argues that this is a significant departure from the *Historikerstreit* (Historians Debate) and the Wehrmacht exhibit controversy of the 1980s and '90s respectively. As a result, contributions to the Air War discourse have never been so difficult or dynamic, both requiring and challenging “historians to write a much more complex, contextualized, and comparative history of the legitimacy, experiences, and effects of aerial bombardment, a history of World War II as total war that nonetheless retains clarity about the centrality of Auschwitz and Nazi responsibility for it.”⁸⁰ In other words, it is no longer sufficient to recount the strategic development or chronological narrative of the aerial bombardment over Europe, but instead requires historians to address issues of memory, experience, responsibility and even commemoration.

A new work by historian Gilad Margalit titled, *Guilt, Suffering and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II* (2010),⁸¹ has contributed to this discourse by broadening the understanding of “victim.” Margalit examines the division of memory between German and Jewish memories of the Second World War, arguing “the shapers and agents of Germany’s postwar memorial culture broadened the term [victim] to include German soldiers who died in the service of the Nazi regime’s criminal enterprise.”⁸² These recent contributions have managed to shift (and broaden) the discourse on the Allied bombing over Germany to include German-centered memory of the bombing campaigns, especially by asking interesting questions about the experience

⁸⁰ The *Historikerstreit* was a renewed intellectual debate over interpreting the Holocaust. The Wehrmacht exhibit implicated guilt of the regular German Army and was closed due to credibility of sources. Nolan, 8.

⁸¹ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II*. Translated by Haim Watzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

and outcome of aerial operations during the Second World War. However, bringing up questions of memory, suffering and victimization has not been done without creating controversy.⁸³

In other words, coming to terms with the past and the various ways in which the past is remembered is an ongoing process. Since the early 1990s, diverse initiatives in unified Germany have constructed ways to remember and commemorate German suffering. The following chapter investigates the function and importance of commemoration in the GDR as a public practice that helped sustain the memory of Dresden's war-time bombing. These efforts, however, have been met with controversy, which raises the perpetual question posed by Nolan, "How should historians analyze, contextualize, and judge the legality and morality of the aerial bombardment of cities and the extent and effects of German suffering?"⁸⁴

DRESDEN: A SHORT HISTORIGRAPHY

The Dresden raids remain embedded in various discourses on the Air War and in the wider discourse of German victimization. As a result, even today, the bombings of Dresden have not been forgotten. On the contrary, writers have produced a continuous stream of literature – fictional, autobiographical and academic on Dresden and the notorious bombing raids on the evening and afternoons of 13 to 15 February 1945. For a variety of reasons, Dresden has been inscribed in the memory of academics and the public at large as a horrible and violent event of twentieth century warfare.

⁸³ Margalit devotes part of chapter five to the Dresden raids, arguing that East Germany's rhetoric was partly replicated from Nazi propaganda and that memory efforts in Dresden were politically directed against the West.

⁸⁴ Nolan, 8. Later in the article Nolan uses the Wehrmacht exhibit controversy as an example. Under pressure, the exhibit had to be closed with the promise of revamping it to show a more balanced portrayal of German suffering and German guilt. For the Wehrmacht exhibit controversy, see Nolan page 14.

As a contentious and enduring symbol of the destructive force of aerial warfare, Dresden was a readily usable example of both German suffering and questionable Allied actions. Due to the city's cultural history, its fame as a site of baroque architecture and beauty, the presence of refugees and the firestorm that raised the city center with flames that shot for thousands of feet skyward and were visible hundreds of kilometers away, the Allied bombings of Dresden remain a controversial act.

At the same time, while there is little dispute among historians that the bombing of German cities caused widespread destruction, suffering and loss – even more so in the case of the Dresden raids – it is also true that the events of February 1945 have been exaggerated, appropriated for political purposes and mythologized as a result of the extensive attention that Dresden has received from various political and interest groups, academics and the general public. As a result, there is a considerable wealth of material written on Dresden, whether examining the larger scope of the Allied Air Campaign or focusing specifically on the events of February 1945. Literature specifically addressing the Dresden bombings is available in English and German, both of which are considered here. This discourse is broad as well as abundant, and is composed of contributions by historians, German and Western, ex-soldiers and independent scholars. Dresden has also received considerable attention and remains present in the public domain with literature, images and films produced to keep the memory of this event alive. From the Internet to autobiographical novels, newspapers and journal articles, narratives on the bombings of Dresden are easily accessible. As recently as 2006, there was a German made for TV film that aired as a two-part mini-series, titled “Dresden.” It was produced by TeamWorx and later dubbed for English viewers.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Roland Suso Richter, director. “Dresden” Team Worx, 2006.

In academia too, Dresden is a topic that remains a source of scholarly discussion as historians continue to ask whether or not bombing civilian cities was a necessary or just aspect of the Second World War. What I am interested in examining is how this historical event has been remembered and commemorated and how that aspect has changed over time as a result of local interests and political agendas during the Cold War, and the role that East German commemorative practices played in the city. There are elements of both continuity and change in the ways in which the destruction of Dresden has been remembered over the course of the decades from 1945, through the years of occupation and division and on to the time of reunification in 1990. My review of key texts will establish a historiographical framework for Dresden, as well as to evaluate what has and has not received due attention over several years of academic discourse.

For years, English literature on Dresden was limited to myth and legend. Much of what a Western audience could learn about the Dresden raids in the early decades of the Cold War came from literature, such as Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-five*.⁸⁶ David Irving's 1963 publication, *Destruction of Dresden*, provided one of the first English-language accounts of the raids. Twenty years later, British military historian, Alexander McKee's publication of *Dresden 1945* (1982), providing a personal and historic overview examining the 'reasons' for Dresden, arguing that the city was a defenseless, militarily valueless city that was bombed so Churchill and the RAF could flex their muscles as a major world power.⁸⁷ Both McKee and Irving (after several revisions) framed Dresden as a senseless crime, transforming the city into a "hellish landscape" shaped by a series of

⁸⁶ Alternatively titled, *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*. It was first published in English, in 1969.

⁸⁷ Alexander McKee, *Dresden 1945: The Devil's Tinderbox* (London: Souvenir Press, 1982). See chapter 5.

terror bombings. Dresden, in other words, remained a famous massacre with no military or strategic justification and moreover, was presented as a blemish on the record of the RAF's Bomber Command.

Görg Bergander's *Dresden im Luftkrieg* (1977) has been selected from the wealth of German literature written on the Dresden raids, as it provided a detailed and objective account of Dresden within a larger narrative framework of the Air War. Elizabeth Corwin's short article, "The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German accounts, East and West" (1987), offered a preliminary study of how Dresden was used politically in the Cold War, using German periodicals as reference materials. It rounds out the list of the Cold War texts considered here.

Also under consideration is Alan Cooper's *Target Dresden* (1995), which examined air power as it developed from the First World War to Dresden, demonstrating an escalation in both technology and destructive impact. Anthony Clayton and Alan Russell's *Dresden: A City Reborn* (1999), focused on the reconstruction of the city and the changing symbolism of Dresden as a place of suffering and loss into a city of peace and renewal.

Examining German memory on the Dresden raids and life after the bombs, independent scholar Elizabeth Ten Dyke's *Dresden: Paradoxes of Memory in History* (2001) focused on the image of Dresden in the late Cold War and Post-Wende periods.⁸⁸ Highlighting the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in memory work, Ten Dyke

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Ten Dyke, *Dresden: Paradoxes of Memory in History*. Routledge: New York, 2001. Similar to Ten Dyke's project of focusing on memory of the Dresden raids in the 1980s and 1990s, I intend to focus on the earlier postwar period. Future work on Dresden also needs to look at the intermediate years of the Cold War and the years following reunification. Looking specifically at the memory and commemoration of the Dresden raids is still a new approach and there remains considerable room for exploration.

examined various memory sources (including individual accounts) on the bombing raids and the ways in which different attempts have been made to deal with this particular past.

In 2004, British historian Frederick Taylor published *Dresden: 13 February 1945* with the intention of “reveal[ing] a more complex and ambivalent moral framework”⁸⁹ than had been recognized previously in regards to the Dresden bombings. He hoped to transmit the message to his audience that Dresden was *one* salient example of the destructive force of war and that humanity can no longer afford intolerance and war.⁹⁰ Providing by far the longest narrative account, it is Taylor’s belief that through education, awareness and remembering we can avoid future wars.

More recently, American military historian Marshall De Bruhl published *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden* (2006), providing a popular history of the Dresden air raids. The book was intended for an American audience to educate and create awareness of the Allied efforts during the Second World War.⁹¹ De Bruhl provided a readable narrative, focusing on the key figures and main events of the Air War, and building up to the bombings of Dresden as the climax in a controversial bomber war that targeted and bombed civilian cities.

Lastly, the edited collection by Addison and Crang (2006), *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945* provided a platform for various contributors to deal with the causes, conduct and consequences of the bombings of Dresden by examining how Dresden became a symbol of controversy over military and ethical questions of total

⁸⁹ Taylor, xiii.

⁹⁰ Taylor, xiv.

⁹¹ Marshall De Bruhl, *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden* (New York: Random House, 2006).

war.⁹² Broken into several short chapters, this text is all encompassing in its aim to examine the origins, motives, execution, experience and long-term consequences of the bombings of Dresden, as well as the postwar controversy, and seeks to explain why Dresden maintains its status and controversy to this day.

According to Elizabeth Ten Dyke, all the accounts on Dresden,

tell the same story and all have the same horrifying conclusion: a once beautiful city left a moonscape of smoking ash and rubble, and tens of thousands of residence and refugees cremated by the fire. Corpses that remained were hauled to public spaces such as the Neumarkt, heaped onto each other, showered with fuel and set ablaze.⁹³

At the same time, however, each and every account of the bombings of Dresden, for which there are many, maintains differences – whether nuanced or not, from one source to the next. Thus, sixty-six years after the event, Dresden remains a highly contentious topic. Why was Dresden bombed and so close to the war’s end? Was Dresden bombed as a result of a Soviet request during Yalta, or as a revenge attack for German raids on British cities? Was it a tactic intended to intimidate the Soviet Union in an emerging Cold War climate? Or was it a preemptive maneuver of the Americans and British, anticipating that the Red Army would occupy Dresden after the war? Or perhaps was it a cold-blooded imperialist attack meant to simultaneously influence the environment in postwar Germany and disrupt the Soviet advance into Central Europe? Was it for any of these reasons, a combination, or none at all?⁹⁴ These questions and the discourse in general are still very much unresolved.

⁹² Addison and Crang., ed. *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006).

⁹³ Ten Dyke, 83. The Frauenkirche ruins lay in the Neumarkt. The largest public cremation was in the Altmarkt nearby.

⁹⁴ Sebastian Cox, in Addison and Crang, 22.

The memory and historiography of the bombings of Dresden, as a result, have created the appearance of continuity, when in fact there is little continuity to be found. In the publication of *13 Februar 1945* (2005),⁹⁵ collaborators in the Dresden memory-initiative, under the guidance of editor Matthias Neutzner, more appropriately identified the memory of Dresden as,

manifested in the most varied forms: via richly diverse traditions of remembrance, articulated in countless different manners, both private and public. Via politically motivated declarations and actions establishing references to the destruction. Via the sustained interest of the international media and art for the “symbolism of Dresden.” And last but not least, many of the convictions and attitudes of the people of Dresden, which are inherent to the genius loci, are also founded to no small extent in the reflections on destruction and reconstruction.⁹⁶

Dresden has no cohesive narrative. Instead, it remains contested (and commemorated) as part of the contentious memory of the Air War, the Second World War and the Third Reich.

Each contribution to this discourse, as a result, conveys a different story of Dresden. Some recount the city’s civic history, albeit from a variety of origins. Taylor’s and McKee’s accounts, trace Dresden’s history back to its origins in the 12th century whereas most contributions provide shorter time frames, beginning just days or months prior to the events of February 1945.⁹⁷ To date, Frederick Taylor’s *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945*, provides the most detailed and extensive English-language description of the Dresden bombings. The text provides a comprehensive account of Dresden, in which Taylor argues that the air raids on the city were a senseless crime, which Nazi

⁹⁵ Matthias Neutzner, ed., *13 Februar 1945* (Dresden: Dresdener, 2005).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51. The memory-initiative is a current and local effort in Dresden to create a new framework for remembering Dresden as a result of competing memories and narratives since reunification in 1990. This initiative is discussed further in the epilogue.

⁹⁷ McKee provides a brief history of the city dating from Medieval Dresden. See chapter 4. For a more comprehensive back history on Dresden see the first half of Taylor.

propaganda appropriated and consequently influenced the narrative of Dresden throughout the Cold War. Taylor then frames reunification as a liberating moment allowing individuals to write, discuss and re-access the collective memory of Dresden, which had been shaped in the last months of the Third Reich and then politicized by the Cold War. As a result of the extensive appropriation and ongoing controversy over the Dresden raids, the events of February 1945 are still well known through legend, literature and popular culture.⁹⁸

In fact, Dresden remains one of the most contentious events of the Air War. Literature on the bombing raids continues to address questions of legality and whether or not Dresden was a legitimate military target. In *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945*, Webster and Frankland argue that Dresden did not mark a change in the bombing policy of the Allies but was part of a planned and executed campaign to bring about the rapid economic defeat of Germany.⁹⁹ Likewise, for Addison and Crang, Dresden was a justifiable war crime but also a ruthless act of war. In chapter one, Hew Strachan argues that Britain broke international laws to wage total war and had a technological advantage and state of the art weapons to do so. Also, with extensive experience in colonial conquest, Britain was accustomed to waging war without the influence of international law. Strachan also argues that there was a strategic justification to the air raids on Dresden by way of indirect benefits. The attacks drew the Luftwaffe away from the Eastern Front and into the defense of the homeland. They also caused German production to disperse, thereby inflicting further strain on the transportation

⁹⁸ Taylor, xi-xii.

⁹⁹ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945*. Volume III: Victory, Part 5 (London: Frank Cass, 1961).

network, as well as disrupting and confusing the movement of refugees fleeing from the East.¹⁰⁰

Along similar lines, Taylor argued that by the standards of the Second World War, Dresden was a legitimate military target.¹⁰¹ The city was a political and increasingly strategic target as the war progressed, a Nazified city center and industrial hub inside the Third Reich. According to Götz Bergander, Dresden was a legitimate target but the methods used to bomb the city were unusual compared to other targeted Axis cities. Furthermore, Bergander, who witnessed the bombings, remained skeptical of the high number of refugees reportedly in the city. Similar to Taylor, De Bruhl argued that, with full national mobilization, everyone to some extent took part in the war and was therefore susceptible to injury, capture or death. For Clayton and Russell, the history, city and destruction of Dresden make it a unique and tragic event of the 20th century. The ongoing controversy around Dresden, furthermore, results from the persistence of the city's role as a symbol of the horrors of conventional bombing.¹⁰² Alexander McKee, on the other hand, disregards all these arguments and positions himself at the far end of the spectrum of opinion, arguing that Dresden was a massacre with no military justification.

McKee does not however, identify just the raids on the night of 13/14 February, but frames the destruction of Dresden by the four consecutive raids from 13 to 15 February 1945. In chapter two of Addison and Crang, Sebastian Cox argues that the Dresden raids originated from Operation Thunderclap, first devised in August 1944.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Hew Strachen, "Strategic Bombing and the Question of Civilian Casualties up to 1945," in Addison and Crang, page. 21.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, xiii.

¹⁰² Anthony Clayton and Alan Russell, eds., *Dresden: A City Reborn* (New York: Berg, 1999), xvii.

¹⁰³ Sebastian Cox in Addison and Crang, 19.

Furthermore, it was Commander-in-Chief Sir Arthur Harris who suggested that Chemnitz, Leipzig and Dresden, alongside Berlin, should be targets in the winter of 1945.¹⁰⁴ For Taylor, the Area Bombing directive of 14 February 1942 marked the RAF's switch from precision attacks on oil plants, munitions factories and transport centers to area raids in which civilian casualties were now accepted as a by-product of winning the war.¹⁰⁵ It was the bombing of Cologne, however, on 30 May 1942, code-named *Millennium*, that demonstrated the RAF's shift to indiscriminate bombing of urban areas.¹⁰⁶

De Bruhl, on the other hand, constructs a narrative of the Air War leading up to Dresden from the Casablanca Directive of January 1943 to the events of February 1945. According to De Bruhl, the Casablanca Conference unofficially sanctioned “around the clock” bombing of Germany, as a means to systematically destroy German military, industrial and economic systems through a joint Anglo-American effort. It is clear “from the Casablanca directive that terror bombing of civilians was an official, albeit unannounced policy of both the RAF and the Eighth Air Force.”¹⁰⁷ According to De Bruhl, it was only a matter of time before bombs would be dropped over Dresden as part of the directive to systematically defeat Nazi Germany. Furthermore, the few real firestorms of the war provided valuable lessons for the Allies in the war against Japan.¹⁰⁸

In chapter eight, Taylor normalizes the advent of aerial warfare and bombing from the skies by placing the Strategic Air Offensive within a larger history spanning

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, 118.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰⁷ De Bruhl, 47.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 105.

thousands of years of military technology, from dropping objects by balloon to tossing projectiles from catapults.¹⁰⁹ This approach, in turn, positioned Taylor against the mainstream argument in which aerial warfare is often depicted as a new, novel and advanced form of modern warfare. At the same time, Taylor does identify Hamburg and Dresden as distinctive raids that marked the first and last firestorms of the Second World War.¹¹⁰

For Elizabeth Corwin, the “firestorm technique” was a deliberate and integral part of the strategy employed by the Allies to bring the war to a quick and victorious end.¹¹¹ In the infamous raid over Hamburg, the technology and science for creating firestorms were still in the early stages of development, but by February 1945 the Allies had it boiled down to a science. Dresden, as a result, was one of many German cities and towns targeted as part of a larger Allied strategy with the intent of engulfing German cities into destructive and deadly firestorms.

According to Taylor, Dresden was bombed to support the Soviet advance in the east and to disrupt the movement of troops to the Eastern Front and the shift of refugees fleeing toward the west. Dresden was also an important transportation and communication junction point in the Third Reich, yet the bombing of Dresden came as a surprise to the Germans, even though there were indicators – warning signs according to Taylor – that the city could be bombed.¹¹² For one, Dresden was integrated into the Third Reich’s war effort via its war industry, and its role in Germany’s transportation and

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, 79.

