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TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY:  
Policy and Classroom Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an examination of the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History and of history teachers' interpretation and presentation of this topic. The Interim Report of the History Working Group, which was set up in 1989 to advise the Secretary of State for Education on the form the History Curriculum should take, did not recommend the Holocaust – or the Second World War – as topics for study. This decision was reversed and the Holocaust was included, as an aspect of World War two, in the Group's Final Report. Drawing on a series of interviews with members of the History Working Group, and analysis of their working documentation, this thesis examines and explains this apparent 'u-turn'. Subsequent amendments and revisions to the National Curriculum for History which have resulted in the increasing prominence of the Holocaust, currently one of only four named historical events which must be taught, are set out. In examining the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum two key debates are considered: the role of school history and the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

There are a number of issues involved in teaching the Holocaust in history which go beyond the usual considerations of lesson planning and resourcing: it would appear the key issue is that teachers are unclear about whether the rationale behind the inclusion of the Holocaust on the History National Curriculum is primarily historical, social or moral. In order to get closer to an answer to this problem this thesis brings together two foci: the history of the Holocaust as a National Curriculum topic and the presentation of this topic in the history classroom. Interviews with teachers of history are drawn upon in addressing the latter strand.

It becomes evident that there was a lack of clarity among those who shaped the National Curriculum for History regarding the aims and objectives of including the topic of the Holocaust. This thesis argues that this lack of clarity at the Centre is reflected in the many and varied approaches to teaching the Holocaust found in the history classroom.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BNP</b> British National Party
<b>BBC</b> British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>DES</b> Department of Education and Science
<b>DFE</b> Department for Education
<b>DfES</b> Department for Education and Skills
<b>ERA</b> Education Reform Act
<b>GCSE</b> General Certificate of Secondary Education
<b>HA</b> Historical Association
<b>HET</b> Holocaust Educational Trust
<b>HMI</b> Her Majesty's Inspectorate or Her Majesty's Inspector
<b>HSU</b> History Study Unit
<b>HTG</b> National Curriculum Council History Task Group
<b>HWG</b> National Curriculum History Working Group
<b>INSET</b> In-Service Training
<b>KS</b> Key Stage
<b>LEA</b> Local Education Authority
<b>NC/HWG</b> National Curriculum History Working Group Minutes
<b>NCC</b> National Curriculum Council
<b>NQT</b> Newly Qualified Teacher
<b>NCVQ</b> National Council for Vocational Qualifications
<b>OFSTED</b> Office for Standards in Education
<b>PESC</b> Political, Economic, Social, Cultural
<b>PGCE</b> Post Graduate Certificate in Education
<b>PoS</b> Programme/Programmes of Study
<b>QCA</b> Qualifications and Curriculum Authority <i>In 1997 SCAA was merged with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to form the QCA</i>
<b>SAT</b> Standard Assessment Task/Test
<b>SCAA</b> School Curriculum & Assessment Authority <i>In October 1993 the NCC merged with SEAC to form the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority</i>
<b>SCHP</b> Schools Council History Project
<b>SEAC</b> Schools Examinations & Assessment Council
<b>SHP</b> Schools History Project
<b>TES</b> <i>Times Educational Supplement</i>
<b>THES</b> <i>Times Higher Education Supplement</i>
<b>UN</b> United Nations

## CHRONOLOGY

The timeline below outlines the development of the National Curriculum and Holocaust education against a backdrop of national and international events from which curriculum developments cannot be seen in complete isolation.

<b>1987</b>	An All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group is set up to look into allegations concerning Nazi War Criminals and make suggestions regarding possible legislation. The 1991 War Crimes Act will be the result.
<b>January 25 1988</b>	The first meeting of the Holocaust Educational Trust takes place in the House of Commons. Labour MP Greville (now Lord) Janner is Chairperson of this newly formed Trust.
<b>March 29</b>	An article appears in the <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> reporting on plans to develop a GCSE text book on the Holocaust. Carrie Supple, a Jewish history teacher from Newcastle is researching and writing the book which will be designed for cross-curricular use. The project receives support from the Holocaust Educational Trust.
<b>April 22</b>	Robert Kilroy-Silk writes a piece for <i>The Times</i> criticising the education system which he says fails to teach young people about the Holocaust.
<b>January 24 1989</b>	<p>The History Working Group (HWG) meet for the first time at Elizabeth House in London.</p> <p>Kenneth Baker visits the group and agrees "that an international dimension was important to history, particularly in the twentieth century but warned that this should not be achieved through making history into twentieth century studies" (NC/HWG (89) 1<sup>st</sup>).</p> <p>Sub-groups are set up. Primary: Ann Low-Beer, Robert Guyver and Peter Livsey. Secondary: Gareth Elwyn Jones, Carol White and Jim Hendy. Structure: Alice Prochaska, John Roberts and Henry Hobhouse (who was called Tom Hobhouse).</p>
<b>April 17</b>	A member of the structure sub-group faxes a list of topics for consideration to Jenny Worsfold (HWG Secretary). Communism and Fascism; the rise and fall and rise of

modern Germany; the Great War and the Second World War feature in a list of 56 non-British history options.

The HWG have deliberately left it until late April to discuss curriculum content aware that this would be a contentious issue and concerned to get the attainment targets in place first.

**May 29**

John Roberts writes to Commander Saunders Watson of his intention to resign from the HWG at the end of June following the completion of the Interim Report. He feels unable to balance his commitments as Warden of Merton College, Oxford and a high profile academic historian with sitting on the HWG.

