

CORPSES OF MASS VIOLENCE AND GENOCIDE: DESTRUCTION, IDENTIFICATION, (RE)CONCILIATION



LECTURES BY

ELISABETH ANSTETT
(ÉCOLE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES)

JEAN-MARC DREYFUS
(MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY)

May 23, 2013

10:00-14:00 hours

Room María Moliner, 1F8

Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, CSIC

C/Albasanz, 26-28, Madrid

Metro Ciudad Lineal & Suanzes

Permanent Seminar

Faces and Traces of Violence

Project "The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain:
A decade of Exhumations" (CS02009-09681)

Project 7PM ITN Marie Curie "Sustainable Peace Building" (238589)

CSIC Research Line "Justice: Memory, Narration & Culture" (JUSMENACU)

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(RE)CONCILIATION**

PERMANENT SEMINAR FACES AND TRACES OF VIOLENCE

MAY 23, 2013

10:00 - 14:00 HOURS

ROOM MARÍA MOLINER (1F8) - CCHS-CSIC - MADRID

PROGRAMME

10:00 - 10:15 Welcome by Francisco Ferrándiz

10:15 – 11:00 Élisabeth Anstett & Jean-Marc Dreyfus

Presentation of the research programme: *Corpses of Mass Violence and Genocide*

In Europe and all over the world, mass violence and genocides have been a structural feature of the 20th century. Our research programme, Corpses of Mass Violence and Genocide, aims at questioning the social legacy of mass violence by studying how different societies have coped with the first consequence of mass destruction: the mass production of cadavers. What status and what value have indeed been given to corpses? What symbolic, social, religious, economic or political uses have been made of dead bodies in occupied Europe, Soviet Union, Serbia, Spain but also Rwanda, Argentina or Cambodia, both during and after the massacres? Bringing together perspectives of social anthropology, law and history, and raising the three main issues of destruction, identification and (re)conciliation, this research programme conducted by anthropologist Elisabeth Anstett and historian Jean-Marc Dreyfus, will enlighten how various social and cultural treatments of dead bodies simultaneously challenge common representations, legal practices and morality. Programme outputs will therefore open and strengthen the field of genocide studies by providing proper intellectual and theoretical tools for a better understanding of mass violence's aftermaths in today societies. This research programme, that has started in February 2012 and will develop over four years, is financed through a grant of the European Research Council.

11:00 – 11:45 debate

11:45 - 12:15 coffee break

12:15 - 12:45 Jean-Marc Dreyfus

A forgotten "memorial enterprise": the French exhumations in Germany after World War II, 1945-1958

12:45 - 13:15 Élisabeth Anstett

Long time missing corpses: soviet mass violence and bodies' disappearance

13:15 – 14:00 debate

14:00 - 16:00 lunch at the CCHS-CSIC

A forgotten “memorial enterprise”: the French exhumations in Germany after World War II, 1945-1958

Jean-Marc Dreyfus (Manchester University (UK)) / jean-marc.dreyfus@manchester.ac.uk

French memories of World War II were constructed nationally around three themes: the glorious gesture of the Free France around General de Gaulle, the Resistance and the deportation. We know now, after decades of research, that 76 000 Jews were deported from France to the East, mostly to Auschwitz and Sobibor, and that 85 000 Resistance fighters were deported to the concentration camps of Germany. In various shapes, this tripartite memory has persisted till today. It is the most surprising to see how deeply forgotten is a major French enterprise of the post-war years, namely the systematic search for human remains of deportees all over Germany, their identification using French and German forensic methods and the repatriation to France of corpses that have been reclaimed by family members. This was a state endeavour, at the state's expense. Bodies which were not claimed by families were left in Germany, although reburied in military style “war-grave” cemeteries on the sites of the major concentration camps. The Commission answered to the minister for veterans and victims of war, but also fell within the purview of the foreign ministry following the signing of the Franco-German agreement of 24 October 1954. The bodies were exhumed en masse (70 000 were handled) and placed in a specially adapted tent for individual identification. The present contribution seeks to give an account of the Commission's work, provide statistics relating to the vast amount of work it carried out, and look at how the bodies were treated. The presentation will analyse the forensic interpretation of the exhumations and argue that this enterprise, though the result of pressures and demands made by families and by survivors' organisation, was an attempt to “renationalise” the corpses, the French state showing in that way its re-empowerment after four years of occupation and submission to the Third Reich.

Long time missing corpses: soviet mass violence and bodies' disappearance

Elisabeth Anstett (CNRS (Iris, Paris, France)) / Elisabeth.Anstett@ehess.fr

During the socialist era, the Soviet Government set up a vast system of forced labor camps, overseen by a central administration: the Gulag. Between 1918 and 1989, more than 20 million Soviet citizens from all ethnic, religious and social backgrounds were sentenced to forced labor and detained within this system. Even if the number of executions “as such” as been limited (800 000 for the Stalinist period, and a few thousands more before 1930 and after 1953), historians of the Gulag thus consider that two millions of detainees have died in custody. Their corpses have never been return to their families, nor have these last been put in situation of being able to identify the true fate as much as the place of burial of their relatives.

In nowadays post soviet Russia, many of these human remains and mass graves are resurfacing, putting the society and the State in situation of having to deal for the first time with the missing corpses of Gulag's victims.

Focusing on this resurfacing process, I will argue that the administrative, legal and symbolic treatment of victims dead bodies -threw proper administrative instructions of early Soviet State, various burial practices (such as anonymous tombs, extensive use of mass grave, occasional use of mass-cremation), bureaucratic practices of denial of their location but also contemporary judicial practices aiming to avoid giving any legal status to Gulag's human remains often considered by local prosecutors as ‘archeological artifacts with no commercial value’- reveals the destruction side of soviet forced labor camp project. It obliges us, also, to consider the long-lasting effect of mass violent practices in contemporary Europe.

SPEAKERS

Dr. Jean-Marc Dreyfus is Reader in Holocaust Studies at the University of Manchester. He has extensively written on the economic aspects of the Holocaust in Western Europe (Aryanisation and looting) and the post-war restitution and compensation policies. His book on three labor camps in Paris, co-authored with S. Gensburger, was released in English in September 2011 by Berghahn Books: *Nazi Labor Camps in Paris* (French edition, Fayard, 2003). Jean-Marc Dreyfus is the co-editor of the *Dictionary of the Holocaust* (co-editor: Edouard Husson, Georges Bensoussan, and Joel Kotek). His current research is two folded: he is studying the role of French diplomats in the aftermath of the Holocaust and is the co-director of the ERC project “Corpses of mass violence and genocide”.

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Dr Elisabeth Anstett (LLM La Sorbonne, PhD Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) is social anthropologist, Permanent Research Fellow at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the PI of the project CORPSES OF MASS VIOLENCE AND GENOCIDE. Her research interests concern anthropology of violence, anthropology of memory and social uses of material culture. She is the author of (with Jean-Marc Dreyfus, eds), *Cadavres impensables, cadavres impensés, approches méthodologiques du traitement des corps dans les violences de masse et les génocides* (Paris, Pétra, 2012); (with Luba Jurgenson, eds) *Le Goulag en héritage, pour une anthropologie de la trace*, (Paris, Pétra, 2009); *Une Atlantide russe, Anthropologie de la mémoire en Russie postsoviétique*, (Paris, La Découverte, 2007).

Personnal page: <http://iris.ehess.fr/document.php?id=1023>

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