¹¹⁰ See Taylor chapter 12.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Corwin, “The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German accounts, East and West,” the “firestorm technique” *UCLA History Journal*, 8 (1987), 71.

¹¹² Taylor, 137-138.

communication networks. With the presence of slave and labour forces in local factories as well as with an ongoing local Nazi presence, Dresden was a legitimate military target. Second, the development of “heavies,” large bombers equipped with heavy payloads and capable of flying long distances, should have been a warning sign that eastern Germany would be a future target of the Allies.¹¹³ There were also secret plans made by the authorities in Dresden to evacuate the children from the city.¹¹⁴ It was the timing, however, Taylor concludes that created the element of surprise.

On the other hand, the sense of security of Dresden residences could have been reinforced by Saxony’s nickname, “the Reich’s air raid shelter” (*Reichsluftschutzkeller*).¹¹⁵ Saxony did in fact play the role of evacuation center for the whole of the Reich because the state did not believe that bombers could or would penetrate that far into German territory. When this assumption proved false, demands in late 1943 for the construction of air raid shelters in Saxony could not be met due to shortages in concrete, steel and labour.¹¹⁶ According to De Bruhl, Dresdners were further lulled into a false sense of security because only two raids had been carried out over Dresden before February 1945 and both were regarded by the locals as anomalies.¹¹⁷ The winter offensive in the Ardennes also helped ease tensions in Germany and increased morale as the defensive was put on hold for the first time in years. Perhaps it was also the time of year; Christmas and New Years had just past and the American raid on 16 January 1945 was not even reported to high command, helping to reinforce a false sense of security.

¹¹³ Ibid., 137.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 143-144.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 138.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 138.

¹¹⁷ De Bruhl, 194.

Furthermore, German propaganda played a role in shaping the myth of Dresden. In particular, Taylor identifies Goebbels' shift in propaganda message in the winter of 1944-45, which affected the coverage of Dresden and the messages conveyed to the German public after the raids. Rather than de-emphasizing the destruction in Dresden and "putting a positive gloss on the German position, [Goebbels] would hammer home the horror in store if the Third Reich was defeated." Goebbels was also hypocritical, name-calling the "Anglo-Americans with their pitiless bomber fleet."¹¹⁸ In fact, rather than gloss over the horrors and destruction of the city, Goebbels exploited and exaggerated the events of February, helping to create the myth surrounding Dresden's destruction that has not been completely dispelled even today. At the time, this "propaganda of fear" also helped to reinforce the perceived immoral actions of the Allies as a means of fostering German unity in the face of attack. The prewar image of Dresden also helped contribute to the myth of an "innocent city."¹¹⁹

Fighting in and from the skies transformed the dimensionality of warfare, for which Dresden remains one of many symbolic bombing events of the twentieth century – from Guernica to Coventry, Hamburg, Hiroshima, Hanoi and Baghdad. The bombings of Dresden, as a result, can and should be placed in a larger narrative of bombing campaigns that took place around the world throughout the twentieth century. According to De Bruhl, Dresden is one of the most famous events of the war but one of the least understood. As a result, the memory of Dresden is imbued with rumors, conspiracy theories, debates and charges of war crimes. De Bruhl uses Dresden as a case study to address the moral controversy surrounding aerial bombing. In doing so, De Bruhl focuses

¹¹⁸ Taylor, 12.

¹¹⁹ Matthias Neutzner, "Appeal regarding 13 February 1945," <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/appeal.php>.

on a bomber perspective and builds up to the devastating attack carried out by the Allies, identifying Dresden as a distinctively destructive raid because of the Allied scale of attack.

On the other hand, according to Clayton and Russell, Dresden was a unique and tragic event of the twentieth century. Furthermore, they frame the events of the raids from the perspective of the present, as Dresden continues to rebuild and repair itself, ending on a positive note that despite being one of the saddest events of the twentieth century, Dresden is a city reborn. The publication date, 1999, marks an unusual date, in that Clayton and Russell identify the rebirth of the city before the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche (completed in 2005), which most historians do, and rather to earlier post-reunification efforts and energy in the city to restore Dresden to its former glory. For Addison and Crang, Dresden was “one of the most contentious episodes in the use of airpower during the Second World War.”¹²⁰

Corwin further argues that unlike other bombing raids of the Second World War, Dresden has not recessed into the “annals of history.”¹²¹ In fact, Dresden is annually commemorated and news of these ceremonies regularly make the press in and outside Germany, helping to mark this event as unique, compared to many of the other bombing raids of the war. The practice of commemorating Dresden, however, has received almost no attention from scholars invested in this discourse even though commemorating the Dresden raids remains an important tradition in the city.

¹²⁰ Addison and Crang, ix.

¹²¹ Corwin, 71.

Focusing on a comparison of perceptions of the bombings in the two postwar Germanys, Corwin argues that under the Cold War political climate, the memory and history of the Allied bombardment in both East and West were shaped by ideology and politics. She suggests that the “German past [was] an instrument of propaganda for both sides.”¹²² In the intermediate period of the Cold War, the Soviet Union used Dresden as a “beacon in the struggle against the Americans.”¹²³ For the West, remembering Dresden served as an opportunity to downplay the impact of the Atomic Bomb. As a result of the tense political climate, Corwin argues that it was not until the 1980s that East and West Germany came to a closer understanding of the Dresden raids. This emerging cross-border consensus paralleled a cooling of East/West pressures and was met with a tone of reconciliation, as well as the emergence of German responses to the Air War that were less dictated by the Superpowers. Concentrating on the decade prior to and following reunification, Elizabeth Ten-Dyke argues that Dresden continued to play an important role during the Wende as East Germans confronted their collective past while they worked towards unification with the West.

In chapter seven of Addison and Crang, Nicola Lambourne recognizes Dresden as a unique city, specifically for its postwar reconstruction. Dresden has received extensive Soviet and Western-style new construction and historic reconstruction, as the city was a center of reconstruction before and after unification.¹²⁴ Focusing on the reconstruction efforts in the city, especially of Dresden’s churches, palaces and museums, Lambourne argues that the East German treatment of ruined sites was more architecturally

¹²² Corwin, 72.

¹²³ Ibid., 75.

¹²⁴ Nicola Lambourne “The Reconstruction of the City’s Historic Monuments” in Addison and Crang, 143-144.

conservative than the Federal Republic.¹²⁵ The Iron Curtain also provided for the protection of GDR culture from American influence, which remained a high political priority for the state. For De Bruhl, reconstruction provided a way to heal the physical wounds of the city and with time, possibly the emotional wounds as well. Reconstruction also involved a process of reconciliation; “nowhere is this reconciliation more manifest than in the reconsecrated Frauenkirche, the great church has been resurrected from the broken and charred pile of rubble that for half of a century lay at the very heart of Dresden.”¹²⁶ Reconstruction in Dresden was selective and exact in rebuilding portions of pre-war Germany. ‘Old Germany,’ however, could never wholly be reclaimed.¹²⁷ Reconstruction, furthermore, was based on a “strange dichotomy of preserving the cultural heritage while destroying the aristocracy and the class system that created it.”¹²⁸ The GDRs first priority, however, was housing, which involved building blocks of utilitarian style apartment buildings.¹²⁹

Today, it takes increasingly more effort to identify the physical scars of the Second World War. Signs of the firestorm in Dresden are becoming less obvious with on-going reconstruction efforts intended to rebuild the city center as it was before February 1945. With on-going local commemoration efforts, however, Dresden remains in public memory. Outside Dresden, on the other hand, reconstruction increasingly hides the scars of the city’s past for those who have never lived or visited the city. Soon it may be difficult to see evidence of the bombing in the physical landscape. Is the reconstruction of Dresden a constructive method for “overcoming the past?”

¹²⁵ Ibid., 147.

¹²⁶ De Bruhl, 304 -5.

¹²⁷ Ibid., xi.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 289.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 290.

For De Bruhl, memories of the war will gradual die out with the passing of each generation.¹³⁰ For him, awareness, education and knowledge are the tools for preserving this memory. De Bruhl recognizes that the United States needs to act on memory preservation, like the efforts in Europe with “war memorials and burial grounds” which has helped in preventing memory of the war from disappearing into the background.¹³¹ Perhaps these events explain why Europe, and Germany in particular, cling to sites of memory and continue to construct memorials and commemorate as a way of keeping memory of the past active and alive in the present. But can such a presence of the past on the landscape be a burden on the present?

By contributing to the discourse on Dresden I hope to direct it toward questions of commemoration and further into issues of reconstruction and memory. The intention of this thesis is to move away from an event-driven or narrative history of Dresden in exchange for a historical inquiry into what followed February 1945, specifically – how Dresden’s reconstruction, commemoration and memory practices were dealt with in East Germany. Now that the Historical Commissions report has been published, hopefully the focus can shift from what happened and how many lives were lost to a more historical discussion connecting Dresden into the larger context of the war, and to issues of German suffering, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and memory. In the following chapter I intend to provide a historical examination of the ways in which the events of February 13 to 15 1945 have been appropriated and used by collective, official and political memory.

¹³⁰ Ibid., x.

¹³¹ Ibid., x.

Today, memory, commemoration and reconstruction issues are among the most interesting this discourse has to offer. A considerable amount of attention has been paid to the bombing, how it happened, where and when as well as to the ongoing controversy of *why*. It is now time to shift this discourse to examine what happened after. How were the bombings of Dresden received? How did locals and East Germany rebuild the iconic city? How was Dresden remembered? How was it commemorated and memorialized, in Dresden, Germany and abroad? What shaped and influenced these practices? How has public memory and official history shaped various narratives on the Dresden bombings? How was the bombing of Dresden framed differently in East, West and unified Germany? How was the memory of Dresden appropriated as part of East Germany's official narrative of the Second World War? How was the narrative, memory and commemoration of Dresden influenced by the Cold War and Post-Wende environments? What do the diverging narratives of Dresden say and to whom do they appeal? The following chapter focuses on the framing of Dresden's memory via commemorative practices, official narratives and the city's constructed environment to address some, but clearly not all, of these intriguing questions.

CHAPTER THREE: DRESDEN & FRAMED MEMORY

The bombings of Dresden have been appropriated to such a great extent and in various ways since 1945, by both Allied and Axis during the war and period of occupation, East and West Germany afterwards and still to this day, that it remains among the most memorable and controversial of all the bombing raids that took place over Allied and Axis soil throughout the Second World War. Dresden as a historical case study, as a result, provides an excellent place to investigate linkages between memory, commemoration and space.

Memory, to begin, is inscribed, written and constructed onto objects and into physical spaces. Memory is also remembrance of the past in a particular way, appearing in many forms and states: collective, individual, private and public, institutional and official. It is an active process in which collectives, individuals, groups and organizations remember and record the past onto things and into places. Usually recorded in narrative form, memory, alongside history, allows the present to study the near and distant pasts. Consequently, through acts of remembrance, there are various mediums and spaces for people to inscribe and record memories of the recent and more distant pasts. This process, according to Ann Fuchs, is not simply a process of recording memories onto objects and spaces, but rather a more complex process of constructing memories that are compiled through processes of narration and social mediation.¹ These processes, furthermore, change over time, rendering change to the memories by which they were composed from

¹ Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote, *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990* (New York: Camden House, 2009), 235.

and marking memory as a fragile and inconsistent medium. Memory, as a result, is simultaneously a useful and challenging medium to facilitate a study of the past.

With these conditions in mind, this chapter examines the role of memory, posing the two-part question: How was the memory of Dresden's bombing shaped and framed after 1945 and what role did commemoration practices play in sustaining these memories? The intention of this chapter is to discuss and interpret the various ways in which the bombings of Dresden were remembered and commemorated in the decades of the German Democratic Republic up to the time of reunification. Seeing that memories reside in objects and texts, on the built environment and in spaces – both public and private,² examining how memory is framed³ requires looking at the politics of public commemoration, including memorials to the victims and casualties of Dresden, and more generally the Air War, as well as looking at reconstruction and the historic preservation of the built environment as a reflection of different visions of the past. As a result, this chapter divides its attention between places of memory – including memorial sites in Dresden – the process of constructing memory via construction of the urban landscape, and the nature of commemorative practices in the city of Dresden – to examine the intersection of memory and public space.⁴

Memory after the war was politicized and divided along East/West lines, creating what appeared to be a frozen memory culture. At the same time, cross-border relations

² Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 11.

³ The idea that memory is framed by various strategies and devices is discussed in chapter one of Iwona Irwin-Zarecka's *Frames of Remembrance*, titled "Setting the Analytical Parameters." This approach of framing memory comes from the work of Erving Goffman as well as from Maurice Halbwach, an early theorist on collective memory. See Irwin-Zarecka's chapter one for a detailed discussion on memory and its parameters as a category of analysis.

⁴ In doing so, I hope to link the study of urban space to memory studies, which is an important task but relatively new to the work of historians.

were also established, bridging the ideological divide of the Iron Curtain as a way to facilitate peace and reconciliation. Thus, despite the frigid conditions of the postwar period, this chapter argues that the official and public memory of Dresden's bombing did in fact undergo change as times shifted from the period of occupation to the foundation of the East German state and to the decade prior to reunification. This shift reflected changing political and ideological tensions in Cold War Europe and the various ways in which the memory of Dresden was framed and reframed so that it could be used as a symbol and a political tool. As a result, different versions, themes and framings of Dresden's wartime bombings were remembered and commemorated as a way to mourn loss, support accusations of guilt and responsibility, and at other times, foster relations based upon peace and reconciliation.

Looking at the period of occupation, the East German Republic as well as the years following reunification, a more complex memory framework appears, including continuities and changes in practice and message from the final days of the Third Reich to local efforts in the GDR that complicated the political framework established by the state. Within the 1949-1989 period, furthermore, subtle complexities of Dresden's memorial culture also appear. The memory of Dresden's wartime destruction, consequently, is more nuanced and complex than the "monolithic, reductionist and crude"⁵ model it has been labeled for years and for which it may appear at first glance.⁶

⁵ Thomas Fox in *Bombs Away!*, 129.

⁶ Early literature discounted East German memory as propagandistic, depicting Dresden as a theme for propaganda use against the west. See Elizabeth Corwin. Later works argued that the memory of Dresden followed an East German pattern of dual themes: self-pity and indignation towards the Western Allies. See Bill Niven *Germans as Victims*, chapter six. This chapter seeks to build upon these arguments to show that while Dresden was used as a source for East German propaganda themes of victimization and indignation, more positive ideas of reconciliation, peace and non-violence were also present, creating in turn a more complex and nuanced memory of the Dresden raids.

Official memory remains a focus of this investigation because of the extent to which the ruling Socialist Unity Part (SED) controlled public memory of the recent past. Spatial memory was also chosen in order to investigate places of memory in Dresden and to connect these memory efforts to local commemoration practices. Commemorations were held annually from 1946 onward, providing ample material to examine the continuities, discontinuities and practices in Dresden. In particular, three memory sites played important roles: the Heidfriedhof Cemetery, the ruins of the Frauenkirche and the Altstadt Cremation site.

This chapter is divided into three parts: narrative, commemoration and space, each examining Dresden's memory and how they helped shape it. Part one provides a brief narrative account of the founding myths in East and West Germany with their respective differences, to place the memory of Dresden in the East German narrative of the Second World War. Part two provides a chronological discussion of commemorative practices in Dresden and reflects on the role that memory played in shaping these traditions. Part two also seeks to problematize the practices in Dresden, as well as looking at some of the continuities and changes in the commemoration practices from the time of the occupied *Ostzone* through to the East German republic and eventual reunification. Here I focus on the role of official memory in the last months of the Third Reich, the time of Occupation and the period following the foundation of East Germany, as the SED played a prominent role in creating an official East German narrative of Dresden and the Nazi past. I also look at the role of local authorities, who complicated this politically-framed narrative by facilitating a working relationship with Coventry, England, and encouraging themes of reconciliation, peace and opposition to war. In part three, I look

specifically at local practices and the physical city to examine Dresden's memory landscape and the role that specific sites played in commemorative practices and memory of the bombings. The purpose is to examine the dynamics of remembrance and commemoration in Dresden's built environment. To do so, I examine the relationship between memory and concrete spaces in Dresden's urban environment, as well as looking at reconstruction as a process whereby remembrance and memorialization of the past facilitated memory in public spaces. In so doing, this chapter aims to reveal more complexities in the framework of memories about the 1945 Dresden bombings.

NARRATIVE

In the last months of the Third Reich, the destruction of Dresden was represented as a deliberate and destructive Allied campaign against an innocent German city. In light of the city's great cultural value, Nazi propaganda downplayed Dresden's military role, exaggerated the death toll and distanced the city from the war in order to create and reinforce the image of an innocent, picturesque city on the riverfront. Narrating Dresden as a city of lost life, innocence and culture, Nazi Germany framed the events of February 1945 as an unjustified war crime committed by the West. This narrative quickly spread around the world, in image and print,⁶ and told of "an unparalleled pointless destruction of an innocent city."⁷

Following the firestorm in Dresden, Goebbels' propaganda response was two-fold. On the one hand he argued that the British-American Allies were barbarians. By

⁶ Most of the photos and film clips that we have today of Dresden before, during and immediately after the bombings were produced by the Nazi state and later shown as propaganda to a German and international public by the Third Reich. They were also later used in Soviet propaganda.

⁷ "Dresden as a place of Remembrance," <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/history-symbol/remembrance.php>.

selling the Allied bomber to the German people as a symbol of destruction, Goebbels depicted the Allied conduct in the Air War as murderous, barbaric and criminal terrorism that aimed at breaking the spirit of the German people by sparing no one, not even women, children or the elderly.⁸ On the other hand, he also minimalized the destructive impact and the blow to German morale to help sustain the war effort.⁹

The Third Reich also tried to integrate civilian casualties of the Air War into the national cult of the dead by awarding civilians in Dresden (and elsewhere) with military decorations, honouring air raid casualties as “heroic soldiers of the home front”¹⁰ and “innocent civilians who had fallen victim to a crime by a sadistic enemy.”¹¹ Nazi propaganda also used the ruins of German cities for political purposes,¹² which was done by taking photos to show the German people the vicious nature of the enemy, while conveying a message of resistance. Late in the war, Nazi leadership also hoped to encourage people to resist the enemy to the end, holding out for the miracle V weapons.¹³ Hitler also spun the destruction of various German cities as an opportunity to clear the rubble and construct a new Germany along the lines of Nazi ideology, rather than merely reconstructing a “weak Christian-humanist past.”¹⁴

The German press also conveyed the story of Dresden to the neutral press as a way to attach “morale opprobrium” to the decisions made by the Allied high command.¹⁵

⁸ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt Suffering and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II*, trans. by Haim Watzman (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 47.