**May 30 – June 1**

The HWG meet at Hebden Bridge.  
Units for study in Key Stage 3 and 4 are identified.

The decision is made that the topic of World War Two and the Nazis will not be included as a compulsory study unit in its own right.

First draft of Interim Report is produced.

**June 3**

China: Students are killed in the Tiananmen Square massacre.

**June 7 - 10**

Group meet at Elizabeth House and look at draft Interim Report. *Britain in the twentieth century* is the only exemplar Programme of Study (PoS) included in the report. No reference is made in this exemplar to the events of the Second World War.

**June 16**

A paper by a member of the secondary sub-group questions the overload at Key Stage 4 and proposes the trimming of Modern Britain, compensated by a linking unit on the Second World War, including the Nazis and the Holocaust instead of China.

At some point after this a sentence on the social impact of the two world wars is added to the Modern Britain Programme of Study .



<b>July 24</b>	John MacGregor replaces Kenneth Baker as Secretary of State for Education.
<b>July 25</b>	<p>12th meeting, Elizabeth House. The Chairperson reports that Baker and Angela Rumbold (Education Minister), “were generally pleased with the [Interim] Report. They had a couple of niggling doubts, first about knowledge being in the Programmes of Study rather than the attainment targets, and secondly about there being insufficient emphasis on British history” (NC/HWG (89) 12<sup>th</sup>).</p> <p>Professor Peter Marshall has now replaced John Roberts and joined the newly formed Key Stage 4 group with Alice Prochaska and Tom Hobhouse.</p>
<b>August 10</b>	The Interim Report is published. The Second World War and the Holocaust are not recommended as topics for study in the Report.
<b>August 30 – Sept 1</b>	<p>13th meeting takes place in Bournemouth. This is Michael Phipps’ last meeting, Barney Baker (a cousin of Kenneth Baker) replaces him.</p> <p>The Chairperson had now met with John MacGregor who was concerned about chronology; the proportion of British history in Key Stage 3 and 4; historical knowledge and its assessment.</p> <p>The Chairperson announces the setting up of three panels to deal with the tasks ahead:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programmes of Study Panel: Alice Prochaska (convener), Peter Marshall and Peter Livsey.</li> <li>2. Responses Panel: Jim Hendy (convener), Tom Hobhouse and Robert Guyver.</li> <li>3. Assessment Panel: Carol White (convener), Ann Low-Beer, Gareth Elwyn Jones and Tim Lomas.</li> </ol>
<b>September 1</b>	<p>An article appears in the <i>TES</i>, “Whose Myth is it Anyway” bewailing the omission of Britain in the Second World War from the Interim Report.</p> <p>Also this month the Fox Report (Fox, 1989) is published.</p>
<b>September 3</b>	50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two.

<b>September 5</b>	Colloquy of Historians meet at Chatham House, London to discuss the National Curriculum for History.
<b>September 8</b>	An article appears in the <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> under the headline “Don’t drop Holocaust” reporting that the Holocaust Educational Trust will campaign for a key place on the school curriculum for World War Two following the “outcry over the exclusion of the war in a list of compulsory subjects recommended for a new National Curriculum”.
<b>September 9</b>	A study unit <i>World at War 1939-45</i> is proposed for Key Stage 4 by the HWG member from the Key Stage 4 group who attended the Colloquy of Historians.
<b>September 11</b>	A member of the PoS panel drafts a Programme of Study for <i>The Second World War 1939-45</i> , part of the Purpose of the Study Unit reads: “The Second World War provides an excellent framework for pupils to bring together into a single focus not only national, continental and world history but also different types of historical inquiry, e.g. military, social and economic history.”
<b>September 18</b>	The member who proposed the study unit sends a draft paper on Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to the Chairperson, <i>The Second World War 1939-45</i> is included as a Unit.
<b>September 26</b>	The member of the PoS panel who has been working on a draft of the PoS sees difficulty in teaching about 1939 without going back at least to 1933. It is changed to <i>1933-45; Second World War – advent, course and aftermath</i> .
<b>September 29</b>	The 14th meeting takes place at Elizabeth House. The responses panel give an interim report summarising the nature of the responses received so far. Comments include the omission of World War Two and the Nazis; the Reformation; and Medicine through time.  The Group accepts the proposals from the Programmes of Study panel which include a new study unit, <i>The Second World War – its advent, course and aftermath, 1933-1948</i> .  A cross party group of Members of Parliament (Greville Janner, John Marshall, Robert Rhodes James and Jeff Rooker) send a submission on the teaching of the Second

	World War and the rise and fall of Nazi Germany to John MacGregor and the History Working Group. They criticise the omission of the rise of fascism and the Holocaust.
<b>October 2</b>	A story in <i>The Times</i> under the headline “MPs denounce omissions” reports on the submission from the cross party group of MPs. The piece concludes, “the MPs believe few schools would choose to study the War.”
<b>October 6</b>	The <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> reports on the submission from the cross party group of MPs.
<b>October 9-11</b>	The 15th meeting of the History Working Group takes place. Jim Hendy reports that the responses about Key Stage 4 included comments that there was too much twentieth century history; and World War Two and Nazi Germany should be included. Discussion follows on whether the Study Unit on World War Two should be listed as British.
<b>October 11</b>	John MacGregor writes in reply to the group of MPs reminding them that the Interim Report sets out the Group’s initial thinking and opportunities exist within their current proposals for the inclusion of World War Two and the Nazis in the school curriculum.
<b>October 13</b>	An article appears in the <i>TES</i> , “Critics force history group to rewrite report”. This article refers to the submission from the all party group of MPs. It is also reported that the Historical Association will, on this day, submit detailed comments to the HWG, including the neglect of 1929-45 and the rise of totalitarianism. Martin Roberts, Chairperson of the Historical Association Education Committee is quoted, “if you don’t cover that part of the twentieth century crucial aspects of the modern world cannot be understood.”
<b>October 20</b>	16th meeting of the History Working Group. A member of the responses panel reads the paper he has prepared summarising the responses received to date. He notes that the top three most commonly mentioned omissions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Holocaust</li> <li>b) The rise of Fascism and the rise of Nazi Germany</li> <li>c) World Wars One and Two – Both the British Legion and the Western Front Association wrote about this (NC/HWG (89) 16<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>

