

Institution: University of Essex
Unit of Assessment: 30 – History
Title of case study: Bergen-Belsen: Holocaust Remembrance and Awareness
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Rainer Schulze's research on the history of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp provided a new analysis of the singular role of Bergen-Belsen in the system of Nazi concentration camps. This research informed a new permanent exhibition at the Gedenkstätte (memorial site) at Bergen-Belsen. The new exhibition has educated hundreds of thousands of visitors since it opened in 2007, and has improved the reputation of the Gedenkstätte, allowing it to secure a donation from the Berlin Bundesregierung of €1million and to increase its permanent staff number. In the UK, Schulze's work has had effects on the teaching of Holocaust history in the UK, achieved through his participation in the annual University of Essex Holocaust Awareness week, his Key Stage 3 and 4 and A-Level workshops, and the establishment of the Dora Love Prize for schools in 2012.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Schulze (Senior Lecturer at Essex from 2000, Reader from 2004, Professor from 2009) has worked on the twentieth-century history of Celle in Lower Saxony, Germany, for much of his career. An important part of this research has focused on the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, located in this district. In 1992, Schulze was commissioned by the State Ministry of Education of Niedersachsen to compile an inventory of historical sources on Bergen-Belsen available in British archives, which over seven years developed into an important research tool not only for the history of Bergen-Belsen but also for the history of persecution and resistance in the whole of the state of Lower Saxony during the Nazi period.</p> <p>In 2000, following the recommendation in the Final Report of the Select Committee on German Unity to assign concentration camp memorials a crucial role in the formation of a German cultural memory, the Gedenkstätte (memorial site) at Bergen-Belsen was one of seven memorial sites in Germany to receive dedicated funding from the German federal government (matched by funding from the state government of Lower Saxony) to carry out new research on the history of the prisoner-of-war, concentration and displaced-persons camps at Bergen-Belsen, develop a new permanent exhibition, and set up a new information centre to present the findings to the general public. Schulze was asked to join the international team of researchers set up under the leadership of Wilfried Wiedemann, Managing Director of the Gedenkstätte, and from 2000 to 2003 received funding from the Gedenkstätte totalling almost £140,000 to carry out his research.</p> <p>Schulze took leadership of two central projects for the history of Bergen-Belsen: (a) the history of the attempts to rescue Jewish prisoners held at the 'exchange camp' Bergen-Belsen 1943–1945 by way of exchange, ransom or repatriation (an area completely overlooked by earlier research), and (b) the history of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen by British troops, revising the existing interpretation of this event with the aid of new findings in the British archives. Schulze also studied the period in which Bergen-Belsen was a displaced-persons camp (1945-1950).</p> <p>In 2003 Schulze became a member of the management team at Bergen-Belsen and took on additional responsibilities for the development, design and oversight of the whole exhibition. This appointment led to Schulze's additional research in the field of museology, focusing on questions</p>

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of representation of the Holocaust in historical exhibitions, visitors' expectations, the relationship between commemoration, education and 'entertainment' at sites of Nazi crimes, and the future of such exhibitions more than sixty years after the events in a changing historical-political context.

Among other research contributions, Schulze's revealed for the first time that:

- the British Foreign Office were reluctant to negotiate the rescue of Jews from Bergen-Belsen, opting instead to focus efforts on a quick and unconditional victory over Nazi Germany (see 2005);
- British authorities running the displaced-persons camp for Bergen-Belsen survivors experienced tensions and conflict with survivors, many of whom wanted to take control of their own lives (see 2007b);
- until recently the memorialisation of Bergen-Belsen has been far from adequate, reflecting the overall amnesia that overtook Western Germany in the first two decades after the war (see 2006).

3. References to the research

- Schulze, R. (2000) Celle unter britischer Militärregierung [Celle under British Military Government], *Celler Chronik*, 9, 7-33. [Available from HEI on request]
- Schulze, R. (2003) 'Germany's Gayest and Happiest Town'? Bergen-Belsen 1945–1950, *Dachauer Hefte. Studien und Dokumente zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, 19, 216-38. [Available from HEI on request]
- Schulze, R. (2005) 'Keeping very clear of any 'Kuh-Handel'': The British Foreign Office and the rescue of Jews from Bergen-Belsen, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 19 (2), 226-51. DOI: 10.1093/hgs/dci021
- Schulze, R. (2006) Forgetting and remembering: Memories and memorialisation of Bergen-Belsen, in S. Bardgett and D. Cesarani (eds.) *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 217-35. ISBN: 978-0853037170
- Schulze, R. (2007a) 'Rettungsbemühungen': Anmerkungen zu einem schwierigen Thema der Zeitgeschichte ['Rescue Attempts': some comments on a difficult topic of contemporary history], *Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung in Norddeutschland*, 10, 11-22. [Available from HEI on request]
- Schulze, R. (2007b) 'A continual source of trouble': The displaced persons camp Bergen-Belsen (Hohne), 1945–1950, *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exile and Resettlement, 1945–1950*, Reading: Thomson Learning EMEA Ltd. Part of the Cengage Learning online archive: <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/history/postwar-europe-series-1.aspx> [Available from HEI on request]

Research Funding:

R. Schulze; *History of the DP-Camp at Bergen-Belsen 1945-1950*; Niedersächsische Landerszentrale Fur Politische Bildung; 1 October 2000 – 31 December 2003; £139,157

4. Details of the impact

Schulze's research on the history of Bergen-Belsen has educated the general public – both in Germany and in the UK – in the unique details of the history of Bergen-Belsen and the British role in liberating the camp. The effect has been to inform the public of oft-neglected complexities of the Holocaust, including the multiple purposes for which camps such as Bergen-Belsen were used, and the groups other than Jews that were held in such camps. These details of the history of the Holocaust have been mediated primarily through the permanent exhibition at Bergen-Belsen, and also through Schulze's numerous public speaking engagements and his school outreach activity.