⁹ Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 133.

¹⁰ Bill Niven and Chloe Paver, eds. *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹² Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of Germany Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 140.

¹³ Taylor, 12. The Nazi leadership regarded these miracle weapons as holding the key to turning the tide of the war.

¹⁴ Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang, eds. *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 118-119.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 435.

The neutral press, according to Addison and Crang were more widely informed about the Dresden raids than the German public.¹⁶ In so doing, Goebbels' propaganda maintained a fine balance between shedding light on Allied acts of terror as a way to gain domestic and international sympathy, while downplaying the disruption and impact to Germans in order to maintain domestic morale.¹⁷ In the Dresden daily, *Der Freiheitskampf*, the tone towards the Allies was "infuriated [and] indignant."¹⁸ An article published in *Das Reich*, a month later, was in part a eulogy for Dresden and "partly a call for continued resistance."¹⁹ The German press generally responded to the bombing of its cities by calling Allied aircrews "Terrorflieger" and "Luftgangster," and identifying the worst-hit cities with new words, such as "Coventrating," "Hamburging" and "Atomization" (defined as a city that had been blown to smithereens),²⁰ all terms invented to emphasize the impact of devastation. Dresden, however, was not given such a name. Instead, it was identified and became one of the most prominent symbols of the Air War. In response to this narrative, heated debates questioning the morality and ethics of aerial bombing quickly ensued.

In the immediate years following the war and for the duration of the GDR's existence, much of Nazi Germany's narrative of the Dresden bombings was sustained as part of East Germany's version of this recent past. Both narratives told the story of a devastating blow against an innocent German city, resulting in the death, loss and suffering of countless German civilians. The *destruction* of Dresden was further

¹⁶ Ibid., 436.

¹⁷ Ibid., 435.

¹⁸ Tami Davis Biddle, "Dresden 1945: Reality, History and Memory" in the *Journal of Military History* 72 (April 2008), 436.

¹⁹ Ibid., 436.

²⁰ Alan Cooper, *Target Dresden* (Bromley: Independent Books, 1995), 173.

reinforced as an indictment against Western imperialism, which consequently helped to deepen the Communist/Capitalist divide in the early years of the Cold War. The memory of Dresden, furthermore, was tightly regulated and officially sanctioned by Soviet authorities and the SED official line was that “the bombing of the beautiful city of Dresden by the British and Americans in February 1945 [was] symptomatic of the destructive force of Western imperialism.”²¹

The way in which Dresden was viewed as an innocent city of art and culture, depicted as a place of suffering and devastation following the immediate events as well as free from the activity of war, all helped shape the official history of the events of February 1945, which were in turn used by both East and West to facilitate diverging and politicized memories of the war. In “Beyond Usable Pasts,” Jörg Arnold argues that the “public narratives about the meaning of death in the [Dresden] bombing raids had been shaped in accordance with National Socialist ideas of heroic sacrifice and innocent victimhood,”²² in turn providing one more example of the extent to which National Socialism permeated society during and after its twelve-year existence. According to Frederick Taylor, the Nazi version of what happened in Dresden between 13 to 15 February “became set in cold-war stone” during the Soviet occupation of eastern Germany and following the foundation of the GDR as examination into the circumstances of the Dresden raids was not encouraged by the East German government.²³ At the same time, however, local and state efforts altered the Nazi narrative by advocating the

²¹ Bill Niven, ed., *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

²² Jörg Arnold, “Beyond Usable Pasts: Rethinking the Memorialization of the Strategic Air War in Germany, 1940 to 1965” in *Memorialization in German Since 1945*, eds. Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010), 29.

²³ Taylor, xii.

memory of Dresden for more than suffering and loss. As a result, it is clear that some forms of German memory (and Dresden included) are complicated and highly contested; yet the way in which the memory and narrative of Dresden did change (and maintained continuities) after 1945 has received only modest academic attention.

Following the division of occupied Germany, memory cultures formed with the founding of two politically opposed German states.²⁴ Divided by the ideological lines of the Cold War, East and West Germany also pursued different economic, political and reconstruction programs, as well as developing different versions of the past, serving to further complicate Germany's memory culture today.²⁵ Furthermore, the ways in which Germans, both East and West, remembered and attempted to deal with the Nazi past in the postwar period, forms an integral part of postwar history, memory and identity. The divergence of memory in East and West Germany also highlights the importance of political ideology in shaping modes of remembrance and that the politicizing of memory remained a central part in the two Cold War Germanys. Memorialization of the bombing campaign, as a result, "became politically usable in the ideological struggles of the day."²⁶

Following the formation of the GDR in October 1949, the process of integrating the events in Dresden into the state's founding narrative was actively shaped by Soviet authorities and the SED. During this process, the GDR underwent a reworking of the past to remember the Red Army as liberators, as well as the bombings of Dresden as a specifically Western attack, which created a discontinuity in the narrative of Dresden

²⁴ Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a usable past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 19.

²⁵ Niven and Paver, 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

from the period of occupation. The Soviets also advocated their memory of Dresden, encouraging the SED to use the city as a “beacon in the struggle against the Americans.”²⁷ The party propagated “the bombing of the beautiful city of Dresden by the British and Americans in February 1945 as symptomatic of the destructive force of Western imperialism;”²⁸ an interpretation that helped to deepen the Communist/Capitalist divide in the early years of the Cold War. The ways in which Dresden was remembered by Nazi Germany also shaped the collective memory and official history in the East (and West) but which resulted in politicized memories of the war. During the Cold War, official memory of the Allied bombardment campaign by both East and West, was strongly shaped by ideology and politics,²⁹ as the German past provided an excellent instrument for propaganda on both sides of the political divide.³⁰

The East German founding narrative told of Soviet liberation and Communist victory, where German perpetrators fled to the West, thereby marking West Germany as the successor state of the Third Reich. From the ashes of Germany’s cities, furthermore, came the opportunity to found a Communist utopia in the name of the German Democratic Republic.³¹ As a result, East Germany was able to create and maintain public spaces for memorials that recognized German wartime suffering, alongside the memory of a socialist victory. This was done through the construction of public memorials, commemorative practices, propaganda, print and literature. In fact, Soviet authorities

²⁷ Elizabeth Corwin, “The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German accounts, East and West,” the “firestorm technique” *UCLA History Journal*, 8 (1987), 75.

²⁸ Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

²⁹ Corwin, 71.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

³¹ Dagmar Barnouw, *The War in the Empty Air: Victims, Perpetrators, and Postwar Germans* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), xi.

regulated and encouraged German wartime memories so that they could be used locally, as well as for the ideological war with the West. The principle requirement was that German memories “recorded the ideological and military victory of the Red Army.”³² In the case of Dresden, narratives about the war in the East and Soviet involvement in the Dresden raids (and others) were downplayed to the narrative of Western guilt and German suffering. As a result, the memory of German suffering from the Allied air raids was maintained and commemorated in East Germany as a way to repeatedly accuse the West while celebrating the East. This approach, in turn became part of the narrative that was woven into the fabric of the founding myth of East Germany.

Reconstruction efforts were also incorporated into the GDR’s political memory of the Allied bombings of German cities. In Dresden, for example, the re-opening of specific cultural sites that were reconstructed to their exact pre-war form coincided with important anniversary celebrations of 13 February. Among these sites was the Zwinger palace, opened in 1965 on the 20th anniversary of the Dresden bombings, as well as the Semper Opera House, which was not reopened until the 40th anniversary in 1985.³³ The presence of wartime memory can also be attributed to the fact that there was limited reconstruction of city ruins in East Germany, due to a lack of funds. This was especially the case when compared to the situation in the West. Soviet and East German authorities instead transformed many of these rubble sites into official places of memory and memorials. In Dresden, these sites served as memorials to the “victims of the Anglo American warmongers.”³⁴ These East German ruins, in turn, served political and social

³² Ibid., xi.

³³ *Abschlussbericht der Historikerkommission zu den Luftangriffen auf Dresden zwischen dem 13. Und 15. Februar 1945*. ed. Matthias Neutzner with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schnatz (Dresden: 2010), 41.

³⁴ Margalit, 155 and quoted in Bill Niven, *Germans as Victims*, 114.

functions by preserving and inscribing the state-sanctioned narrative of Dresden onto the city's landscape. They also provided public places for individual and collective remembrance, providing constant reminders to Dresdners and visitors about the capitalist war against the East.³⁵ In other words, reconstruction and public spaces provided an additional opportunity to sanction this narrative of Dresden by creating physical manifestations of Soviet propaganda that could be used in the political war against the West.

The founding myth in West Germany focused on narratives of suffering and expulsion from the East. In fact, although politically and ideologically divided, trauma and suffering proved equally strong in shaping East and West German memory cultures. West Germany also focused on the memory of the dislocation of refugees, the rape of the east and the suffering of POWs, rather than on American and British air raids, as it proved easier in the Cold War climate to attack the Soviet Union for past wrongs than directing accusations of guilt towards their allied partners of the present. As a result, Allied bombs remained faceless³⁶ as the memory of the Allied bombardment campaign was often superseded by depictions of Red Army soldiers as "Mongols" – the same image and stereotype used by Nazi propaganda. The Federal Republic also drew on the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) to reinforce a postwar identity that emphasized West Germany's path from devastation to prosperity.³⁷ The release of the last POWs from the East ten years after the war (in 1955) further provided West Germany with an on-going theme of suffering.³⁸ The narrative of resistance towards the Nazi regime, using

³⁵ Moeller, 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 6.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944 as a focal point, was also used by the Federal Republic against the East German campaign as the ‘better Germany,’ providing evidence in West Germany “of another, better Germany even within the depths of the Third Reich.”³⁹

Together these narratives in the 1950s created a “usable past”⁴⁰ that helped construct and synthesize an imagined community and a collective identity for the Federal Republic that was based on selective memories of the recent past. Narratives of the rape of Germany, the “loss of the East,”⁴¹ Soviet ill-treatment of POWs, Eastern expellees and even the Allied bombing campaign all helped foster a West German “framework of collective memory,”⁴² which remembered German suffering and encouraged recognition of these past events.

In the immediate decades after the war, certain memories in West Germany were repressed, forgotten or became the object of a silent taboo,⁴³ whereas in the East memory was politically monitored and controlled for ideological purposes. In the FRG, as a result, there was limited postwar mourning of Germans killed in battle, air raid victims and those who fell on forced treks from the East partly because of the country’s founding narrative, but due to the nature of its commemorative practices and rebuilt cityscapes as

³⁹ Karin Husen, “The ‘Day of National Mourning’ in Germany,” in Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith, eds. *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 149-150.

⁴⁰ This term was coined by Robert Moeller and used in the title of *War Stories*.

⁴¹ The “Rape in the East” was appropriated by West Germany and became the “Rape of the East.” Moeller, 7.

⁴² From chapter one of Irwin-Zarecka’s *Frame of Remembrance*, 9.

⁴³ In *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Sebald argues that select memories of the past were repressed, whereas Barnouw argues that they were simply forgotten because they fell out of public discourse. Different still, Mary Nolan argues that certain memories were not repressed or forgotten but treated as a taboo. See each of their respective works, which are introduced and discussed, in this part of the chapter.

well. This past, in other words was “shadowy, insubstantial, in the powerfully persuasive substantial presence of rebuilt cities and well-functioning political and social institutions that followed, as if logically, from the good, clean Allied victory.”⁴⁴ Civilians were also silent on wartime suffering, particularly concerning the air war, in part, as a response to the international branding of Germany as the perpetrator of the war. The victims of civilian bombings, furthermore, were largely women, children and the elderly, who at the time had restricted access to publicize their suffering. As a result, memory of the bombings in West Germany did not maintain as strong a physical or cerebral presence in the public sphere, especially when compared to the GDR, whose memory landscape was maintained through political memory, commemorative practices and by the enduring scars left on the physical landscape due to limited and long-term reconstruction efforts.

East German memory could not and did not retreat as easily. Instead, it was regulated by Soviet policy and kept in the public eye through annual commemorations and the transformation of rubble sites into public memorials. Memory of the bombing war was also emphasized in the GDR as a result of East Germany’s extensively bombed-out cities and from the official narrative that was a part of the GDR’s founding myth. Soviet propaganda was also deployed to the West in a continuing effort to remember the war and the founding of the GDR from a Soviet perspective. The Dresden raids, as a result, were a readily accessible “vehicle for propaganda” for the GDR and the West as well, as Dresden provided the perfect mixture of trauma, controversy, fear, shock and anger, with unclear intentions, various death tolls and multiple fingers of blame pointed

⁴⁴ Barnouw, x.

in various directions. And since the events happened close to the end of the Second World War, they became wrapped up in the onset of Cold War politics.⁴⁵

Furthermore, this awareness in the East contributed to the distinction in East and West Germany as to who was identified as a victim of the war. East Germans, for example, were more willing and encouraged to self-identify as victims of the Air War (blaming the imperialist aggression of the West), whereas in West Germany there was a relative silence regarding the memory of German suffering from Allied bombers and instead focused on accounting for responsibility in the war.⁴⁶

This cognizant memory in the East, however, was not static, as local and state interest continued to shape the past. It fluctuated and changed in terms of practice, tone and language as a result of the changing political climate of the Cold War, and it was influenced by local practices that were approved by, but not always aligned with those of, the state. Looking at the postwar period as a whole, three distinct shifts are identifiable. The first followed the transition from Nazi Germany to Soviet Occupied territory. Memory in this period (1945-1949) was influenced and still being shaped by Nazi propaganda, as well as by the occupying powers. After 1949, memory became more solidified or frozen, marking a second shift with the founding of East Germany and the consequent escalation of the Cold War that followed (1949 to the 1970s). The third and last shift took place in the final decade of the GDR, which was identified with a loosening of memory, just years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. This chapter will focus on the second phase, looking at the transition of the *Ostzone* (East Zone) into the German Democratic Republic, as well as looking at its memory and commemoration practices in

⁴⁵ Corwin, 88-89.

⁴⁶ W.G Sebald's *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999) was the first work to argue this point, especially concerning the early postwar decades.

the early decades of the Cold War. In particular, I want to examine the themes and practices within this supposed frozen memory framework in East Germany after 1949 and before the 1980s.

COMMEMORATION

Commemorative practices have the ability to reshape the past for purposes of the present. Since the end of the Second World War, there have been ongoing efforts in and outside Dresden to memorialize and commemorate the bombing of this city. Through the construction of memorials, publication of literature and media, the production of public art works, as well as the organization of commemorative celebrations, various individuals and interest groups have attempted to honour and mourn, commemorate and remember the Dresden bombing raids. As memory appears in written and non-written forms – newspapers, journals, texts, symbols, art works, images and places – the focus here is to examine the changing historical memory of the Dresden bombings as reflected in official and public memory efforts through commemorative celebrations.

The driving question behind this part of the chapter is: what were the rituals and procedures of remembrance and commemoration in East Germany during the Cold War?⁴⁷ The parameters of investigation here are limited in time and place to the role of commemoration in East Germany (between the 1950s and 1970s). Thus, this section focuses on commemorative events including anniversary celebrations and memorial staging to examine the purpose and function of commemorative practices in the GDR and the role they played in shaping and constructing the memory of the Dresden bombings.

⁴⁷ “The Changing Legacy of 1945 in Germany: A Round-table Discussion Between Doris Bergen, Volker Berghahn, Robert Moeller, Dirk Moses and Dorothee Wierling” in *German History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2005), 546.

Dresden's themes and practices of commemoration have changed over time. During the 1949-1989 period, these changes were often reflected in theme and tone, mirroring the changes of the Cold War climate. These changes, in turn, whether subtle or more perceptible, have raised issues and conflicts over representation and the 'right' of memory.

Following the end of the Second World War, commemoration played an active role in East Germany. In the early decades of the GDR, the bombings of Dresden were commemorated for the destruction and loss of life, as a violent act committed by Western imperialism. At the same time, Dresden also became a symbol for reconstruction and urban renewal, with the help of Soviet hands. Dresden, furthermore, became a place to promote peace and reconciliation with the West (as state policy), despite its utter destruction caused by their hands. Combined, these commemorative themes reflect a balanced approach between dwelling on a negative past and looking forward to a better future – a concept that remains a part of Dresden's efforts to work through and preserve memories of this past.

Dresden's commemorative traditions, as a result, are more complex than the memory framework that was imposed on the city by the state. Consequently, in carrying out a study on the memory of Dresden during the GDR period, looking at the city and its commemoration practices are integral to uncovering Dresden's memory landscape.

Commemorative practices in Dresden have also had a strong tradition of resident participation and initiation. Starting in 1946, with a city council initiative to commemorate the bombing raids, Dresden has been annually commemorated by the city and its residents. The first commemorative anniversary of the Dresden bombings was a

local affair. As noted, Dresden's city council initiated the planning of a commemoration ceremony for the first anniversary and received permission from local Soviet authorities. The tone of the 13 February 1946 ceremony, according to Jörg Arnold, was "optimistic and forward-looking" in spirit."⁴⁸ From the beginning, 13 February was selected as the day to commemorate and mourn the losses of the February raids – creating a framework whereby 13 February became the key memory-marker for Dresden's destruction. This day was remembered as the largest (and sometimes only) air raid against the city, although by no means the only one. Parallel to the choice of a single day to imprint Dresden's memory, a place was chosen as well. The Altmarkt, where a public cremation of 6865 bodies took place, was used as one of the earliest sites for commemorating Dresden's bombing.

The official narrative during this period of occupation (1945-1949) was one of anti-fascist sentiment whereby Nazism was blamed for starting a war that caused the eventual destruction of Dresden. Germans were also partly implicated. The Western Allies, however, were never directly blamed for the bombings. Printed on 13 February 1946 in the *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, Dresden's first postwar mayor, Walter Weidauer, identified the Nazis who started the war as the principle agents of Dresden's destruction but also incarcerating the German people for not preventing the war. At the same time, the mayor did not mention the Allied bombers who had dropped the bombs over the city. At various commemorative ceremonies around the city in 1946,⁴⁹ however, Max Libermann, an official in the city's information services noted to Major Broder (of

⁴⁸ Niven and Paver, 29.