	He also notes, “secondary teachers’ perceptions of omissions coincided generally with the perceptions of the wider public response (e.g., WWI, WWII; more European history etc). Though the omission of the history of medicine was remarked upon mainly by teachers.”
<b>November</b>	MacGregor leaves education and is replaced by Kenneth Clarke.
<b>November 9</b>	Germany: The Berlin Wall is opened.
<b>November 14</b>	Angela Rumbold says in the House of Commons that World War Two and Nazism will be in the Final Report.  HWG are meeting in Great Yarmouth. A senior civil servant telephones Saunders Watson to apologise for Rumbold’s comments.
<b>November 26</b>	Clarke announces proposals stating that students can choose to study either history or geography at Key Stage 4 or do a short course in both.
<b>November 28</b>	Margaret Thatcher resigns as Prime Minister
<b>December 22</b>	Writing in the <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> Lionel Kochan questions the wisdom of teaching the Holocaust to all school students (Kochan, 22 December 1989).
<b>January 1990</b>	Final Report of the HWG is completed.
<b>February</b>	National Curriculum Council History Task Group begins work.
<b>February 11</b>	South Africa: Nelson Mandela is released.

<b>March 27</b>	In the House of Commons Greville Janner asks the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish the Final Report and whether he will make a statement (Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 173, 27 March 1990).
<b>April</b>	The first edition of the <i>HET Bulletin</i> is published. The article on the front page announces, “Stop Press: Holocaust Education for Britain’s Schools. Children in British schools will soon be learning about the Holocaust as a compulsory part of their curriculum” after “the number of high level submissions both to the HWG and to Mr MacGregor”.
<b>April 2</b>	In the House of Commons Janner asks the same question as on March 27 (Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 421, 2 April 1990).
<b>April 3</b>	The Final Report is published. The topic of the Holocaust appears in this report for the first time included as Essential Information under the heading <i>Casualties of War</i> in the Study Unit <i>The Era of the Second World War: 1933 to 1948</i> . This is one of two compulsory Study Units recommended for Key Stage 4.
<b>April 4</b>	In the House of Commons Janner asks the Secretary of State for Education what steps he intends to take to introduce study of the Nazi Holocaust into state schools as a core part of the National Curriculum (Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 621, 4 April 1990).
<b>April 13</b>	The <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> reports “Shoah lessons ‘are essential’”. Janner is quoted, “as a result of pressure of MPs of all parties and many others, the working party has changed its mind. Having won in principle, it is imperative to make sure that there are adequate resources and time for the subject to be taught effectively.”
<b>November 28</b>	The Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library hold a debate “Teaching the Holocaust: For or Against?” between Professor Lionel Kochan with Dr David Sorkin and Mr Ronnie Landau with Mr Philip Rubenstein.

<b>January 3 1991</b>	The NCC Consultation Report completed in December 1990 is published. It endorses the structure of the History National Curriculum as recommended by the HWG.
<b>January 14</b>	The Draft Orders for History are published. Clarke makes some changes to the proposals set out in the NCC Consultation Report.
<b>March 25</b>	The Statutory Orders for History are published and must be implemented from September. A press release announcing the publication of the Final Orders for History and Geography reiterate that "the focus of study for 14-16 year olds should be from the turn of the century to about 20 years ago" so as to draw a distinction between history and current affairs. Also, the Secretary of State stated that "In response to comment that pupils who decided to drop history in the final key stage would do little twentieth century history...Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) now includes a compulsory study unit on the era of the Second World War" (DES 103/91).
<b>April 1992</b>	John Patten replaces Kenneth Clarke as Secretary of State for Education.
<b>April 1993</b>	Education Secretary John Patten announces the Dearing Review.  Also this month Bill Clinton opens the Holocaust Memorial Museum in New York.
<b>July</b>	Dearing's Interim Report is published.
<b>December</b>	Dearing's Final Report is published confirming history will not be compulsory at Key Stage 4. The National Curriculum is slimmed down.  Also this month <i>Schindler's List</i> is released in cinemas in the UK.
<b>May 1994</b>	SCAA publish the Draft proposals for History.
<b>July 1994</b>	Gillian Shephard replaces John Patten as Secretary of State for Education.

**January 1995**

New National Curriculum Orders for History are published. Students in Key Stage 3 are to be taught an overview of the twentieth century: the First World War and its consequences; the Second World War including the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs; the legacy of the Second World War for Britain and the World. It is also recommended students be taught about at least one event, development or personality in depth (DfE, 1995, p. 13).