Bergen-Belsen Gedenkstätte

The first impact of Schulze's research has been to improve the Gedenkstätte at Bergen-Belsen. He has been informing the work of the Gedenkstätte since his appointment to their management team in 2003. His most notable contribution has been to use his research to inform the Gedenkstätte's new permanent exhibition, opened in 2007. The new exhibition filled the gaps and corrected the errors of the Gedenkstätte prior to 2007, as attested by a Bergen-Belsen survivor, now Emeritus Professor of German at University of Sussex, with whom Schulze has worked: 'The Memorial in Bergen-Belsen, inaugurated in 1952, significantly distorted the truth about what had been one of the worst camps. The new permanent exhibition was opened in 2007 in order to remedy this situation...For the first time the complete history of Bergen-Belsen is presented in a reliable and effective manner, giving what is left of the camp its due as an important national and international commemorative site' [corroborating source 1].

The redesign of the Gedenkstätte has brought benefits both to those who visit the site and the institution responsible for the running of the Gedenkstätte. The improved design of the Gedenkstätte influenced the decision by the Berlin Bundesregierung to financially support the work at Bergen-Belsen in 2008 with a donation of €1million. This funding allowed the Gedenkstätte to increase the number of permanent employees to 20. The improved quality of the Gedenkstätte was also recognised with a €20,000 Museum Prize in 2009 awarded by German bank Niedersächsische Sparkassenstiftung. Public beneficiaries of the redesign include the 1500 former prisoners and 100 British former military personnel with whom the Gedenkstätte made contact during the process of the redesign, some of whom have visited the site. The redesign has also brought a significantly greater number of general public visitors to the site. The site is now visited by more than 1000 guided groups per year, an increase of approximately 40% on the number prior to the redesign. All benefits from the redesign have been confirmed by the CEO of the Foundation for Lower Saxony Memorial Sites [corroborating source 2].

UK Impact: Schools and general public

Schulze's research on the history of Holocaust has also been used to educate the general public in the UK and school pupils in the East of England. In January 2008, he organised a public symposium 'Representing the Unrepresentable: Putting the Holocaust into Public Museums' as part of the Holocaust Memorial Week at the University of Essex. The symposium was a knowledge exchange collaboration with the Director of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum (IWM), and informed an audience of 110 of how the new Bergen-Belsen exhibition differed from existing exhibitions of its kind, comparing it specifically with the Holocaust exhibition at the IWM. The symposium helped Schulze to establish a working partnership with the IWM in which, according to the Museum's Director of the Holocaust Exhibition, 'he acted as a very well informed

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intercessor between the IWM and the Belsen Information centre' [corroborating source 3].

Schulze has also contributed his research to the annual University of Essex Holocaust Memorial week since 2008. He has done this through co-ordinating the programme, contributing his own research to the programme in public talks and panel discussions, and by inviting Bergen-Belsen survivors of whom he has learnt and with whom he has developed contact through his research. Each year Holocaust Memorial Week has included school visits in which pupils have learnt from Schulze's work on Bergen-Belsen and in particular on the 'other victims' of the Holocaust, such as Roma and homosexual prisoners of the camp. He has added to this school outreach activity by giving a number of talks at schools through Essex and Suffolk. He has run conferences for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils at the University of Essex, and has worked with University Campus Suffolk to hold workshops for A-Level students, teaching more than 170 pupils. On many of these talks he was accompanied by Dora Love, who educated school pupils about her work caring for child survivors of Bergen-Belsen. After her death in October 2011, Schulze established the Dora Love prize for schools in Essex and Suffolk. This annual prize will be awarded to the best Holocaust awareness project by an individual or group of pupils in primary, secondary, or sixth-form schools. The prize ensures a lasting legacy for Dora Love and Schulze's collaboration with her, and a permanent impact in schools of his research into the stories of Bergen-Belsen.

Through this activity Schulze's research has had impacts both on pupils and on their teachers. His contribution to local schools' teaching of Holocaust history has been praised highly by the teachers with whom he has worked:

Rainer has made an invaluable contribution to the development of schools' history in Suffolk and Essex during the last two years. He has worked with 8 schools in Suffolk and a number of schools in Essex to promote students' knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust and influence the way that the Holocaust is taught in the school curriculum.

Deputy Head teacher at Northgate High School, Ipswich, Suffolk, Fellow of the Schools History Project

5. Sources to corroborate the impact [All sources saved on file with HEI, available on request]

1. A survivor of Bergen-Belsen and Emeritus Professor of German at University of Sussex
2. Director of the Foundation for Lower Saxony Memorial Sites
3. Director of the Holocaust Exhibition, Imperial War Museum
4. Deputy Head teacher at Northgate High School, Ipswich, Suffolk, and Fellow of the Schools History Project