⁴⁹ Margalit, 150.

the Propaganda Department of the Soviet Military Administration in Dresden) that several independent speakers had blamed the Western Allies for the city's bombing.⁵⁰ Thus, even the first commemorative ceremonies involved individuals who mourned the losses of February 1945, groups interested in using Dresden for political ends, as well as official voices seeking to imprint a relatively moderate tone. As early as January 1946, Major Broder recognized that, "Everything should be done to prevent February 13 from being a day of mourning (*Trauertag*). If it is granted an incorrect meaning, it will express movements opposed to the Allies."⁵¹ This according to Broder, should be prevented at all costs. The memory of Dresden, as a result, was under close inspection from the very beginning, and during this brief period (1946-1949), the official line was to avoid naming the Western Allies as the culprits behind the attack.⁵²

Between 1946 and 1949, the bombings were commemorated annually in the city. Following the formation of East Germany and the freezing of Cold War relations, however, there was a distinct shift in views about the culpability for the bombings. In fact, East Germany shifted blame for the city's destruction from Fascist Germany to the Democratic West.⁵³ On the fourth anniversary (1949), Mayor Weidauer wrote a second article (this time for *Neues Deutschland*) that was "diametrically opposed" to the one that he had written three years earlier, and clearly implicated the Americans and British for

⁵⁰ Ibid., 151.

⁵¹ Ibid., 150.

⁵² Margalit argues that there was public sentiment behind channeling resentment towards the United States and Great Britain, but the official line refrained from doing so during the occupational period. (151) See chapter 5.

⁵³ Margalit supports recognition of this shift by analyzing a series of films produced by the DEFA that trace the change in message and tone on Dresden. The first film, produced in 1946 and called *Dresden*, depicts the bombings without identifying who the bombers were. The 1951 film, *Dresden Warns and Reminds*, depicts Dresden as a military valueless target with no strategic value, and links the bombing to issues of German guilt. See chapter 5, especially pages 152 – 171.

the bombings, arguing that there was no military reason behind the Dresden attack.⁵⁴ It was this combination of Western culpability and a feeling of senselessness that became the official position and sanctioned narrative of East Germany, which conveniently fit into the GDRs founding narrative and its anti-fascist state ideology.

In addition, American culpability became further entrenched than blame assigned to the British, (a feeling which persists to an extent to this day), thus serving to reinforce the divide between the Cold War superpowers.

When Dresden fell victim to Anglo-American weapons of annihilation (Vernichtung), the war had already been decided. Why, then, did it have to die? Dresden became a pile of rubble because the American imperialists knew... that the city would end up on the Soviet zone of occupation. Dresden was thus a victim of anti-Soviet incitement.⁵⁵

Emphasis on the American imperialists as the instigators behind the Dresden raids and for strategizing a postwar order further demonstrates how the narrative of Dresden was shaped by the political climate of the postwar period. In turn, this narrative was incorporated into the memory of Dresden as a social construction of the (postwar) present. It is also interesting to note that alongside the memory of Americans as the principle force behind the raids, 13 February is the principle night that the raids are remembered, despite the fact that this first night of attacks was carried out by British bombers.⁵⁶

By 1950, the SED had adopted the narrative of Western culpability and senselessness and even incorporated some of Goebbels' rhetoric and propaganda slogans, calling the Allied air offensive a series of *Terrorangriffe* (Terror attacks) and calling

⁵⁴ Margalit, 154-5.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁶ The Americans did not arrive until the early morning of the 14th as part of a joint second wave with the British. It was the two raids following on the 14th and 15th that were carried out by USAAF bombers.

Britain and the United States – former Soviet Allies – “barbarians” and “destroyers of culture.”⁵⁷ In Mary Nolan’s words, “As the Cold War intensified the GDR viewed Dresden through the lens of a Cold War anti-capitalism attack,’ which supposedly had no military justification and occurred when the war’s outcome had been decided.”⁵⁸ For the fifth anniversary of the attacks (13 February 1950), the SED also staged a political campaign, naming the Americans and British as the culprits behind the attack, advocating that the “Anglo-American warmongers”⁵⁹ had destroyed Saxony’s cultural capital. This politicized commemoration was reflected in celebrations throughout the Saxon region. A pamphlet was also published with photos of ruined cities, dead bodies and communist-funded reconstruction efforts, thus making visual the distinction between Soviet and Western contributions to the rebuilding of East Germany, and Dresden in particular.

The narrative of Dresden as an avoidable attack whereby Germans were held responsible, as a result, was short lived between the end of the war and the founding of the GDR four years later. The new-Soviet shaped narrative helped reinforce resentment towards the democratic Allies, and particularly the Americans, as well as encouraging feelings of victimization, caused by the Air War, Nazi Germany and the Western powers.

At the same time, from 1950 onward, an annual peace demonstration was also held in Karl Marx Square to commemorate the bombings. Approximately 100,000 people attended each year.⁶⁰ In organizing such an event, Dresdners tried to promote peace rather than war, with sentiments of *Nie Wieder Krieg* (Never again War).⁶¹ As this peace rally was state-orchestrated, it provided the GDR with an additional medium for

⁵⁷ Margalit, 156.

⁵⁸ Nolan, 18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁰ It was organized by the German Peace Committee (*Deutsches Friedenskomitee*). Niven, *Germans* 115.

⁶¹ Taylor, xiv.

commemorative practice, but one that contrasted with stronger state messages of indictment against the West.⁶² So while official memory efforts encouraged feelings of resentment and victimization, aimed at both Nazi Germany and the West, local and state efforts were also promoting peace, through these state-orchestrated rallies as a political campaign to show that East Germany was in fact the ‘better’ Germany, which consequently transformed Dresden into a site and symbol of peace, and served as a lesson to avoid future war.

Furthermore, while Britain and the United States were being represented as agents of destruction, the Soviet Union was also being iconized as a hero, helping to rebuild Dresden and all of East Germany. Dresden, in turn, was used as a symbol to condemn the West and praise the East. Soviet-guided reconstruction also transformed Dresden into a showcase for communist architecture and propaganda, thus creating opportunities to celebrate Soviet assistance for the devastated city.

In 1952, the commemoration of Dresden became a national, East German event. The narrative of Dresden, consequently, became placed within Cold War politics that transformed the Western Allies and Soviets from partners fighting fascism into enemies of the Soviet Union and East German people.⁶³ This approach challenged the Western narrative of the Second World War, which depicted the West as fighting to “root out” all Nazi evil.⁶⁴ For the tenth anniversary (1955), a record 250,000 people were in attendance for the local commemoration and peace rally, but following these celebrations, the scope of the event and attendance diminished, reflecting an easing of East/West relations.

⁶² Niven, *Germans*, 115. It also provided the opportunity for Dresden to symbolize East Germany’s will to rebuild.

⁶³ Margalit, 156-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

In 1959 Dresden and Coventry, England forged a friendship based upon recognition of mutual suffering from the Second World War, with the goal of encouraging peace and reconciliation. Despite the fact that Britain did not recognize the GDR until 1973,⁶⁵ British-East German relations were practiced informally along lines of “complex transnational relations.”⁶⁶ The town-twinning of Coventry and Dresden (via British – GDR relations) was one component of this elaborate framework and was meant to encourage both cultural and commercial ties.⁶⁷ British- East German relations, however, were complex, multi-faceted and constantly in a triangle relationship with the Federal Republic.⁶⁸ According to Stefan Berger and Norman Laporte, “Britain was careful not to let British-GDR relations have a negative bearing on the British-FRG relations which were of far greater importance to Britain. Relations with the GDR in general had to “remain one step behind Bonn.”⁶⁹ Despite these triangular relations, East Germany continually tried to present itself as the “better Germany” to the west. One such way was for the SED to use connections in Britain to win further British support and use propaganda to present the GDR as morally better,⁷⁰ by promoting policies of ‘world-peace’ and ‘non-violence’ in political and memorial practices. This approach was supposed to demonstrate the extent the GDR had recovered and distanced itself from its National Socialist past.

The relationship between Coventry and Dresden was the first “town-twinning”

⁶⁵ East Germany was not officially recognized by Britain until 1973, but was given defacto recognition in 1955.

⁶⁶ Stefan Berger and Norman Laporte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 7.

⁶⁷ East Germany’s foreign policy was determined by the SED politburo, based on information collected by the bureaucracy of the party and state.

⁶⁸ Berger and LaPorte, 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

arrangement between Great Britain and the GDR, and was maintained by the strength of relations between the towns and their people. Together, the Coventry Committee for International Understanding and its sister organization in Dresden worked together to facilitate cultural exchanges, “including exhibitions, performances, theater companies and orchestras.”⁷¹ One of the earliest initiatives developed was in 1965 when a group of volunteers, including 25 students from Cambridge and other British universities travelled, to East Germany to help rebuild one of Dresden’s hospitals, which had been nearly completely destroyed by the February air raids. This project was organized by Reverend Bill Williams, Provost of Coventry Cathedral to give students the opportunity to engage in a “non-political project to heal the wounds of history”⁷² and to promote reconciliation and forgiveness for past events across the ideological divide of the Iron Curtain.

The Coventry-Dresden link was also maintained in part by the Christian Coventry Cathedral and the Protestant Church in Dresden, each of which committed to building “a network of relations as a symbol of their intentions to overcome the legacy of extensive war-time bombing.”⁷³ Since the twinning of these cities, a tradition remains to this day where the bishops of Coventry Cathedral and Dresden’s Frauenkirche visit each other annually and participate in each other’s commemorative celebrations.⁷⁴ In 1995, Bishop Dr. Christopher John Cocksworth reflected upon 50 years of friendship between Coventry and Dresden, despite the fact that both were bombed extensively during the war by each other’s air force, and despite the fact that the cities later became ideological

⁷¹ Berger and La Porte, 160.

⁷² “Dresden Bombing Atonement: Volunteers to help rebuild hospital” *The Times*, 15 March 1965. Reverend Williams also launched an appeal to raise £25,000 to cover the cost of rebuilding the front of the hospital.

⁷³ Berger and LaPorte, 160.

⁷⁴ For more on the participation of Coventry’s Bishop in Dresden, see Anthony Clayton and Alan Russell’s *Dresden: A City Reborn* (New York: Berg, 1999), particularly chapters three and four.

opponents in the Cold War. In Dr. Cocksworth's own words, "This is the debris of history on which we all stand; a history of hurt and conflict; a history that could drive deep furrows of division between us."⁷⁵ Yet despite this contentious shared past, since 1959 the Coventry-Dresden friendship has continued to develop its relations and promote peace and reconciliation. The pairing provides a unique example of British-East German relations, despite the fact that the GDR was east of the Iron Curtain.

In 1963, the year that David Irving's, *The Destruction of Dresden*⁷⁶ was published, Dresden was introduced to a wider Western audience, by depicting the city as a "site of victimization." Public buildings that had been damaged during the raids were affixed with memorial plaques during reconstruction. These plaques recalled that the "Anglo-American terror bombing" destroyed Dresden.⁷⁷ By the twentieth anniversary of the raids (1965), a softer tone was being presented as the SED tried to better relations with West Germany.⁷⁸ An anti-American bias later resurfaced with the Vietnam War,⁷⁹ as the memory of Dresden was used as an opportunity for East Germany to vocalize its opposition to the Vietnam War and war in general. In fact, the peace rally represents strong continuity in a local message that has remained opposed to war; today this sentiment still rings true.⁸⁰ This fluctuation in tone and message demonstrate how

⁷⁵ Dr. Christopher John Cocksworth, "Coventry and Dresden – a friendship spanning fifty years" from *Abschlussbericht der Historikerkommission zu den Luftangriffen auf Dresden zwischen dem 13. Und 15. Februar 1945*. ed. Matthias Neutzner with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schnatz. Dresden: 2010.

⁷⁶ David Irving, *Destruction of Dresden* (London: William Kimber, 1963).

⁷⁷ Margalit, 164.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 160. The twentieth-fifth anniversary (1970) was the last large-scale commemoration for Dresden in the GDR for about a decade. This shift resulted from the *Ostpolitik* and the signing of the Basic Treaty with West Germany in 1972. See Niven *German as Victims*, 116.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 161. The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was in its most intensive phase during Lyndon Johnson's term as president (1963-1969) and Richard Nixon's term (1969-73). Aside from this complicating factor, commemorations in Dresden were lower key and less explicit in emphasizing the dangers of the Anglo-American imperialists.

⁸⁰ Ten Dyke, 205. Even though these rallies were state-orchestrated, the message of peace and non-violence provides an example of continuity in message from the Cold War to the post re-unification period.

commemorative practices were adapted to the political climate and conditions of the present.

The 1965 commemorations also coincided with the opening of the “Grove of Honor” in the *Heidfriedhof* (Dresden’s largest cemetery). Located north of the city, the Grove of Honor is one of three memorials in the cemetery that were used annually for state ceremonies from 1965 until 1995, when unified Germany commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the bombings. This memorial site is constructed along a long pathway, lined with memorial stones that recount the loss and sadness of the events of February 1945. The memorial wall and burial site at the end of this walkway, however, were finished much earlier, in 1948. The poem on the memorial wall, written by Max Zimmering, reflects sentiments of the earlier occupation period by leaving the perpetrators of Dresden’s destruction nameless. The memorial stone also selectively memorializes the night of February 13th. The inscription reads:

“Wieviele starben? Wer kennt die zahl?/ An deinen worten sieht man die qual/ Der namenlosen die hier verbrannt/ Im hoellenfeuer aus menschenland.”

- “dem gedenken der opfer/ des luftangriffs auf/ Dresden am 13-14 Febr. 1945.”

“How many died? Who knows the number?/ In your words one sees the anguish/ Of the nameless who burned here/ In a hell’s fire from man’s hand.”

- “In memory of the victims of/ the aerial attack on Dresden/ February 13-14 1945.”⁸¹

A wreath laying ceremony at this memorial stone, where the bodies and ashes of the victims of the bombing raids were buried, was started in 1965, with the opening of the Grove of Honors, and remains a tradition that is held each year where Dresden’s mayor and various participants and local groups are present.

⁸¹ Memorial inscription at the Heidfriedhof cemetery in Dresden. Moritzurger Landstrasse 299, 01129.

East German memory was monitored by SED and Soviet policy, yet Dresden was able to place itself in a unique and complex position – in part through Soviet and SED efforts – as an East German city, symbolizing a place of suffering and loss by Western hands while also celebrating reconciliation and peace with the West, and particularly Britain, through a relationship that promoted cultural and religious ties. Dresden’s unique position as Coventry’s sister-city created a relationship of reconciliation, despite the fact that Dresden was well behind the Iron Curtain. At the same time, Dresden was also a symbol of the Soviet Unions’ heroic efforts to salvage and rebuild Dresden from the ruins created by Western hands.

By the 1980s, the tone of civic commemoration had shifted again and organizers started to critically self-examine the city’s history, recognizing that Dresdners too were implicated in the National Socialist past. On 13 February 1982, a spontaneous tradition started when an unauthorized group of Dresden youth gathered to light candles at the base of the Frauenkirche ruins, which they followed by singing *Dona nobis pacem*, “Give us Peace.”⁸² Both traditions remain apart of the official commemoration practices on the evening of 13 February each year.

On the other hand, there were changes in commemoration practices during the 1980s. Despite the fact that Kattago argues that the 1980s hardened the East/West German divide, commemorations showed an increasing similarity in tone to those in West Germany. The 1982 candlelight and singing tradition, as well as the GDR’s first official and national commemoration of *Kristallnacht* on November 9 1988,⁸³ provide

⁸² Eleanor Chiari, Mark Hatlie and Michael Prince, “Dresden – A Contested ‘Site of Memory.’” <http://sitesofmemory.twoday.net/stories/5516592/>. The year following (1983), large scale commemorations were reintroduced in Dresden.

⁸³ Clayton and Russell, 7.

two examples that reveal a slight loosening of the ideologically controlled commemoration practices in East Germany. The tone for Dresden memorialization in the 1980s was more reflective of the occupation period. Nazi Germany was held responsible and memory efforts also encouraged a critical and reflective examination of the 1933-1945 period, as they do today. On-going efforts to publically commemorate Dresden further attest to the enduring sentiments of local residents.

Local commemorations in Dresden have helped sustain the memory and symbolism of the raids. How Dresden was remembered, however, varied in message and tone during Germany's transition from war to occupation, peace and division. During the Cold War, socialist memories of the bombing raids maintained continuities with Nazi propaganda, and at other times subdued their politicized messages in order to foster better relations with the West. The tone of the memory and official narrative of Dresden, however, remained negative, depicting scenes of horror and loss. Commemorations organized locally, on the other hand, practiced a balance between negative and positive by recalling loss and destruction while also using the destruction of Dresden as an opportunity to heal the physical and emotional wounds from the events of February 1945. Thus, while official memory of Dresden was regulated, experienced continuity and reflected a backward looking, negative tone, local commemorative practices on the other hand were maintained by strong resident participation, carried out a balanced policy between past and present, positive and negative, and have maintained traditions from 1946 that continue to this day.

PLACE

Commemorative practices are, in part, spatial practices that take place in sites and places of memory. In the case of East Germany, these sites were constructed by the East

German state in order to further shape the memory of Dresden's bombing, by inscribing its memory framework for the events of 13 to 15 February 1945 onto Dresden's landscape. What role did memorial sites and places of memory (as public spaces for remembering and commemorating the past) play in framing Dresden's memory?

Physical space, in fact has played an important role in commemorating Dresden. Particular places of memory in the city supported commemorative practices and helped sustain a visible memory of Dresden's bombing. According to John Gillis in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, the purpose of commemorating the past is "to fix the meaning and purpose of the war in an enduring form,"⁸⁴ including on the physical landscape by establishing and signifying important "sites" and places of memory. In Dresden, Germany and Europe more broadly, this ongoing effort is visible through the various war memorials and monuments that proliferate across the landscape. Gillis also argues that people are forgetful and need their "social memory bolstered by powerful mnemonic aids;" memory may be safe in the present, but "monuments are needed to transmit [memories] across generations."⁸⁵ Gillis defines the purpose of these mnemonic aids as "serving to anchor collective remembering, a process dispersed, ever changing, and ultimately intangible, in highly condensed, fixed, and tangible sites."⁸⁶ Monuments, memorials and mnemonic aids to remembering the past, or *sites* of memory, embody and legitimate common, collective and official memories of the past.