**1999**

Draft Orders for History are published following a review of the National Curriculum initiated by the new Labour Government elected in May 1997. The Holocaust is one of only four named historical events which must be taught in Key Stage 3, the other three being the two World Wars and the Cold War (DfEE, 1999, p. 22). According to Terry Haydn under the draft proposals the Holocaust was the “*only* topic specified by name which will be a compulsory part of the History Curriculum” (Haydn, 2000, p.135. Emphasis in the original).

The DfEE and QCA jointly publish the new Orders for History.

**June 6 2000**

The Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum opens.

**September 2002**

Citizenship is introduced as a National Curriculum subject, compulsory at Key Stages 3 and 4.

## CHAPTER ONE

### SITUATING MYSELF IN THE RESEARCH

We should teach the Shoah<sup>1</sup> in schools. But I do not think that history teachers will really do so effectively until we have removed it from its quasi-mystical associations and clarified our own objectives. I think we have to start and end with what happened and why, with the Shoah as history.

(Kinloch, 1998, p.46)

It would appear that the Holocaust has a unique role in the education of young people in England. It has been included in successive versions of the National Curriculum for History where it is currently one of only four named historical events that must be taught in Key Stage 3 (KS3)<sup>2</sup>, the other three being the two World Wars and the Cold War. Initial drafts of the 2000 Order for History included the Holocaust as the only mandatory content<sup>3</sup>. In his review of R J Evans' *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Neal Ascherson wrote, "I know that it is untrue to claim that the only bit of history now taught to British school students is the Third Reich. But it is probably true that it is the only bit of history they are almost all taught about" (Ascherson, 2003). Why is the Holocaust considered such a fundamental part of the History Curriculum in England? What impact does this have for how it is conceptualised and taught as a school subject? It is important to note that I am not trying to diminish the importance of the Holocaust. I am not a disciple of David Irving. I am not questioning that the Holocaust should be taught in schools. I am chiefly interested in

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<sup>1</sup> 'Shoah' is Hebrew for 'a great and terrible wind' preferred by some over the term 'Holocaust', see Chapter Three for further discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Pupils in Key Stage 3 are aged 11-14. Chapter Four explains this term more fully and describes the development of the National Curriculum for England and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) have been unable to locate early drafts of the 1999 Order for History, although not ideal, this statement is therefore supported by secondary sources: Haydn (2000, p.135) and Kinloch (2001, p.9).



questions concerning pedagogy and curriculum content and how decisions relating to these are arrived at.

The quotation at the start of this chapter is taken from Nicolas Kinloch's review of Michael Burleigh's *Ethics and Extermination* (1998). The review, published in *Teaching History*, sparked a debate about the teaching of the Holocaust in school history. Michael Meagher wrote in issue 94 of *Teaching History*:

Nicolas Kinloch draws too stark a division between the twin journeys of moral development and intellectual enquiry. Confronted with the real horror of the facts of genocide, the traces of the real suffering in physical, written, visual and oral evidence, is it not inevitable and natural that pupils will be disturbed into reflection of a deep and personal kind?

(Meagher, 1999)

Terence McLaughlin writing in issue 96 of *Teaching History* noted that:

One difficulty for Kinloch's position is that specifically historical criteria are not (always) isolatable from such considerations. Kinloch says that whilst the Shoah is a unique historical phenomenon, it is not unique in moral or social terms. Yet the historical significance of the event is partly constituted by its moral and social significance.<sup>4</sup>

(McLaughlin, 1999)

More recently Steve Illingworth has criticised Kinloch's position "as unduly pessimistic and lacking in ambition". He continues, "it is surely not too idealistic to hope that a study of the Holocaust would lead to pupils reflecting on their own behaviour and attitudes" (Illingworth, 2000). Illingworth's argument is summed up in the editor's introduction to his article, "Steve argues that an emphasis on personal and moral development does not compromise the discipline of history but instead leads pupils into confronting difficult questions and motivates them by showing them the perennial relevance of the issues history throws up." The editor (Christine Counsell) makes reference in this introduction to another piece by Jenny Parsons,

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust can be found in Chapter Three.

which appeared in issue 93 of *Teaching History*, where Parsons cited “the moral and spiritual aspect of history” as “one of the most pressing reasons for its appeal” resulting in the high take-up of GCSE history at her school. Chapter Three reflects on the nature of school history and the debate over whether this should be taught for moral or historical purposes. Teachers’ views concerning the teaching of the Holocaust in school history are presented and discussed in Chapter Six.

The starting point for this research arises from my own classroom experience and observations which bear Kinloch out: the Holocaust is approached differently from other topics in history; there is confusion over objectives; and the topic is often taught primarily for social and moral rather than for historical reasons. An interesting question in relation to these observations is whether history teachers who make explicit links between the Holocaust and issues such as prejudice, discrimination and racism, also make links to moral and social issues when teaching topics such as the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. If history teachers are covering more than “what happened and why” (Kinloch, 1998) when teaching the Holocaust - as an attempt to instil in students moral and social values - without exploring other topics in the history classroom in the same way, this would seem to be an issue. In March 2001 I attended a seminar on *Approaches to teaching the Holocaust* at the Imperial War Museum in London. This seminar appeared to confirm my own observations, for it was clear the perceived aims of teaching the Holocaust, and approaches to this topic, varied among the teachers present, as indeed did the number of lessons spent on the Holocaust.

The reader will note the use of ‘I’ in the opening sentence and throughout the paragraphs above. The decision to situate myself in the research lies with the influence of post-modernists, and also as a response to Carr’s maxim to study the historian before studying their work. Carr added that all historians had “bees in their bonnets”, and that if you could not detect buzzing as you read their work there was something wrong (Carr, 1961, p.23). As a young, white, female, history teacher, what prompted me to design and undertake this research? In this brief introductory chapter I will attempt to clarify why my experiences as a classroom teacher led me to ask some awkward questions about the teaching of the Holocaust in secondary schools in England.

As a school student I had always enjoyed history and decided to complete a degree in Economic and Social History and Sociology at the University of Kent at Canterbury. I graduated in 1998 and went to Canterbury Christ Church University College to complete a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) in Secondary History. It was at Christ Church I first considered the question of how the twentieth century was presented in the history classroom after a tutor highlighted the status of the Holocaust in early drafts of the Order for History published in 1999.

Between September 1999 and July 2001 I taught history and religious education at a secondary school in Sittingbourne, Kent. When I began teaching in Sittingbourne there were 13 students in Year 10, and 11 students in Year 11 who were studying a course in GCSE history. Each year group comprised approximately two hundred and 50 students. This concerned me as I felt history had a great deal to offer young people. During my first year I took several Year 9 classes. Stimulating lessons and a

large corridor display using *The Simpsons* to explain the skills that could be developed through GCSE history for the workplace, as well as a leaflet along similar lines for parents evening, boosted numbers opting for GCSE History at the end of that year to 45. The following year I organised a trip to Berlin for the GCSE students. This helped to further raise the status of history within the school, and at the end of my second year 72 students opted for GCSE history. I ‘sold’ history as a subject through which students could develop their analytical skills, their presentation and organisation skills, the ability to construct and present an argument and an awareness that usually there is more than one (equally valid) point of view. History is a very relevant subject which helps students to develop these skills in addition to teaching them about their own identity; an apt line from a song by *Dexy’s Midnight Runners* featured in a wall display in a colleague's classroom, “if I need courage to carry on I just look back to where I came from”. Indeed, understanding where we have come from is important in understanding how we got to where we are. This study is informed by Carr’s dictum: “the past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past”(Carr, 1961, p.55).

After presenting a seminar at Christ Church in January 2000 about my experiences as a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) (this became Russell, 2000) I became involved in the PGCE mentoring programme. One of the PGCE students I mentored had studied the history of South Africa at degree level and wanted to know why it was not taught in school. I could not explain why South Africa, Northern Ireland, the Middle East and many other histories were missing from the schemes of work. Further omissions from the National Curriculum include genocide and famine in Africa and events in

Europe since 1989, as well as the technological revolution. It is clear that students cannot study thousands of years of world history by the age of 14, but who decides what is important? What were the criteria for the selection of curriculum content?

A further area of concern to me was the amount of time spent teaching and learning about the twentieth century. The original proposals for a National Curriculum for History covered students to age 16, but in January 1991 Kenneth Clarke announced students would be able to opt to take either history or geography at the end of Key Stage 3<sup>5</sup>. This led to, “a rather hasty reorganisation [which] moved the compulsory topic of the twentieth century into the final year of compulsory history” (Brown & Davies, 1998, p.78). In making the years 1914-1989 the focus for Year 9 do we not imply, particularly to the many students for whom this is the pinnacle of their study of history, that the events we teach them about in this period are the most significant in history? After all, in the previous six terms students may have covered the Romans to the Edwardians. A possible difficulty with the Holocaust being one of the only compulsory topics in the National Curriculum for History is that it skews history and suggests that this was the worst atrocity, which we are not in a position to judge<sup>6</sup>. The Atomic Bomb is not mentioned by name in the current National Curriculum but was included in earlier versions. Perhaps the problem is not that the dropping of the Atomic Bomb does not feature as a named topic, but that other events are named. In naming some events and not others it is perhaps implied to history teachers that some historical events are more important than others. In May 2002 I wrote an article for the *TES Teacher* about teaching the Holocaust in history (Russell, 2002, p. 27) aimed at highlighting some of the broader issues in teaching

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of the formation of the National Curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> The following chapter discusses issues surrounding making moral judgements about the past.

the Holocaust. I received one revealing response expressing astonishment that schools may be tight for time when it came to teaching “the ONLY History topic specified as compulsory”<sup>7</sup> (Correspondence, 16 June 2002). I had suggested completing some ground work with students in Years 7 and 8 by looking at anti-Semitism with reference to the plague; and democracy with reference to crowns and parliaments as preparation for teaching the Holocaust in Year 9. This teacher, “spent a great deal longer” than two or three lessons on the Holocaust and ran a Holocaust day where students could hear survivor testimony. In 2000 I had written to *Teaching History* (Russell, 2001b) to express my concern at the numbers of students studying the Nazi period from Year 9 through to GCSE, A Level and possibly beyond. I was under the impression that this was a new phenomenon, perhaps wrapped up in the quest for higher grades and an improved position in the league tables, as well as the notion that twentieth century history is somehow more immediate, relevant and interesting to students. My concern was that students did not have access to a balanced History Curriculum and were spending the apex of their experience of school history studying events between 1914 and 1989. It may be league tables are a factor in the preference for twentieth century exam courses as history teachers are able to build on the knowledge of the twentieth century history that students have acquired in Year 9; but the trend for twentieth century syllabuses was growing at the time the National Curriculum was being devised, as is noted in Chapter Five.