Sites of memory⁸⁷ are defined here as places and spaces of memory on the built environment. These memory "sites" were often used by individuals, groups and

⁸⁴ For Gillis, commemorating the past is important, particularly times of war. John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 127.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁸⁷ Corwin, 71.

communities as public forums for commemorating and mourning the loss of life, celebrating the efforts of Soviet reconstruction and promoting either reconciliation and peace, or blame and accusation. According to Pierre Nora, in *Lieux de Mémoire*,⁸⁸ “sites of memory” are complex things on the landscape, “at once natural and artificial, simple and ambiguous, concrete and abstract, they are lieux – places, sites, causes – in three senses: material, symbolic, and functional.”⁸⁹ The process of making places into *sites* requires constructing material structures and transforming them into “symbolically charged public spaces.”⁹⁰ As physically and socially constructed places⁹¹ – large or small, public or private, urban or rural, these sites are inscribed with memories through experience and practice, collectively or individually. This act of site-making is also a visible effort undertaken by states, communities and individuals seeking to contain, remember and commemorate the past by embedding memory into specific spaces in time.⁹² They become “landscape markers of the past,”⁹³ as sites are inscribed with multiple and sometimes conflicting pasts. As a result, *sites* of memory have the ability to honor, glorify, remember, forget, silence and narrate a multitude of different memories.

Memory inscribing was also integral to the process of reconstruction whereby buildings and construction efforts sustained and reinforced the memory and narrative of Germany’s bombed out cities. In Dresden, new sites of memory were planned and constructed by the state to reinforce a distinctly East German view of the bombings. At

⁸⁸ From Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) see preface and introduction.

⁸⁹ Pierre Nora, 14.

⁹⁰ Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919 Volume 2, A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 280.

⁹¹ Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919. Volume 2, A Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 280.

⁹² Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

the same time, Dresden was undergoing extensive reconstruction in which old structures were either re-built to their exact pre-war form, demolished for new Soviet-style structures or kept as rubble memorials. Thus, the memory of the Dresden bombings remained in various *sites* throughout the city, preserving the memory of loss as Dresden was once Saxony's cultural capital.

Place, as a historical subject of investigation, reveals the process where social relations between humans and environment occur.⁹⁴ As a result, “every memory unfolds within a spatial framework... we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is... preserved in our physical surroundings.”⁹⁵ Place and the built environment deserve a central position in memory studies.⁹⁶ In the case of Dresden, Nazi and Soviet architectural and memorial legacies weigh heavily on Dresden's built environment, as constantly resurfacing pasts⁹⁷ that come into constant contact with layers of public and spatial memory.

Examining the relationship between memory and place, and how sites of memory in Dresden's urban landscape are constructed for purposes of commemoration and remembrance, is the focus of the following few pages. In so doing, the next several pages examine the relationship between memory and concrete places in Dresden's urban environment, by examining reconstruction as a process whereby remembrance and memorialization of the past, as separate and contingent processes, took place in public spaces.

⁹⁴ Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher and Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xiv.

⁹⁵ Gavriel D. Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, eds., *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁷ Rosenfeld and Jaskot, 4.

According to Thomas C. Fox in “East Germany and the Bombing War”, “the very landscape of the East encouraged a topography of memory,” as the East was not and could not be as rapidly rebuilt as the West.⁹⁸ Physical spaces, in other words, were inscribed with memories of bombing, destruction and death. As a result of this physical *topography of memory*, memory of the bombing war could not and did not recede into the landscape or the “annals of history,”⁹⁹ reinforcing instead, a constant public and official awareness of the past in which East Germans could remember and commemorate German suffering in public.

Where are these places of memory in Dresden? And at the same time, where is memory absent on the landscape?¹⁰⁰ It is inscribed and built into memorials and memory sites constructed by the East German regime, Soviet authorities and Dresden’s city council, and preserved in the city’s landscape and specific symbolic structures that were reconstructed by East Germany and Germany as a whole since reunification. Memory, for example, is not visible in the Hauptbahnhof, as it was rebuilt without inscribing the memory of the bombings or deportations that took place in this city. On the other hand, particular sites of memory became especially prominent on Dresden’s memory landscape, including the *Altstadt*, the Frauenkirche, the Heidfriedhof cemetery and its memorials, and the *Altmarkt*.

State regulated memory in Dresden’s landscape was made visible through the construction of the memorials and burial site at the Heidfriedhof, the annual peace campaign and commemorative ceremonies held throughout the GDR, the *Trümmerfrau*

⁹⁸ Fox in *Bombs Away!*, 115.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Corwin, 71.

¹⁰⁰ See Susanne Vees – Gulani’s, “The politics of New Beginnings: The Continued Exclusion of the Nazi Past in Dresden’s Cityscape,” in *Beyond Berlin*, edited by Rosenfeld and Jaskot, pages 25 – 47, for a short and informative read on elements of exclusion of the Nazi past in Dresden’s memory landscape.

memorial erected in front of city hall, various plaques affixed to bombed-out buildings and the memorial ruins of the Frauenkirche, each of which carried with them a politicized message. These sites of memory and “ruined buildings, bearing the scars of the war, constituted a concrete expression of the suffering of the Germans and their status as victims.”¹⁰¹ As a result, Soviet influenced commemoration in these memory sites helped reinforce the memory and symbolism of Dresden as a site of destruction, suffering and death, an understanding of the event first presented by Nazi Germany in the last months of the war.

The memory of Dresden was shaped in this politicized Cold War climate and in an environment of complete and utter destruction and ruin. According to David Lowenthal and Kenneth Foote, preservation has shaped and frequently distorted the memory of the past and specific sites of memory.¹⁰² Preservation, along with the reconstruction of select architectural and symbolic sites and new Soviet-style construction have played their part in shaping and sustaining memory. The political climate and the physical surroundings of East Germany played important roles in shaping the memory of Dresden’s devastating bombing.

During the GDR period, proposing the construction of a new memorial site was a political task – politics influenced its placement in the city, its aesthetics and most importantly, its message. In a Soviet funded project, such as the Grove of Honor, this task was straightforward. Funds were supplied, and Soviet authorities dictated the place, style and message of the memorial, such as the memorial plaques that were affixed to the side

¹⁰¹ Margalit, 71.

¹⁰² Rosenfeld and Jaskot refer to the works of Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: American’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: TX, 1997) and David Lowenthal’s *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See the introduction of Rosenfeld and Jaskot, page 5.

of buildings. In a non-state or non-Soviet project, however, this process was more complicated.

In late spring of 1963, correspondence between RHS Crossman,¹⁰³ David Irving and the Provost of Coventry Cathedral, Reverend H.C.N Williams, discussed the possibility of erecting a British memorial in Dresden, suggesting that a British built memorial in Dresden could serve as “an act of atonement for the bombing of the city in February 1945.”¹⁰⁴ Irving proposed a large-scale memorial in Dresden, built by British hands and from funds raised by private appeal in Britain. His motive was to create a visible and lasting memorial “mark[ing] our wish to dissociate ourselves from this act of the wartime British war cabinet,” and he added that this line of thinking was aligned with communist propaganda (which made it thereby more likely to gain approval in East Germany). “The destruction of Coventry and Dresden” he notes “were two acts of Capitalist barbarism on the same moral level.”¹⁰⁵ One of Crossman’s central hesitations in supporting this venture was the wording on the plaque, since he was convinced that “communist propaganda would exploit the whole affair as repudiation by the British people,” rather than as act of atonement and reconciliation.¹⁰⁶ As a result, Crossman tentatively forwarded his support for the memorial if the idea was supported by West Germany and the British government and organized as a private venture (or by the church), rather than as an initiative coming from the British government.¹⁰⁷ If successful,

¹⁰³ Richard Howard Stafford Crossman, M.P was a labour party politician, who between 1945 and 1974 was M.P for Coventry East, a National Executive Committee Member from 1952 to 1967 and chairman of the Labour Party from 1960-61.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from David Irving to Mr. Crossman, proposing a memorial in Dresden. 20 June 1963. NA, FO 371/169329.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Mr. Crossman to David Irving, 27 June 1963 FO 371/169329.

¹⁰⁷ This memorial proposal provides another example of the triangular relationship between Britain, the GDR and the Federal Republic, where each decision had to be carefully weighed and discussed before moving forward with a decision.

he contended, the memorial could prove to be an effective tool of “psychological warfare against East Germans.”¹⁰⁸

The idea of a memorial quickly became a church matter as a way to decrease the political implications and reduce the chance for possible political exploitation by the GDR. A competition among British architects and sculptors was held to design a memorial, either in the Heidfriedhof or alternatively in a suitable city-center location, with the requirement that it be built by British hands, be monumental rather than statuesque and ready for unveiling in time for the twentieth anniversary of the bombings in February 1965. After much debate and consultation with the Lord Privy seal, however, it was decided instead that the Church would host a cultural exchange by sending a group of British volunteers to travel to Dresden in order to help rebuild one of Dresden’s bombed-out hospitals.¹⁰⁹

Reconstructing Dresden, either with new Soviet-style constructions or reconstruction of ruined structures, became a practice that helped sustain public memories of the city’s bombing in order to support peace and reconciliation with the West and at other times, foster political tensions with those same powers. These messages influenced and shaped the practices and places of memory and commemoration for the Dresden bombings and the ways in which locals identified with the destruction of their city. Reconstruction, in other words, was used as a local and national policy in East Germany to help preserve memories of the bombing campaign. Reconstruction also supported local commemorative practices, which were integral in shaping Dresden’s

¹⁰⁸ Lord Privy Seal, 9 July 1963. NA, FO 371/169329

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. The exchange was noted in *The Times*, “Dresden Bombing Atonement,” 15 March 1965.

postwar landscape. As a result, reconstruction in Dresden had a direct connection to memory practices in the city, and influenced how this memory was formed. Construction in Dresden also tried to execute and maintain a policy of balance between historical renewal of ruin sites and new construction as a way to find a new way of expressing the city's identity – which it continues to do to this day.

After the war, reconstruction was Soviet regulated and conservative compared to Western reconstruction and renovation efforts. A public debate quickly ensued over the issue of urban planning and opinion was divided between those favoring reconstruction and those supporting new construction. Following the founding of the GDR on 7 October 1949, this reconstruction debate became part of the political agenda as people increasingly decided in favour of totally redesigning the city.¹¹⁰ In part due to restricted financial resources, however, the Soviets adopted a selective replica reconstruction policy, where buildings identified with historic value would be reconstructed to their exact pre-war form alongside newly constructed Soviet-style buildings to fill in the landscape. Rather than demolishing and rebuilding a whole new city, Soviet policy elected that selective cultural sites be laboriously reconstructed with construction crews. At times, these were the same crews who had been employed to refurbish Dresden's cultural and historic sites under the Third Reich.¹¹¹

The 1950 general urban development guidelines issued by the Council of Ministers of the GDR illustrated the new centralist approach to planning, “however, they also recognized the historically evolved city as a yardstick for reconstruction, which entailed, decisively for conservation of Dresden's urban structure, the preservation of

¹¹⁰ Matthias Neutzner with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schnatz, eds., 31.

¹¹¹ Selective cultural sites included the Zwinger, Semper Opera House, Frauenkirche, the Hospital and the Sophienkirche.

many historical streets and squares, the reconstruction of characteristic cultural monuments and measures to prevent the further decay of ruins.” In 1952, the government decided that the *Altmarkt* should be reconstructed with considerable widening of the adjoining Wilsdruffer Strasse so that the square would serve as a central point in the *Altstadt*. This transformation of a pre-war public space shows Soviet recognition of the significance of the site to Dresden’s landscape as well as the importance of refurbishing the space to support communist ideals.

Monument preservation in Dresden (and in the whole GDR) faced difficult challenges. “Of the 700 buildings in the old city, the majority of which were listed monuments, some 550 were totally destroyed and the remaining 150 were seriously damaged. An additional problem in the case of Dresden was the typical material, sandstone, which offers little resistance to moisture and frost. It was thus important to realize protective measures as quickly as possible, if the remaining substance was to be preserved.”¹¹² Preservation was such an important task because of the length of time several of these sites sat in ruin before they could be meticulously reconstructed. The Zwinger Palace was the first historical landmark to be fully rebuilt and was completed in 1964. By the mid-sixties, a long list of historical landmarks had been reconstructed, including the Kreuzkirche, the Albertinum, the Johanneum, the Georgenbau wing of the Royal Palae, the Altstädter Wache, the Italienisches Dörfchen and the Sekundogenitur. On the other hand, the oldest architectural monument in the city, the Sophienkirche, was demolished in 1962/3,¹¹³ and it was only in 1977 that the reconstruction of the Semper Opera House got underway with mass support from Dresden locals. The official opening

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹³ Matthias Neutzner with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schnatz, eds., 35.

of the opera house coincided with the fortieth anniversary of the bombings on 13 February 1985.

State authorities originally planned to complete the reconstruction of the inner city by 1955, but extended the deadline to 1962 and later to 1970, in large part because housing reconstruction remained a constant problem in the GDR.¹¹⁴ Residential quarters built in the 1950s were compact developments and from 1965 onward, 10 and 17 story prefabricated blocks began to infringe on Dresden's historical silhouette.

New construction and several reconstruction efforts were completed in time for various commemorations over the years of the GDR. Synchronizing reconstruction works with the commemorative ceremonies of 13 February helped reinforce the link between memory and place in Dresden's landscape. The former Zwinger palace, for example, reopened as a public museum in 1964 serving "as both a symbol of civil pride and propaganda for the Communist regime."¹¹⁵ The Semper Opera house was opened in 1985 for the city's fortieth anniversary of the bombings, years after the completion of a new Soviet-style theater. Various new construction projects helped rebuild Dresden as a cultural center along communist lines, while simultaneously working on reconstruction sites to preserve 'old Dresden.'

The Frauenkirche was perhaps the most popular and recognizable structure of pre-war Dresden, which after the raids became a public site of memory, mourning and

¹¹⁴ The 1970 deadline was not met. Cultural sites were still under construction in the 1980s and further reconstruction of the city center has been underway since unification.

¹¹⁵ In the early phase of Soviet reconstruction, East Germany tried to adopt Dresden's cultural sites to the cause of socialism. Addison and Crang, 176. In fact, a 16 point guideline directed that sites easily appropriated to the socialist cause were to be reconstructed first; the lower on the list, the longer a building or site would wait in ruins. By keeping the famous Frauenkirche in rubble, East German authorities (under Soviet influence) transformed the former church into a symbol of the city's destruction and of capitalist aggression, thereby appropriating the memory of Dresden for political purposes. De Bruhl, xiii.

reconciliation. As early as 1948, residents began sorting through the stone blocks of the Frauenkirche and as late as 1957, planning competitions for redesigning the church were still being held.¹¹⁶ In May 1966, however, the rubble from the Protestant church was officially declared a “memorial for the victims of the bombing” locally and nationally: thus creating a public space where residents could remember and mourn losses they suffered during the February raids. In fact, each year this site was used to commemorate the victims of the raids on the evening of 13 February, alongside the Altmarkt, which are a minute’s walk apart. Preserving the Frauenkirche as a site of ruin, furthermore, transformed these ruins into a site and symbol of German suffering and loss. At the same time, establishing ties with the Coventry Cathedral (via the twinning of Coventry and Dresden) also created a public space for reconciliation and peace between former enemies based on the recognition of mutual suffering. When reconstruction of the church finally commenced in 1993, there was intense controversy over whether or not Dresden, and specifically the Frauenkirche, should continue to serve as a memorial to the air raids and, if so, what message it should evoke.

Reconstruction in Dresden was carried out in East Germany as a combined (social) policy of reconciliation and political polarization, and as a (practical) policy of renewal and restoration. Throughout the GDR period and since reunification, reconstruction in Dresden has worked to maintain this balanced policy between historical renewal of ruin sites and new construction, the latter as a new way of expressing the city’s identity – using modern materials such as glass and steel.¹¹⁷ According to Clayton

¹¹⁶ Planning competitions were held in 1953, 1955 and 1957, demonstrating that until the late 1950s, Dresdners envisioned the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. Addison and Crang, 150.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

and Russell, it is united Germany's task to "create something new, but to set it in its historical context. Renewal thus goes hand-in-hand with authentic restoration, as a building operation of equal importance."¹¹⁸

Dresden is no less than a contested and complex site of memory. "Memory is about excavating – about sorting and sifting through the elements of one's own past."¹¹⁹ Thus the ongoing reconstruction efforts in Dresden are helping to maintain a conscious and active presence on the past, as it did over the course of forty years of reconstruction under the GDR. On the other hand, extensive reconstruction and new construction efforts have repaired and healed many of the scars on Dresden's cityscape. What will happen when living memory passes and memory of the bombings are no longer visible on the landscape?

Since reunification, further efforts have been made to re-inscribe particular places of memory in Dresden, including the Frauenkirche memorial in 2005 and the Altmarkt memorial (2009), possibly in response to a revival of academic attention to Dresden (since the mid 1990s), and as a complement to on-going reconstruction projects, which scholars have identified as marking the 're-birth' of the city.¹²⁰ Re-inscribing these places, furthermore, is providing Dresdners with new opportunities to record new and different messages and memories of the Dresden bombings onto the city's landscape – recording a new layer of history and memory onto the city.

French theoretician Michel de Certeau refers to physical spaces as "heterogeneous places shaped by distinct histories and symbols." And he further states that,

¹¹⁸ Anthony Clayton and Alan Russell, eds., *Dresden: A City Reborn* (New York: Berg, 1999), 114.

¹¹⁹ Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 1.

¹²⁰ Clayton and Russell, 114.

to the contemporary observer, perhaps lacking the ability to appreciate historical depth, this piling up appears to be something like a collage. But if one looks more deeply, one finds that each part of the collage hides stratified layers and meanings, some of which have been destroyed and can live only in memory, and some of which can be recovered as renewed elements in the triadic relationship between humans, landmarks, and cultural meanings.¹²¹

Furthermore, underneath sites and official memories lie “ruble alternative sub-currents that transmit the individuals private, often unsanctioned and traumatic experience of history.”¹²² Similar to choosing a place or site to imprint memory, a time must be chosen as well. The 13th of February is the day of commemoration for it was, and still is, remembered as the largest and sometimes only air raid against the city. In fact, a total of eight air raids were carried out over Dresden, seven of which took place in 1945.