In addition to my concerns regarding the presentation of twentieth century history, I experienced specific difficulties in teaching about the Holocaust. I began to question what I was trying to achieve during one lesson on the Nuremberg Laws. Students

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<sup>7</sup> As stated earlier in the chapter, the two World Wars and the Cold War are also compulsory.

had not grasped what it meant to be Jewish and I was fielding questions such as: why couldn't the Jews convert to another religion? Why didn't they dye their hair blond? Couldn't they wear coloured contact lenses?. I felt emotionally more involved with the subject of the Holocaust than with other periods and events I taught. The Citizenship Curriculum was yet to be introduced when I was teaching, but teaching about the Holocaust felt important morally as well as historically and I wanted to 'get it right'. But was it right to be exploring values through the History Curriculum, or should I be teaching "what happened and why" (Kinloch, 1998)? What did I want this class to leave the room with? An understanding of what the Nuremberg Laws were? Some empathy with the Jews and the realisation that prejudice and racism are wrong? Was I meant to be producing 'good citizens'? I had observed a PGCE History student explaining to a 'low ability' group of Year 9 students that there was once a very bad man called Hitler, who lived in a country called Germany and who did not like Jews. During the Second World War he tried to kill all the Jews who lived in Germany and in the other countries he invaded. The activity which followed was from a Heinemann publication, *The Era of the Second World War* (Reynoldson, 1993, p.45). Students had to fill in the missing words: "the Holocaust was the killing of \_\_\_\_ million Jews by the Nazis. Some were \_\_\_\_\_. Others were herded into \_\_\_\_\_ and gassed." During a lesson later in the term with the same group, students reacted negatively to the suffering and death of German refugees; they believed that the Germans "deserved what they got" because of what they did to the Jews. As the late Professor Robert Phillips noted, quoting from Sean Lang (1999, p.24), "history 'promotes notions of tolerance' [but] it is equally true that it can also encourage racism and prejudice" (R. Phillips, 2002, p.148). This lesson prompted me to ask more questions as I began to wonder what impression Year 9 were gaining of

Europe. A Year 9 student from another ('top ability') class came to me when I was organising the trip to Berlin to ask if it would be safe for him to go since his grandmother was Jewish. Anti-German feeling among students was not helped by the notion (largely drawn from war films) that all Germans are Nazis, or by the tension arising from international football games between England and Germany. Stories that students heard in the media and some of their experiences of refugees in the local area had a further impact on their view of foreigners. I was concerned about exacerbating racism and risking prejudice towards German people, particularly after the lesson in which we had looked at the plight of German refugees. This is of concern given England's position in Europe. The reality is that the pressures of day to day teaching mean that sometimes lessons like the one described above are used. The Holocaust is not an easy subject to teach. My own experience, as well as the recent research and literature discussed below, indicates that there are a number of specific issues involved in teaching the Holocaust in history which go beyond the usual considerations of lesson planning and resourcing.

Shortly after the National Curriculum became statutory Reva Klein wrote in the *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* that teachers were "terrified" of teaching the Holocaust (Klein, 1992). Many history teachers had never studied or taught the Holocaust before. Over the past 13 years support for teachers and students teaching and learning about the Holocaust has grown and there is support for teachers teaching the topic across the curriculum. *Lessons of the Holocaust* is a resource pack produced by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) and the Spiro Institute. The Imperial War Museum has produced a resource pack, *Reflections*, activities from which can be used as preparation to a visit to the permanent Holocaust Exhibition at



the Museum which opened in June 2000. Schools can book out a travelling exhibition from the Anne Frank Educational Trust. Holocaust survivors can be booked for classroom visits through the HET. The Imperial War Museum and HET run In Service Training (INSET) on approaches to teaching the Holocaust, and the HET organise visits to Auschwitz for teachers and Sixth Form students. Such a level of practical support may indicate that even if teachers are no longer “terrified”, they continue to be uncertain about teaching the Holocaust and require support. This was true of one teacher (Barbara) interviewed for Chapter Six in particular.

I struggled to teach about the Holocaust not because I lacked resources but because I was unclear of my objectives. Indeed, the volume of resources (many of which are cross curricular) did little to help me focus my lessons. A possible “lack of clarity about the nature of the affective and cognitive aims of such work” was one pedagogical challenge recognised in some small scale research about the teaching of the Holocaust published by Brown and Davies in 1998:

Perhaps the central difficulty relates to teachers finding it almost impossible to characterise the purpose of the work clearly. If they were more comfortable with this they might well be able to select teaching methods confidently and have strategies already in place for a range of responses by children. Teachers do not seem very clear if they wish, very generally, to educate pupils for cognitive or affective development.

(Brown and Davies, 1998, p. 80)

In 1999 Susan Hector carried out a survey of history teachers’ attitudes to teaching the Holocaust. She found that some teachers believed the Holocaust should be taught because it was an important event in human history; no pupil should, “end their academic study without looking at the depths to which mankind can descend” (Hector, 2000, p.107). Others taught the Holocaust simply because they had to: it was on the syllabus. When Kinloch asked a group of teachers why young people

should be taught about the Holocaust they responded that the Holocaust is possibly *the* critical event of the twentieth century; it changed the way we view Germans, Jews and human beings' capacity for destructiveness. All of the teachers Kinloch spoke to believed there were important moral, social and spiritual lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust and thought that studying the Holocaust improved students' ability to recognise and respond appropriately to similar events (Kinloch, 1998, p. 44). The Holocaust is an emotive subject. It took place within living memory in a modern, industrialised country in Europe. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that teachers' treatment of the Holocaust includes social and moral issues. However, Kinloch notes the problem with the above objectives is that they are "a dangerously non-historical set of assumptions." (Kinloch, 1998, p. 45). However, it is difficult to separate the cognitive and affective with a topic such as the Holocaust. Carrie Supple argues that the Holocaust must be taught as part of the mainstream syllabus and that its history is important. But the cognitive and the affective are blurred when she writes that the Holocaust:

Is a subject that many teachers may dread tackling due to its complexity and the fact that it seems beyond explanation. How, for example, could human beings dump a truckload of babies into a burning pit and appear to feel nothing? Nonetheless, it is crucial that this history be part of the mainstream syllabus and not sanctified or otherwise made inaccessible.  
(Supple, 1998, p.17)

The questions, how could this happen? Or, what circumstances led human beings to do this? are cognitive; these are historical questions. The question how could human beings do this and appear to feel nothing? is affective; it is moral and implies a value judgement. In the above quotation Supple is using a moral question "how could human beings dump a truckload of babies into a burning pit and appear to feel nothing?", to state the importance of teaching the Holocaust in *history* lessons. But

as McLaughlin and Illingworth have argued, separating out the cognitive and affective and dealing only with the former in history lessons is problematic; the Holocaust is a human story which forces us to confront the limits of human behaviour. However, there are questions about whether the moral lessons should come from historical lessons or vice versa. This issue is discussed in Chapter Three.

What should history teachers' aims and objectives be when teaching the Holocaust in Key Stage 3? Do we teach the Holocaust to remember the victims? To contextualise World War Two? To help students to understand that certain social, economic and political situations can give rise to racism and prejudice? To produce 'good citizens'? To demonstrate the success of democracy over fascism? To debate whether it is right to prosecute and punish war criminals who are now old people? Kinloch has written in an unpublished review of Glantz's *Holocaust Handbook for Teachers: Materials and Strategies for Grades 5-12* that an historical approach to the Holocaust might aim to teach students to evaluate source material rigorously; to develop and demonstrate a clear understanding of concepts such as causation; and to be able to detect bias and propaganda. Paul Salmons, coordinator of Holocaust Education at the Imperial War Museum, suggests that the historical objectives of teaching the Holocaust:

Can vary depending on the class and the teacher's interest. Pupils need the narrative, a firm understanding of the historical events; causes and consequences; the teacher needs to generate interest and engender a genuine empathy. All of the victims need to be understood and explored without introducing any elements or reference to comparative suffering. The choices made by individuals at the time need to be explored, stereotypes should be broken down. There needs to be historical analysis, we must get beyond 'quasi-mystical associations', the Holocaust was a human event with human causes; there should be an exploration of the perpetrators, victims and bystanders without twentieth century armchair judgement or condemnation.

(Interview, 12 September 2002)

Salmons' opening statement is interesting. It implies diversity amongst current practice. Such a study as that which is suggested here would take time, and there exists the danger that if insufficient time is spent teaching the Holocaust that stereotypes will actually be reinforced. Here I come back to my concern regarding the dominance of twentieth century history in Key Stage 3. In terms of the moral and ethical questions that will arise in the history classroom, Salmons notes that it is important to find a way of dealing with these and not to leave students 'hanging', some could be very deeply affected. This is the same point that Meagher has made in *Teaching History*: if we expose students to a study of human suffering we have a responsibility to guide them through it. But is this the role of school history? Kinloch's difficulty with history teachers dealing with moral questions is that he does not see that it is the role of teachers to create a new society. However, particularly since the introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum, teachers have been encouraged to be more explicit in their teaching on values. On 29 April 2004 *The Independent* reported that a teacher who was planning to stand in forthcoming European elections as a candidate for the British National Party (BNP) had been suspended from his post. This incident raises issues about the role of teachers as values educators.

While the objectives suggested above by Salmons are historical others, such as Short, suggest a range of further motivations for teaching the Holocaust. Short argues that the teaching of the Holocaust is helpful in explaining the situation in the Middle East; learning about the psychology of prejudice; helping to understand human behaviour; combating anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice and preventing future genocides (Short, 1998, pp.10-15). In recent years Europe has witnessed a rise in support for the far right. During the course of my PhD research, Jean-Marie Le Pen,

in April 2002, became the first extreme right-wing candidate to get through to the second round of the French Presidential elections winning over 20 percent of the vote. Then on 6 May the Dutch right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn was shot dead. Fortuyn had been expected to do well in the General Election due to be held nine days after his death; he had been campaigning on an anti-immigration ticket. In the local elections held in England in May 2003 the BNP won seven seats to become the second largest party on Burnley Council. The Leader of the BNP, Nick Griffin, has announced himself as a Holocaust denier and, in a 1997 booklet entitled *Who are the Mind Benders?*, outlined a Jewish conspiracy to brainwash the British people in their own “homeland” (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1412785.stm>). Holocaust deniers claim that the Holocaust never occurred, the Jews made it up. Deniers dispute the minutiae and details of the Holocaust, such as the workings of the gas chambers and the number of Jews killed, in order to claim there was no policy to exterminate Jews during the Second World War. Holocaust denial appears to be motivated by anti-Semitism and the presentation of a political ideology that promotes or attempts to excuse or condone fascism. It is an issue that history teachers need to be aware of.