Should Dresden have a coherent or uniform view of the past or does the emergence of alternative views of the past just pile additional layers upon the complex culture of German memory? Is there a right way to remember? Do people have a right to promote alterative memories or should established parameters define the forms and messages of public remembrance? How should Germans remember and how? What is right and who decides? According to Elizabeth Ten Dyke, in Dresden, as elsewhere,

In order for a coherent or uniform view of the this place to emerge, selective vision and historical amnesia must play a central role in the perception of it. For example, many of Dresden’s most important monuments have been destroyed and rebuilt several times. To conceive of these structures as having an unvarying identity is to disregard the fact that there have been, for example, five Kruzkirchen (plural) or three opera houses. Thus, to the extent that the city is defined by its physical landscape, its identity is constructed not through historical continuity but through the illusion of such continuity.¹²³

¹²¹ Koshar, *Monuments to Traces*, 13.

¹²² Ann Fuchs, 235.

¹²³ Elizabeth Ten Dyke, *Dresden: Paradoxes of Memory in History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 97.

The city of Dresden has been used in the representation and memory of collective death. Dresden has also been used as a site to promote peace, reconciliation and pacifism; as a symbol of renewal and communist aspirations; and as an indicator of German and Western guilt. By changing how we frame memory and history responsibility shifts. By changing the tone and language of the ways in which we regard the past, we also renew questions of culpability and responsibility.

In 1993 The Dresden Trust was founded to help raise funds to honour the victims of the Air War in response to Bomber Commands association honouring heroism during the war. The Trust also raised funds for the reconstruction of Dresden's Frauenkirche (1994-2005), which included a gift from the British people – a new orb and cross for the top of the church steeple. Likewise, the new St. Michael's Cathedral cross was made from the melted and twisted metal from Dresden's ruins.¹²⁴ Following reunification, the Dresden Trust and the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche helped maintain the links between Dresden and Coventry by encouraging on-going reconciliation.¹²⁵ These efforts have also helped re-inscribe Dresden as a place of peace, reconciliation and optimism, by writing over former memories of mourning, loss and suffering, which are still present but in more remote forms.

Although memory and history may have the appearance of continuity, different historical periods, and different groups within these periods, create divergent versions of the past through practices of building, renovating and deconstructing memorials, renaming streets and plazas, as well as reshaping commemoration practices to advocate

¹²⁴ Marshall De Bruhl, xiii.

¹²⁵ Funding for the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche was another local initiative started by fourteen locals who privately started fundraising following reunification. Formalized as "The Society to Promote the Reconstruction of the Church of Our Lady," the organization grew to over 5,000, with members in Germany and various other countries.

different collective remembrance of the past. Places and landscapes, as well as memory and history, continue to change over time.

To summarize, there was a distinct shift in the communist narrative of the Second World War; this shift accompanied the founding of East Germany and as East/West tensions grew.¹²⁶ The story of a common struggle against Nazism was replaced by the story of a lone Soviet struggle against Nazism.¹²⁷ As a result, “English-speaking Allies were implicated in cooperating with the Nazi state in its early stages.”¹²⁸ The narrative of Dresden was a part of this process of reconfiguring the recent past to fit the political needs of the present. The city, in turn, was used as a symbol to condemn the West while at the same time praising the Soviet Union through its reconstruction and commemorative practices.

The fact that East Germany “restricted the room in which competing memories of the war and its consequences could emerge,”¹²⁹ especially by creating guidelines for remembering and commemorating the bombings of Dresden, is clear. At the same time, shortly after the foundation of the East German state, these commemorative practices complicated the memory of Dresden by encouraging peace and reconciliation – a form of communist-devised propaganda to show that the GDR was the ‘better’ Germany. As a result, local commemoration practices have reinforced the memory of Dresden as a site of destruction, suffering and death as well as a place for reconciliation and peace. During different periods of the GDR’s history, sustaining the memory of the Dresden bombings

¹²⁶ Moeller, 153.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 153.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 153.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 19.

was used in coordination with Dresden's extensive and on-going reconstruction and commemoration efforts to facilitate better relations with the West. At other times, the memory of Dresden helped intensify this political divide.

The political line of the SED, as well as local efforts in Dresden, helped to sustain memory and commemoration practices in the GDR, creating a complex 'culture of remembrance.' Dresden memorialized German suffering, as inflicted by the imperialist powers – Nazi Germany, Britain and the United States, as well as celebrating anti-fascism and the communist heroes in the East who fought Nazi Germany. At the same time, Dresden also celebrated peace and reconciliation with the west by way of establishing peaceful relations, such as with Coventry, Dresden's sister city after 1959.

Local residents and East Germans remembered Dresden as a site of unnecessary suffering but chose to remember this event with an eye toward preventing future suffering and maintaining peace with the west. Despite the political and ideological divide that came with the onset of the Cold War, East Germany had no apparent wish to escalate tensions to the point of conflict and possible war. Instead, the GDR promoted a two-fold memory of suffering and reconciliation whereby Dresden was often used as a readily accessible example and symbol of unnecessary pain and Western aggression and through efforts to rebuilt and repair the devastation from the bombings, as a symbol of peace and no more war.

The divergence between officially sanctioned memory and local level commemorative practices – the later reflecting a more conciliatory undertone – was in part a way to present Dresden as a place of innocence, which reinforced the Nazi narrative by presenting the city as a place of non-violence. This disjunctive was also in

part due to the Dresden- Coventry link, whereby the city became a symbol of reconciliation. Local practices, as a result, reflected a more conciliatory tone due to the city's status as a victim of the Second World War, as well as a postwar city symbolizing peace and non-violence.

The collapse of the Cold War political framework fundamentally altered the polarized East/West discourse of the German past. This in turn, led to a re-engagement with the past as both parts of Germany worked towards reunification together.¹³⁰ This re-engagement also led to renewed questions over the right of memory. Who has the right to remember? Should there be one coherent memory or alternative memories? Why are memory practices in Dresden still so important? What are they trying to remember?

Since reunification, a new framework has emerged which encourages the memory of Dresden in a different way. Although the message has changed – by returning to a similar tone and message that dominated the period of occupation – there is a persistent sense of obligation and responsibility to create a guideline for remembering Dresden. As well, there is an on-going awareness campaign to preserve the memory of Dresden on the city's landscape as well as through commemorative practices and literature that circulates the globe.

Since reunification, scholarship on the memory of the air war has also focused on the Federal Republic and the Western tradition, to the neglect of East Germany's memory culture, which is often dismissed by Western scholars as propagandistic and simple.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Wilms and Rasch, 83.

¹³¹ Examinations of East German memory of the Air War by English-speaking scholars is relatively uncommon. See short works by Thomas Fox in "East Germany and the bombing war" in *Bombs Away! Representations of the Air War Over Europe and Japan*, ed. Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006)

Following 1989, moreover, the West German tradition muted the East German discourse on victimization, making it appear to those less familiar with the East German tradition that the discourse on victimization was ‘new,’ rather than ‘renewed’ by the process of reunification. After two decades of reunification, the focus is starting to shift to examining East German memory. I fit among the English-speaking scholars pursuing this endeavor.

Dresden is a landscape, inscribed with specific memory and commemorative practices, working to sustain the memory of Dresden’s destruction. The city’s built environment finds expression through discussions (or lack thereof) by politicians, institutions and citizens, each asking how and what buildings and public sites should reflect and communicate about the past. According to Rosenfeld and Jaskot, through this process of building – and I add preserving and reconstructing physical sites and spaces on the urban landscape – these “geographies emerge as evolving material embodiments of memory.”¹³² Traces of memory on Dresden’s landscape, in turn, are further sustained through commemorative practices – which have seen relative continuity and stability (locally) from the occupied era through to the GDR and even the period following reunification. As time passes, however, and the distance from 1945 becomes greater, Dresden’s landscape will be composed of more and more commemorative and memorial *traces*.¹³³ With the present-day concern of losing visible traces and voices of the past

¹³² Rosenfeld and Jaskot, 7.

¹³³ Rather than argue that there is a dichotomy between sites that are unseen or inscribed with memory and history, Young argues that memory traces are visible to those with a willingness to remember or with a knowledge of past events. James E. Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 75. See chapter three for a discussion of the construction and visibility of sites of memory through Simon Attie’s Acts of Remembrance, “Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie’s Acts of Remembrance, 1991-1996.”

with the passage of time, current efforts and even those since the early postwar period have worked to maintain visible traces of the past in Dresden's landscape, so that the memory of February 1945 remains present and active for generations of the present and future. As a result, even as the city rebuilds and heals its scars from this past, memorial spaces, constructed sites and commemorative ceremonies preserving the memory of the Dresden bombings will remain.

In other words, "the past has still not passed."¹³⁴ For some it cannot and for others it should not. Instead, the German past (Dresden included), and all the multitude of pasts and memories that this entails, will continue to survive as parts and fragments in the present.¹³⁵ The events of February 1945 remain a key example of this, as the memory of the bombings of Dresden continue to have present-day political and social impact. Whether in newspapers, journal articles, riots on commemoration day, present in controversy over the placement of commemorative wreaths, the organization of historical commissions or public initiatives, the events of 13 to 15 February continue to have impact both locally and abroad. The importance of awareness, furthermore – to know of Dresden's history and the role that various agents played in shaping its memory, the responsibility to remember and the obligation to remember in a balanced, critical manner – remains an integral part of Dresden's memory landscape.

¹³⁴ "The Changing Legacy of 1945 in Germany: A Round-table Discussion", 546.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

World War Two marked not only the full-scale mobilization of nations into total war but also changed how air power influenced the nature of war itself. Before ground warfare was accessible in Western Europe, the air campaign became the Allies front line of combat and made civilians the targets of aerial bombings despite on-going controversy over the morality and ethics of air power and bombing from the skies.

The bombings in Dresden which have been appropriated to such a great extent and in various ways since 1945, by Allied and Axis powers during the war, East and West Germany after and unified Germany since 1990, remain one of a number of contested and remembered events of the Air War that took place over European skies. The memory of Dresden, in turn, was shaped and framed by local, state and external interest groups, invested in preserving the memory of Dresden for present and future generations. These efforts have also helped further the controversy, rumors, debates and myths surrounding the city's destruction.

Dresden is remembered as a unique case because it was mythologized that way, in part through memory, commemoration and reconstruction practices and by the extensive academic and public attention Dresden received after 1945. Sixty-six years later, Dresden remains a controversial symbol of the violence and destruction of the war, as well as a place to articulate sentiments of peace, reconciliation and anti-militarism. The memory of Dresden, as a result, means more than commemorating sentiments of loss and suffering, but supports efforts at peace and reconciliation as well. Today, the bombings of Dresden are still commemorated annually; riots are held alongside commemorative ceremonies and articles are still written on the city of Dresden. The city remains in public memory as

a symbol of German suffering from the Second World War, in which everyone suffered and lost. Since reunification, furthermore, Dresden has become a showpiece for reunification, a source of revenue for tourism and a continued historical site of great contention,¹ despite the fact that Dresden was only one of many cities bombed throughout the course of the Second World War. As a result, the historical space in which Dresden continues to be remembered is part of a larger and more complex network of German memories in which Germans inflicted and experienced loss and suffering.

Memory of the Air War remained visible on the landscape in Dresden and East Germany, for which Dresden remained an “iconic representation of the destruction wrought by the Air War.”² Memory and commemorative practices in and about Dresden were shaped by socio-political influences as well as by media and literature written and published on the events of 13 to 15 February 1945. Reconstruction and building efforts further helped sustain the memories of this traumatic event while providing the East German state with the opportunity to showcase Soviet efforts in the city. Extensive reconstruction projects were also integrated into the memory of Dresden as a means to reinforce the GDR’s founding narrative of Soviet liberation and ongoing postwar support. In addition, keeping alive memories of the Dresden bombings provided a political opportunity to fault the destructive force of Western Imperialism. Official memory and commemoration efforts interacted with the city’s reconstruction, as a means to preserve and sustain the memory of the Dresden raids on the city’s landscape. East German memory of the Air War, in other words, was in part sustained by the state’s political

¹ Paul Addison and Jeremy Crang, *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 215.

² Brad Prager “Air War and Allegory” in Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch, *Bombs Away! Representations of the Air War Over Europe and Japan* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006), 25.

agenda as well as by the visibility of the impact of the Air War on the landscape, which was reemphasized by memorials constructed after the war. These particular sites of memory were also incorporated into the city's landscape via commemoration practices in Dresden.

Dresden was bombed more than once during the Second World War, yet the attack on the night of 13 February and the three raids that followed on the 14th and 15th are central to the memories of Dresden's destruction. According to the GDR narrative, Dresden was remembered as an imperialist attack by the West and employed as a capitalist opportunity to better their territorial position in central Europe after the war. Under Soviet influence, memory of the bombings of Dresden was directed towards the West and placed primary blame on the imperialist aggressors, including Nazi Germany, during the period of occupation, and after 1949, emphasis shifted to Great Britain and particularly the United States.

The framing of Dresden shifted from a focus on Nazi guilt and a reluctance to identify the Western Allies as the destroyers of Dresden to a distinct fixation on western culpability, with an emphasis on the United States, following the founding of the GDR and in time for Dresden's fifth anniversary. This framing further provided an opportunity for Germans to identify as victims of the bombing war as well as to protest the future use of aerial bombing through annual peace demonstrations. Twinning the city with Coventry also served as a means to commemorate mutual experiences of loss. In the last decades of the GDR, a loosening of control over public memory and practice allowed for more reflective memory practices, which are still recognizable today as the framework for memory following reunification has encouraged acknowledgement and remembrance of

the past. During these shifts in framing Dresden's memory, continuities in practice and tone have also remained. Several continuities were sustained by literature and local traditions, which further helped to shape the narrative and myths of the Dresden raids, and to explain what the city symbolizes and how Dresden is remembered today.

Remembrance of the bombings of Dresden has included both elements of change and continuity over the course of the decades from the final months of the Third Reich, to occupied Germany, to East and West Germany during the Cold War and unified Germany since 1990. As a result, the memory of Dresden is complex and compiled of various layers of memories and approaches to remembrance, including the extensive Cold War period, when East German memory was regulated and supposedly frozen. Upon closer inspection, however, a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between Dresden's memory landscape and the ways in which the Dresden raids were remembered and memorialized under the GDR appears.

Going beyond the immediate events of February 1945, this paper reflected on the roles of memory and history in examining how these elements were framed and shaped by the present, in this case, the bombing of one particular German city late in the war, by a divided and politicized Cold War climate. In pursuit of this objective, this thesis has discussed some of the ways in which East Germany commemorated, remembered, understood and tried to come to terms with the bombing of Dresden, by examining various ways in which the bombings of this city have been remembered and commemorated from the last months of the war into the subsequent Cold War decades of occupation and division. Thus, I have examined the various ways in which the bombings of Dresden have been memorialized as a direct result of the city's destruction in the last

months of the Second World War. In doing so, this paper has accessed how the memory and narrative of Dresden has shaped commemorative practices, how commemorations supported and preserved these memories as well as evaluating public and academic discourses on the February 1945 bombing raids.

In part, this study has attempted to contribute to a better understanding of the events in Dresden and how Dresden has been remembered, as well as testifying to the importance of memory and commemoration in historicizing past events. I also hope that I have contributed to a better understanding of how the bombings of Dresden have been shaped and framed over the last sixty-six years. These processes, however, are still very much underway in present-day Dresden as the city remains “a politicized, contested site [where] ‘contestants’ come from all over Germany and the world.” Dresden has been made into (and is still remembered as) a “symbol of the ‘pointless’ and sudden and complete destruction of an ‘innocent’ cultural icon” while still under Nazi rule, which was later reinforced and perpetuated by later regimes and groups that picked up on these narratives and themes.³

After sixty-six years, including forty years of division and Soviet presence, and after twenty years of reunification, Germany is still working through this past. At the same time, recent reconstruction and commemoration efforts have helped reinforce places in the city as spaces for peace, reconciliation and hope. It has taken decades to work towards healing the physical scars of Dresden’s landscape. While some date the ‘rebirth’⁴ of Dresden to the 2005 reopening of the Frauenkirche, city blocks devastated by

³ Eleanor Chiari, Mark Hatlie and Michael Prince, “Dresden – A Contested ‘Site of Memory.’” <http://sitesofmemory.twoday.net/stories/5516592>.

⁴ The notion that Dresden has been ‘reborn’ is borrowed from the title of Clayton and Russell’s, *Dresden: A City Reborn*, which is explained in the text’s final chapter.

the bombings are still under heavy reconstruction. At the same time, the visible memory of the bombing raids will be more difficult to see with the passage of time.

Shortly after the annual wreath laying ceremony in the Heidfriedhof on 13 February 2009, a dispute erupted when a young woman noticed that a nationalist party wreath was lying partially on top of the wreath from Dresden's Jewish community. When the young lady went to move the former wreath so that the latter was unobstructed, an elderly lady accused the young women of disrupting the memorial. After a short exchange of words and after many of those in attendance had left, a middle-aged man bent down and moved the wreath once more, remarking that all wreaths had a right to be seen. This recent wreath laying controversy demonstrates the ongoing conflict over how Dresden should be remembered, commemorated and treated historically, even generations later.⁵ By constructing and celebrating sites of the past on the landscape of the present, Germany continues to work at preserving and sustaining memories of the past, so they remain active and alive. The continued conflict over the memory of the Dresden bombings, however, continues to demonstrate the persistence and degree to which this event is still in the process of being historicized and dealt with, even seven decades later.

⁵ "Dresden – A Contested 'Site of Memory.'"

EPILOGUE

DRESDEN – A CONTESTED ‘SITE’ OF MEMORY

The events of 1989 and reunification a year later impacted the ways in which Germans confronted the legacy of the Third Reich. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the history of the Air War and the memory of suffering, destruction and loss underwent a process of renegotiation, change and integration alongside broader issues, including the history of the Second World War in general and separate postwar histories from 46 years of division. Following the dissolution of the GDR (1990), East Germans were confronted with alternative memories and histories of the past, which they collectively and individually chose to either integrate, adopt or reject West German traditions of remembering and commemorating the past – along with traditions of their own. As a result, narratives and official histories of this contentious and enduring past changed as well as maintained continuities with the East German past.

Consequently, the memory of Dresden was no longer regulated or politicized by the Cold War, which in turn allowed for multiple and conflicting memories of Dresden to enter the public sphere. Competing memories since reunification have also accompanied the commemoration of Dresden’s destruction, marking Dresden as a site, symbol and memory of intense controversy. Each year on Dresden’s days of commemorative celebrations (13 to 15 February), and for more than twenty years now, extreme political right-wing groups and Neo-Nazis have commemorated the bombings with “mourning marches” (*Trauermarsch*),¹ calling the destruction of Dresden a “German Hiroshima,”²

¹ “Protests on Dresden Anniversary.” *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 February 2010.

² David Crossland, “Extremists plan march on Dresden anniversary.” *The National*, 11 February 2010.

and appropriating the memory of Dresden to paint Germans as victims of the Second World War. Over the past two decades, these groups have demonstrated on 13 February, using Dresden as a “rally cry” to evoke memories of this night and marking the event by honouring those who died in the raids as German patriots.³

Pacifists and anti- Nazi activists, on the other hand, have commemorated Dresden by taking part in acts of resistance to denounce these right-wing/ Neo-Nazi demonstrations. Participating in counter-demonstrations, pacifists dispute the memories of right wing groups as a misappropriation of the bombings of Dresden and instead choose to remember the destruction of Dresden in a different way, by advocating a more moderate tone, reflective of the West German tradition, which acknowledges responsibility and recognizes the importance of remembrance.

During the fiftieth commemorative ceremonies (14 February 1995), the political left also took an opportunity to voice its own memory of the Dresden raids, in reaction to the efforts of the political right. At the *Katholische Hofkirche* (Catholic Court Church) memorial service, the left-wing opposition protested the memory of the Dresden dead as victims of the Allied bombers, calling instead for the blame to rest with the Nazis and the Third Reich.⁴ At this particular commemoration and others since reunification, both the political right and left have voiced their concerns over the history and memory of Dresden’s bombing, each advocating their own framework to honour and mourn the destruction and death of Dresden and its residents.

³ “On Dresden Anniversary, Massive Protest Against Neo-Nazi March,” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 February 2009.

⁴ Marshall De Bruhl, *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden* (New York: Random House, 2006), 294.

On the sixtieth anniversary celebrations (2005), members of a Dresden memory-initiative (c. 2004) working to preserve the memory of Dresden commented that, “hundreds of right-wing extremists exploited the symbolic character of the day for macabre self-glorification.”⁵ Pacifist, left and right wing groups for the past several years, however, have received official permission to hold demonstration marches along pre-planned routes through or near the city center. City officials hope that through such means they prevent politically opposed groups from meeting or coming into contact. This ongoing memory-battle between the political right, middle and left over Dresden further demonstrates the resilience and importance of this event to the citizens of Dresden and Germans several decades after the war ended.

Reflecting on the continuing importance of Dresden and the memory of its destruction, a recent *Historical Commission* report (2010) published that,

Remembrance surrounding the Allied air raids on Dresden – addressed symbolically by ways of the anniversary date 13th February – continues to possess topical importance in social-political disputes over historical images, concepts of society and identities.⁶

The “*Historikerkommission zu den Luftangriffen auf Dresden zwischen dem 13. und 15. Februar 1945*” (Historical Commission Report) was published last spring.⁷ Back in November 2004, the mayor of Dresden, Ingolf Roßberg (2001-2008), commissioned a historical report to investigate the bombings of Dresden in response to a public request put forward at an open forum discussion with citizens concerning the *Erinnerungskultur* (memory culture) in the city of Dresden. Endowed by the Dresden city council in January

⁵ Gerd Künzel., ed. *13. Februar. 60 Jahrestag der Zerstörung Dresdens Erinnern, gedenken, mahnen, versöhnen*. Translated by: Gary Bodily (Dresden: Union Druckerei GmbH, 2004), 51.

⁶ “Historical Commission: Dresden historical commission publishes final report.” City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. http://www.dresden.de/en/02/07/03/historical_commission.php, page 1 of 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, page 1 of 3.

2007, the results of the *Dresdener Historikerkommission*⁸ were published in print and online on 17 March 2010. The historical commission committee⁹ – some of whom double as members of the aforementioned Dresden memory-initiative – evaluated the success of the commission in its reconstruction of the human dimension of the raids and its contributions to the scientific portrayal of the historical events as well as to the “responsible remembrance of the fate of those who lost their lives in Dresden.”¹⁰

Part One of the *Historical Commission* investigated the current status on the numbers killed in the bombings of Dresden as the total number remains contested and wide-ranging, between 20,000 and 500,000 deaths.¹¹ Part Two of the commission investigated strafing attacks as based on eyewitness accounts. Although no evidence could be found for the low-flying strafing attacks, a total of 25,000 deaths has been officially acknowledged as a result of the four air raids from 13 to 15 February 1945. Finally, the third task of the commission was to investigate the memories of Dresden residents to see if parallels could be made to academic research efforts on Dresden, published over the last several decades. 1,314 persons documented their personal memories of the raids, including 90 biographical interviews.¹² The study showed that particular narratives and images of the raids are impermissible to generalizations, such as the high death toll and it also demonstrated the influence of public opinion and debates on personal memories.

⁸ Abbreviated name in German, hereafter referred to as the Historical Commission.

⁹ The *Dresdener Historikerkommission* Commission members include: Dr. Rolf-Dieter Müller, Götz Gergander, Dr. Horst Boog, Wolfgang Fleisher, Thomas Kübler, Matthias Neutzner, Dr. Rüdiger Overmans, Dr. Alexander von Plato, Friedrich Reichert, Nicole Schönherr, Dr. Helmut Schnatz, Dr. Thomas Westphalen, Dr. Thomas Widera.

¹⁰ “Historical Commission: Dresden historical commission publishes final report.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, page 3 of 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, page 3 of 3.

As a means to combat the misappropriation of the image and memory of Dresden, this commission report has contributed to the historical discourse on the bombings of Dresden. The commission, for example, reinforces the framing of the Dresden bombings by the four air raids that were executed by both the British and Americans between the 13th and 15th of February 1945 as a way to prevent further misappropriation of the bombings of Dresden as a single and destructive raid on the evening of the 13th, and at the same time as a predominantly American raid. In so doing, the report has created space for further commentary on the relationship between memory and history with regard to the raids over Dresden, and more generally, with regard to the relationship between memory, history and Germany's contentious past. Thus, the historical commission aims to provide a way to resolve the rumors, controversies and myths surrounding Dresden, in part by creating its own guidelines for remembrance.

In response to the misappropriation of the bombings of Dresden by growing extreme political right (and left) wing groups, local efforts in Dresden have also created a guideline for remembrance by asking for the active participation of residents to commemorate the memory of Dresden. In 2004, local residents founded and organized a collective called, "Dresden, 13 February – a Framework for Remembrance,"¹³ which asked for a public and collective stand on the memory of Dresden. To support this effort, the collective created an initiative advocating a framework for the memory of Dresden. Titled "Looking Back, Standing Up For My Dresden,"¹⁴ the collective uses this memory-

¹³ "A framework of Remembrance: The Text." *A Framework for Remembrance*. City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. <http://13februar.dresden.de/en/history-symbol/framework/text.php>. Hereafter referred to as the Dresden Collective.

¹⁴ "Appeal regarding 13 February 1945. Looking back, Standing up. For my Dresden." City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/appeal.php>.

framework to establish and define how and what they choose to remember of the Dresden raids.¹⁵ The initiative also encourages others to adopt this framework as a countermeasure to political right wing advocates who have adopted the bombing of Dresden for their own political agenda by framing the raids as “terror attacks.” This framework of memory, in other words, was created to help express the will of the majority of the people of Dresden and to serve as a starting point for as broad and open a discourse on the subject as possible.

The primary intention behind this initiative was and remains to combat the misappropriation of February 1945 by political extremist groups (particularly the right) with the goal of commemorating the 13th of February as a starting point and platform to learn and commit to peace and humanity, to continue the tradition of commemoration and remembrance in an “analytical and self-critical manner,” and to continue “our peaceful relations with the peoples who once opposed us and encourage further rapprochement.”¹⁶ This initiative also invites “everyone who wants Dresden to be open to the world, a city which is aware of the responsibility arising from its history,”¹⁷ to take an active part in the Framework for Remembrance.

Adopted by the city in 2008 as its official memory, with the support of Dresden’s mayor Helma Orosz, 13 February has been commemorated in the name of “Looking Back, Standing up for my Dresden,”¹⁸ which is moderate in tone and reflects the West German tradition of acknowledging responsibility and encouraging remembrance. This initiative asks residents and friends of the city to respectfully honour the victims of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. Article Title, see: <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/appeal.php>.

National Socialism and the Second World War, as a war that was *initiated* by Germany. The initiative also sets out to remember the destruction of Dresden's city center from the 13th to 15th of February 1945, rather than just the British raid on the night of the 13th; to remember the death of tens of thousands and the suffering of countless survivors.¹⁹ It asks the public to remember the events leading up to the Dresden bombings, to “remember the tyranny of National Socialism – such as those committed against the Jewish citizens of the city. How the story of Dresden's destruction has been treated: how it has gained worldwide symbolic meaning and been used for various political purposes... and also to the symbols and steps aimed at peace and reconciliation over the past 65 years.”²⁰

The members of the collective also define the importance of remembrance and advocate what the initiative rejects.²¹ This community-based initiative chooses to remember because it recognizes the importance of memory as a way to honour the right of expressing remembrance and mourning to those who have suffered. It also demonstrates continuity in a local initiative tradition in which Dresdners have taken an active part in shaping and rebuilding their city and the memory of its destruction. The initiative also remembers because “there is a rightful place for the memories and mourning of those affected,” and it advises that first-hand witnesses have valuable and educational experiences to pass on to younger generations, especially the “yearning for peace and the hope and vitality of reconstruction.”²² Lastly, the initiative remembers out of a duty and obligation to stand up for peace, against violence and war: “We remember

¹⁹ “A Framework of Remembrance: The Text.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Appeal regarding 13 February 1945. Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden.”

²² Ibid.

because confronting our history during National Socialism and the war shows how we are responsible for creating a civilized, democratic, peaceful society.”²³

This initiative, in other words, functions as a local platform to stand up against “people misappropriating the commemoration to play down the crimes of National Socialist German society from 1933 to 1945,” as well as opposing those who misuse the victims of Dresden to “balance out the burden of guilt.”²⁴ The aim is to stand up against any anti-democratic ideologies, attitudes and actions seeking to exploit the commemoration of Dresden and to fight against “revanchism, incitement to racial hatred and violence-inducing propaganda.”²⁵

This collective memory endeavor also demonstrates the effort and degree to which locals are attempting to confront the legacy of the Third Reich in their own city.²⁶ As such, it recognizes that the war started in Germany and takes responsibility for Dresden’s role in waging it.²⁷ During the commemorative celebrations in 2009, the mayor of Dresden, Helma Orosz, demonstrated her support for the local initiative by addressing themes of mourning and loss, but also acknowledging that the war started in and from Germany, and that National Socialism was the ultimate cause of the firebombing

²³ “Dresden, 13th February – A Framework for Remembrance.” City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. http://www.dresden.de/en/02/07/03/c_01_remembrance.php.

²⁴ “Appeal regarding 13 February 1945. Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ In the introduction of *Beyond Berlin*, Jaskot and Rosenfeld explain the purpose of their text as a way to shift focus on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* from specific sites and particular histories to dealing with inhabitants confronting the legacy of Nazism in their respective localities. See, Gavriel Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot., eds. *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 1. Although Dresden is given a whole chapter in this edited collection, where Susanne Veas-Gulani argues to an extent that Dresden’s memory of the Dresden bombing is used as a way to avoid confronting the legacy of Nazism in Dresden, I argue that the Dresden collective is an important step for creating public dialogue whereby Dresdner’s can actively and openly discuss the memory and history of Dresden’s bombing and participation in the Third Reich. As long as this dialogue remains open, not static and rigid and avoids becoming bogged down in political discourse, this initiative can support further discussion on Dresden and its National Socialist past.

²⁷ “Appeal regarding 13 February 1945. Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden.”

Catastrophe. She also said that the city must no longer tolerate Neo-Nazis who defile “the memory of the dead by misusing them for their falsification of history.”²⁸

Thousands of nationalists and Neo-Nazis that year, as in others previous, however, “marched in silence through the city on a pre-approved route that didn’t take them through the very center of the city, but through areas near the center.”²⁹ Banners carried showed images of American bombers and the silhouettes of ruins with slogans carrying messages of accusation, protest against Allied bombing, German victimization, anti-capitalist and anti-American sentiment. Counter-demonstrators included a coalition of unions, churches, the political left, socialist parties,³⁰ and social organizations. They started a counter-commemoration under the title “Geh-Denken,” referring to the German term, to commemorate (*gedenken*), but with the literal meaning “to walk and think.”³¹ Both groups marched along pre-approved routes to prevent their meeting. Police and reporters were also present to maintain order and document the event, revealing to a great extent the persistence and enduring legacy of this historic event. These demonstrations also attest to the dynamics of remembrance in Dresden’s physical environment.

COMMEMORATING 65 YEARS, FEBRUARY 2010 AND FEBRUARY 2011, LOOKING FORWARD

February 2010 marked the sixth-fifth anniversary of the bombings of Dresden as well as signaling a departure from the usual concurrent yet divergent commemorations

²⁸ Eleanor Chiari, Mark Hatlie and Michael Prince, “Dresden – A Contested ‘Site of Memory.’” <http://sitesofmemory.twoday.net/stories/5516592/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Although in recent years the political left has protested official commemorations of Dresden’s bombing, in recent years the left has joined in coalition with the city to help counter-demonstrate against the growing right.

³¹ Sites of Memory, <http://sitesofmemory.twoda.net/stories/5516592>.

held by pacifist and right-wing groups. As part of the commemorative ceremonies last year, the city asked for 10,000 residents and friends of Dresden to join hands on 13 February to create a human chain symbolically protecting the restored *Altstadt* from right-wing protest groups. Helma Orosz, arguing in support of the collective's initiative "Dresden, 13 February – a Framework for Remembrance," stated that, "it is no longer enough to silently remember the victims of the bombings."³² Instead, participants joined hands to take an active part in the human chain campaign,³³ to commemorate Dresden along the lines of the collective's memory-framework. Each participant was identified with a white rose pinned to the left side of his or her jacket. Wearing the white rose symbolized individual participation in commemorating Dresden and looking forward to overcoming war, racism and violence.³⁴ Through these practices, the city aims to prevent 13 February 1945 from being used to promote anti-democratic ideas, attitudes and actions, with the hope that it instead promote "commemoration and remembrance in an analytical and self critical manner."³⁵ City officials also seek widespread acceptance of an official memory framework for February 1945 to prevent future misappropriation of this historic event. The Dresden collective has clearly influenced memory and commemorative practices in Dresden in the last few years. In future commemoration ceremonies, it will be interesting to see how and if the *Historical Commission* – which works in conjunction with the Dresden collective – plays a similar role in shaping future practices and present day reflections on the bombing raids.

³² "Human Chain Campaign." City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/human-chain.php>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "White Rose" City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/roses.php>.

³⁵ "Appeal regarding 13 February 2010: Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden." *What we want*, from City of Dresden, Press and Public Relations Office. <http://13februar.dresden.de/en/appeal.php>

This year, February 2011 marked the sixty-sixth anniversary and commemorative celebrations of the Dresden raids. On Sunday morning, the 13th of February, commemorations started with the traditional wreath laying ceremony in the Heidfriedhof followed by a repetition (and new tradition) of last year's human chain campaign, creating a 3km long "living shield,"³⁶ of 17,000 participants, protecting the city – including the *Altstadt* and *Neustadt* – from hundreds of Neo-Nazi-protesters who gathered in Dresden's main railway station. Police forces were stationed outside, bracing for possible clashes between Neo-Nazis and anti-fascist demonstrators. Joining this year's commemorative celebration was also a message of appreciation and thanks from the city to the "people whose passion, efforts and sacrifice have turned our ruined city back into a place of culture and happiness."³⁷

Throughout the Cold War period, Dresden was a place of memory for more than German suffering inflicted by the Allies. Today, in a post-Cold War world, Dresden is a place of remembrance for Allied actions and German suffering, as well as a place of reconciliation, peace and reflection. Since reunification, memory and commemorative practices in the city have carried over in large part many of the sentiments and traditions of commemorating and remembering the Dresden bombings from East Germany's postwar years. Looking forward, the city and its memory initiative will continue to combat the misappropriation of the Dresden bombings by political extremists as well as advocate remembrance of the bombings and create new commemorative traditions as a way to arrange a new layer of history and memory onto a complex and developing memory culture.

³⁶ Appeal regarding 13 February 1945. Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden."

³⁷ Ibid. No clear mention of who exactly is responsible for these efforts of rebuilding and revitalizing the city but rather a general message of recognition and thanks from the city.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

CBC Digital Archives Online. Reporter: Les Powell, "The Bombing of Dresden." Radio Broadcast, 14 February 1945. Duration 6:15 min.
[http:// archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/15845/](http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/15845/)

Das Bundesarchiv, Digitales Bildarchiv. (BDBa)

Bild 146-1994-041-07, Fotograf: Ang, 1945/1946 ca.

Bild 183-62210-0001, Fotograf: Löwe, 14 Februar 1959.

Bild 183-S93768, Fotograf: Klügel, 24 Februar 1950.

Bild 183-S93770, Fotograf: Klügel, 24 Februar 1950.

Bild 183-U0816-0010, Fotograf: Löwe, 1949.

Bild PO 19711, Fotograf: Frankl, A., 1930.39 ca.

Militarhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr. Dresden, Germany. (MhM)

Künzel, Gerd., ed. *13. Februar. 60 Jahrestag der Zerstörung Dresdens Erinnern, gedenken, mahnen, versöhnen*. Translated by: Gary Bodily. Dresden: Union Druckerei GmbH, 2004.

"Das Verbrechen von Dresden: Eine Dokumentation von Madfred Hausotter." *Der Schlesier*. 21 February 2003.

Erinnerung an Dresden. Author unknown.

"Erinnerungen nach 50 Jahren," *Königsbrücker Stadtanzeiger*, Nr. 53. 1 March 1995.

Report on the Dresden Air Raids. "Sachsen: Dresden, Chemnitz, Leipzig, Zwickau, Plauen – Sachsen im Bombenkrieg (vol. 3) Bombenkrieg über Sachsen."

"Zeitzeugen – Archiv – Bomben." Verzeichnis selbstverfasster Zeitzeugenbrichte, Book 1, A thru G.

"Zeitzeugen – Archiv – Krieg übe Zeitze." Verzeichnis selbstverfasster Zeitzeugenbrichte, Book 2, H thru L.

“Zeitzeugen – Archiv – Sachsen.” Verzeichnis selbstverfasster
Zeitzeugenbrichte, Book 3, M thru S.

“Zeitzeugen – Archiv – 1944-1945.” Verzeichnis selbstverfasster
Zeitzeugenbrichte, Book 4, T thru Z.

“Zeugen der Bombennacht gesucht.” *Morgenpost am Sonntag, Zeitung für
Sachsen*. 8 Februar 2004.

Stadtarchiv, Dresden, Germany. (StADD)

The National Archives, London, United Kingdom. (NA)

AIR 34/606

Immediate Interpretation report No. K 4297

Interpretation Report No. K 4171 Summary

Interpretation Report No. K 4171

Supplement to Immediate Interpretation Report No. K 4297

Supplement to immediate interpretation Report No. K 4020

Supplement to immediate interpretation report No. K 3742

AIR 34/616

AIR 40/1680

CAB 146/351

FO 371/169329

FO 371/97998

Newspaper Articles

The New York Times

“2,000 Big Bombers Rock Nazi Targets.” *The New York Times*, 20 February 1945.

“A February Firestorm that Dresden can’t forget.” *The New York Times*, 30 January 1985.

“A Symbol of War’s Horror Is Reborn in Dresden as a Testament to Hope and Healing.”
The New York Times, 30 October 2005.

Cowell Alan. “With Pain and Guilt, Dresden Marks Firebombing.” *The New York Times*,
11 February 1995.

“Dresden Levelled, Berlin Radio Says.” *The New York Times*, 5 March 1945.

“Dresden, Once Reich Pride, Erased By Bombs, German Radio Asserts.” *The New York
Times*, 5 March 1945.

“Dresden, Rebuilding, Is Still Seared by Memory of ’45 Firebombing.” *The New York Times*, 14 February 1970.

“Germans Revisit War’s Agony, Ending a Taboo.” *The New York Times*, 15 March 2003.

Gruson, Sydney. “Briton’s Book Revives Dispute Over Allied Attack on Dresden.” *New York Times*, 19 May 1963.

Gruson, Sydney. “U.S Still Blamed For Dresden Raid.” *The New York Times*, 22 October 1959.

“Rail City Blasted to Help Russians.” *The New York Times*, 16 February 1945.

“Rail City Blasted.” *The New York Times*, 16 February 1945.

“Reds Mark Dresden Raid.” *The New York Times*, 9 January 1955.

“U.S Lays Dresden Bombing to Soviet Plea, Spoiling German Reds’ ‘Hate America’ Line.” *The New York Times*, 12 February 1953.

“With Pain and Guilt, Dresden Marks Firebombing.” *The New York Times*, 11 February 1995.

Wilcke, Gerd. “Dresden’s Art Center is Left in Ruins from 1945 Bombing.” *The New York Times*, 9 March 1963.

The London Times

Kee, Robert. “Bombing of Dresden.” *The Times*, 7 March 1985.

“Bombing of Dresden as war “crime.” *The Times*, 14 February 1950.

“Britons in Dresden for Rebuilding.” *The Times*, 17 March 1965.

“Demonstrations in Dresden.” *The Times*, 14 February 1951.

“Dresden Bombing Atonement.” *The Times*, 15 March 1965.

“Dresden Raids as Propaganda.” *The Times*, 14 February 1955.

“Smashing Blows at Dresden.” *The Times*, 15 February 1945.

“The Dresden Raids.” *The Times*, 7 July 1966.

“The Wreckage of Dresden.” *The Times*, 25 January 1946.

Misc. newspaper articles

“Extremists Plan March on Dresden Anniversary.” *The National*, 11 February 2010.

“Right-Wing Extremism.” *Deutsche Welle*, February 14, 2009.

“Right-Wing Extremism.” *Spiegel Online International*, 16 February 2009.

“Protests on Dresden Anniversary.” *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 February 2010.

The Daily Telegraph London. 21 November 2002.

Warnatsch, Rudi. “Es waren die Vorboten der Zerstörung.” 12 February 2003.

Cemeteries, Memorial sites

Heidfriedhof Cemetery and Memorial. Dresden, Germany.

Frauenkirche Memorial, Dresden, Germany.

Memorial to the Trümmerfrauen, Dresden, Germany.

Altmarkt Memorial, Dresden, Germany.

Published Sources

Abschlussbericht der Historikerkommission zu den Luftangriffen auf Dresden zwischen dem 13. Und 15. Februar 1945. Edited by Matthias Neutzner in cooperation with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schnatz. Dresden, 2010.

Addison, Paul and Crang, Jeremy A. *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden 1945*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006.

Air Force Historical Studies Office. *Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February 1945 Bombing of Dresden*. Prepared by: USAF Historical Division, Research Studies Institute Air University. N.d.
<http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/PopTopics/dresden.htm>

Allen, H.R. *The Legacy of Lord Trenchard*. London: Cassell, 1972.

Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote. *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and discourse since 1990*. New York: Camden House, 2006.

Baldwin, Peter. ed. *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historian's Debate*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.

- Barnouw, Dagmar. *The War in the Empty Air: Victims, Perpetrators, and Postwar Germans*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Bartov, Omer. "Germany as Victim." *New German Critique*. No 80 (Spring-Summer 2000), 29-40.
- Bashow, David L. *None but the Brave: The Essential Contributions of RAF Bomber Command To Allied Victory During the Second World War*. Kingston: Canadian Defense Academy Press, 2009.
- Bergander, Götz. *Dresden im Luftkrieg: Vorgeschichte Zerstörung, Flogen*. Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1994.
- Berger, Stefan and Laporte, Norman. *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010.
- Bernhard, Ludwig. *Dresden: Ein Europäisches Märchen*. Velbert: Blick&Bild Verlag, 1969.
- Bernstein, Richard. "Germans Revisit War's agony, ending a Taboo." *The New York Times*. March 15, 2003.
- Bessel, Richard. *Germany, 1945: From War to Peace*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.
- Biddle, Tami Davis. "Bombing by the Square Yard: Sir Arthur Harris at War, 1942-1945." *The International Historical Review*, 21 (1999), 626-64.
- Biddle, Tami Davis. "Reality, History and Memory," in *The Journal of Military History* 72 (April 2008), 413-449.
- Bidinian, Larry J. *The combined allied bombing offensive against the German civilian, 1942-1945*. Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976.
- Churchill, Winston. *Thoughts and Adventures*. London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd, 1932.
- Clayton, Anthony and Russell, Alan., eds. *Dresden: A City Reborn*. New York: Berg, 1999.
- Connelly, Mark. "The British people, the press and the Strategic air campaign against Germany, 1939-1945." *Contemporary British History*, vol. 16 (2002).
- Cooper, Alan W. *Target Dresden*. Bromley: Independent Books, 1995.
- Copp, DeWitt S. *Forged in Fire: Strategy and Decisions in the Air War over Europe, 1940-1945*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1982.

- Corwin, Elizabeth C. "The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German accounts, East and West" in *UCLA History Journal*, 8 (1987), 71-96.
- Craven, Wesley Frank and Cate, James Lea., eds. *The Army Air Forces in World War Two (volume 3), Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Crane, Conrad C. *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993.
- De Bruhl, Marshall. *Firestorm: Allied Airpower and the Destruction of Dresden*. New York: Random House, 2006.
- Diefendorf, Jeffry M. *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Douhet, Giulio. *The Command of the Air*. Translated by Dino Ferrai. London: Faber and Faber, 1943.
- "Dresden Historical Commission – Final Report." Landeshauptstadt Dresden. 17 March 2010. www.dresden.de/en/02/07/03/historical_comission.php
- Ehlers, Robert S. Jr. *Targeting the Third Reich: Air Intelligence and the Allied Bombing Campaigns*. Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2009.
- Faber, Harold., ed. *Luftwaffe: A History*. New York: Times Books, 1977.
- Feuchter, Georg W. *Der Luftkrieg*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1964.
- Fisher, Jaimey. *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeducation, and Reconstruction after the Second World War*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007.
- Friedrich, Jörg. *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*. Edited by Allison Brown. New York: Columbia University, 2006.
- Garrett, Stephan. *Ethics and Airpower in World War Two: The British Bombing of German Cities*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Glaser, Hermann. *The Rubble Years: The Cultural Roots of Postwar Germany, 1945-48*. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1986.
- Gobbels, Josef. *Die Tagebücher des Doktor Gobbels: Geschichte und Vermarktung*. Ed. Peter-Ferdinand Hoch. Hamburg: Facta Oblita, 1988.
- Gray, William Glenn. *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate Eastern Germany, 1949-1969*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

- Gretzschel, Matthias. *Als Dresden im Feuersturm versank*. Hamburg: Ellert & Richter, 2004.
- Hannes Heer, Walter Manoschek, Alexander Pollak and Rut Wodak, eds. *The Discursive Construction of History: Remembering the Wehrmacht's War of Annihilation*. Translated by Steven Fligelstone. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Hansen, Randall. *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany 1942-45*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2008.
- Harris, Sir Arthur. *Bomber Offensive*. London: Collins Clear-Type, 1947.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. ed. *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Hastings, Max. *Bomber Command*. London: Michael Joseph, 1979.
- Hatlie, Dr. Mark R. *Sites of Memory Historical Markers, Memorials, Monuments, and Cemeteries*. <http://sites-of-memory.de/main/index.html>
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICMOS), *The Venice Charter 1964*. <http://www.international.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/index.html>. 6 July 2005.
- Irving, David. *The Destruction of Dresden*. London: William Kimber, 1963.
- Irwing-Zarecka, Iwona. *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994.
- Kattago, Siobhan. *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*. Westport: Prager Publishers, 2001.
- Keesing's Research Report. *Germany and Eastern Europe Since 1945: From the Potsdam Agreement to Chancellor Brandt's "Ostpolitik,"* by Charles Scribner's Sons. New York: Keesing's Publications, 1973.
- Kennedy, David M. *World War II Companion*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007.
- Knell, Hermann. *To Destroy a City: Strategic Bombing and its human consequences in World War II*. Cambridge: K&P Publishing, 2003.
- Langenbacher, Eric. "The return of memory: new discussions about German suffering in World War II." *German Politics and Society*. September 22, 2003

- Landeshauptstadt Dresden. Press and Public Relations Office. City, Administration and Council, History of the City. "13th February - Anniversary of the destruction of Dresden" and "A Framework for Remembrance."
http://www.dresden.de/en/02/07/c_035.php
- Lawler, Justus George. "Terror Bombing: Shattering the immunity of civilians has become the very definition of terrorism." *America*, August-September (2006), 27-30.
- Levine, Alan J. *The Strategic Bombing of Germany, 1940-45*. London: Praeger Publishers, 1992.
- Löffler, Fritz. *Dresden: So wie es war*. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972.
- Lowe, James Trapier. *A Philosophy of Air Power*. New York: University Press of America, 1984.
- MacIsaac, David. *Strategic Bombing in World War Two: The Story of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1976.
- Margalit, Gilad. *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory. Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War Two*. Translated by Haim Watzman. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Mason, Herbert Molly Jr. *The United States Air Force: A Turbulent History*. New York: Mason & Charter, 1976.
- Maurer, Maurer. *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*. Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1983.
- McCaffery, Dan. *Battlefields in the Air*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co, 1995.
- McKee, Alexander. *Dresden 1945: The Devil's Tinderbox*. London: Souvenir Press, 1982.
- Meilinger, Phillip S. "Trenchard and "Morale Bombing": The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine Before World War II" in *The Journal of Military History*. 60, 2 (April 1996), 243-270.
- Messenger, Charles. *"Bomber" Harris and the Strategic Bombing Offensive, 1939-1945*. London: Arms and Amour Press, 1984.
- Mierzejewski, Alfred. *Hitler's Trains: The German National Railway and the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

- Mierzejewski, Alfred. *The Collapse of the German War Economy, 1944-1945: Allied Air Power and the German National Railway*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr in Dresden. *Sachsen im Bombenkrieg "und nun auch Dresden"* (8). Dresden: Blick von der Kreuzkirche zum Neumarkt, 2005.
- Mitchell, William. *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power – Economy and Military*. London: Kennikat Press, 1925.
- Moeller, Robert. "Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II's legacies." *History and Memory*. Vol. 17, ½ (2005), 147-196.
- Moeller, Robert. "Sinking Ships, the Lost Heimat and Broken Taboos: Günter Grass and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 12 (2003), 147-181.
- Moeller, Robert G. *War Stories: The Search for a usable past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Moses, Dirk A. *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Müller, Rolf-Dieter, Schönherr, Nicole and Widera, Thomas., eds. *Die Zerstörung Dresdens 13. Bis 15 Februar 1945*. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010.
- Neillands, Robin. *The Bomber War: Arthur Harris and the Allied Bomber Offensive, 1939-1945*. London: John Murray Publishers, 2001.
- Neumann, Klaus. *Shifting Memories: The Nazi Past in the New Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Neutzner, Matthias. "Appeal regarding 13 February 2010: Looking back, standing up. For my Dresden." <http://www.13februar.dresden.de/en/appeal.php>
- Neutzner, Matthias, editor. In collaboration with Nicole Schönherr, Alexander von Plato and Helmut Schmatz. *Historikerkommission Dresden*. Landeshauptstadt Dresden. 17 March 2010.
http://www.dresden.de/media/pdf/infoblaetter/Historikerkommission_Dresden1945_Abschlussbericht_V1_14a.pdf.
- Niven, Bill. *Facing the Nazi past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

- Niven, Bill., ed. *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Niven, Bill and Paver, Chloe., ed. *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Noakes, Jeremy. *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, 1921-1933*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Nolan, Mary. "Germans as Victims During the Second World War: Air Wars, Memory Wars." *Central European History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2005), 7-40.
- Overy, R.J. *The Air War, 1939-1945*. London: Europa Publications, 1980.
- Overy, Richard. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Third Reich*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Overy, R.J. "Transportation and Rearmament in the Third Reich." *The Historical Journal*. xvi, 2 (1973), 389-409.
- Peter, Richard. *Dresden: Eine Kamera Klagt An*. Berlin: Fliegennkoph, 1949.
- Press Release. "Dresden historical commission publishes final report." http://www.dresden.de/en/02/07/03/historical_commission.php.
- Prince, Michael P. *War and German Memory: Excavating the Significance of the Second World War in German Cultural Consciousness*. New York: Lexington Books, 2009.
- Robbins, Michael. "The Third Reich and its Railways: a review article." *Journal of Transport History*. 5, 2 (Sept 1979), 83- 90.
- Rosenfeld, Gavriel D., and Jaskot, Paul B. eds. *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Ross, Stewart Halsey. *Strategic Bombing by the United States in World War II: The Myths and the Facts*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2003.
- Rusineck, Bernd A. *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe: Terror, Illegalität, Widerstand Köln 1944/5*. Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf Universität, 1989.
- Saward, Dudley. "*Bomber*" *Harris the story of Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir Arthur Harris, Bt, GCB, OBE, AFC, LLD, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Bomber Command, 1942-1945*. London: Cassell, 1984.

- Schmidt, Michael. *Der Untergang des alten Dresden in der Bombennacht vom. 13/14 Februar 1945*. Dresden: Sonnenblumen-Verlag, 2008.
- Schmitz, Helmut., ed. *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*. New York: Rodopi, 2007.
- Sebald, W.G. *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Translated by Anthea Bell. New York: Random house, 2003.
- Sider, Gerald and Smith, Gavin, eds. *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997).
- Stahl, Walter. *The Politics of Postwar Germany*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.
- Stanley II, Col. Roy M. (USAF) *World War II: Photo Intelligence*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981.
- Szejnmann, Claus-Christian. *Nazism in Central Germany: The Brownshirts in 'Red' Saxony*. New York: Berghan, 1999.
- Taylor, Frederick. *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.
- Ten Dyke, Elizabeth A. *Dresden: Paradoxes of Memory in History*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- “The Changing Legacy of 1945 in Germany: A Round-Table Discussion between Doris Bergen, Volker Berghahn, Robert Moeller, Dirk Moses and Dorothee Wierling.” Forum. *German History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (2005), 519-546.
- The Dresden Trust*. 7 January 2010. <http://dresdentrust.net/dresdentrust.html>
- The Strategic Air War Against Germany, 1939-1945. Report of the British Bombing Survey Unit*. Introduction by Sebastian Cox. London: Frank Cass, 1998.
- Verrier, Anthony. *The Bomber Offensive*. London: B.T Batsford, 1967.
- Von Oven, Wilfred. *Finale Furioso: Mit Goebbels bis zum Ende*. Tübingen: Grabert-Verlag, 1974.
- Wakelam, Randall T. *The Science of Bombing: Operational Research in RAF Bomber Command*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009.
- Webster, Charles and Frankland, Noble. *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945*. Volume III: Victory. London: Frank Cass, 1961.
- Webster, Charles and Frankland, Noble. *The Strategic Air Offensive Against German, 1939-1945*. Volume IV. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1961.

Weinberg, Gerhard L. *A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Werrell, Kenneth P. "The Strategic Bombing of Germany in World War Two: Costs and Accomplishments." *Journal of American History*. 73, 3 (1986), 702-13.

Wilms, Wilfried and Rasch, William. *Bombs Away! Representations of the Air War Over Europe and Japan*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006.

Winter, Jay and Robert, Jean-Louise., eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919. Volume 2, A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Wittlinger, Ruth. "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?" *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 14:3, 2006, 201-212.
<http://www.informaworld.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/smpp/section?content=a762387860&fulltext=713240928>