My aim was never to shock or upset a class; I do not consider such an approach to be educational or appropriate. There are however colleagues who would argue that there is value in this: for example, Short includes a quotation in his paper on *Holocaust Education in Ontario* from one teacher who said:

I show *Night and Fog*. It's quite gruesome and some of the kids are in tears by the end of it. But what's too horrific? You've got to remind them that there are people out there saying this didn't happen and this is the video evidence.

(Short, 2000, p.298)

This teacher was talking about teaching the Holocaust to students aged 15. There is a question of how much detail we as history teachers should go into. Are students aged 13 and 14 mature enough to learn about the Holocaust? There is a further difficulty here in that history is a subject where events should be analysed, interpreted and debated. In this sense it is questionable whether the history classroom is an ‘appropriate’ arena for teaching about the Holocaust. Giles Marshall wrote to *Teaching History* in 1999:

Hitler and the Holocaust represent the serious limits of our abilities as history teachers to provide any genuine understanding and interrogation of sources in the classroom ... Can I, for instance, present without comment one of the primary sources that David Irving uses when discussing Hitler?

(Marshall, 1999)

There are issues surrounding the teaching of the Holocaust in school history which are so challenging and sensitive that, at times, one almost wonders whether it would be better not to approach the topic at all. But, Short has written that the absence of the Holocaust “from the curriculum may well be seen as offering tacit support to the deniers and spur them on to greater efforts” (Short, 1998, p.11) . The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) consulted various individuals and organisations to help develop their scheme of work on the Holocaust: Unit 19 *How and Why did the Holocaust happen?* (QCA, 2000). In an interview in November 2001 with Rosie Boston, then Head of Education at the HET, she explained that she was asked to look at the draft of the QCA scheme of work and had been uncomfortable with elements of this draft unit since it included work on Holocaust denial, “the Holocaust is not up for debate. It happened. It is not appropriate to look at David Irving and issues of denial at Key Stage 3” (Interview, 21 November 2001). The issue of Holocaust denial is not included in the QCA scheme of work.

I would contend that an understanding of the history of the Holocaust<sup>8</sup> would help to equip students to take part in our democracy and encourage them to think critically about the policies of political parties such as the BNP. This raises a further issue: essentially this thesis is about the teaching the Holocaust in Key Stage 3, but perhaps the central issue is not about coherent and consistent teaching on the topic of the Holocaust in Key Stage 3, but why there is no opportunity for all students to study the Holocaust in sufficient detail at a mature level. As noted above, the Dearing Review (which is discussed in Chapters Four and Five) marked the end of Key Stage 4 history, and the curriculum content designed for Key Stage 4 was collapsed into Key Stage 3. If the draft scheme of work produced for the QCA contained reference to Holocaust denial<sup>9</sup> it was perhaps written from the perspective of what should be done, rather than thinking about the audience it was for. The issue of why some people deny the Holocaust could be discussed with students. Though students in Year 9 may indeed be too young to discuss this as part of their syllabus, why are they denied the right to learn about the Holocaust later in their school careers? The Holocaust is currently taught to students four years before they gain the franchise, with the majority never studying this history subsequently. Counsell wrote in one editorial in *Teaching History*:

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<sup>8</sup> By the term 'Holocaust' I mean here the period of Hitler's rise to power through to 1945, and the gradual legalisation of discrimination and prejudice which led to the abuse and murder of those who were viewed not to fit with the National Socialist's vision. Chapter Three discusses in detail different definitions of this term.

<sup>9</sup> The QCA could not locate drafts of this scheme of work within their archives, or confirm or deny that Holocaust denial had been an element of work suggested in a draft of their scheme of work on the Holocaust.

It's an old story and a true one. Our Year 9 pupil, Melanie, enjoying history enormously but struggling with factual information that is so new to her, is asked to do a little test. Can she remember just one European dictator? Mussolini? Hitler? Stalin? Melanie tries to remember the lively lessons. Her teacher worked hard to build narratives in her head. But it's all too difficult. Mustering her memory, she thinks she's got there. She's remembered. She writes 'MUTLIN'. Armed with her hybrid dictator, Melanie will be forced to give up history in four weeks time. In four years time, she will vote.

(Counsell, 2002a)

If students' compulsory study of history ended at 16 rather than 14, as originally envisaged by Kenneth Baker, the need for the new Citizenship Curriculum (discussed in Chapter Three), introduced in September 2002 and compulsory for students in Key Stage 3 and 4, may be reduced. According to Phillips "the current Citizenship Orders in England place too much emphasis upon civic action at the political level and perhaps not enough on social justice" (R. Phillips, 2002, p.145). If one of the main aims of the Citizenship Curriculum is, as it would seem to be, to engage young people in our democracy<sup>10</sup> then Counsell is right to question whether the Citizenship Curriculum represents an undue loss of faith in the National Curriculum (Counsell, 2002b).

An article in *History Today* prompted me to consider further the purpose of teaching the Holocaust in history. In Germany all students study the Nazi period and the Holocaust, but this has not prevented a rise in racism and neo-Nazism among the youth of Germany. In fact the implication in this article is that it may have prompted it. According to Thomas Lutz, head of Memorial Museums for the Topography of Terror in Berlin:

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Three for further discussion regarding the introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum.



Twenty years ago right-wing extremists would attack the evidence historians had about Nazi crimes. Now they have started conceding they did happen and then saying what the Nazis did was right. Not only do they say this, they write it in the visitors' books. It's only a small minority but it is a new situation.

(Quoted in Fawcett, 2001, p.16)

Lutz attributes this to the development of a “negative memory”. His view was supported by a German history teacher, “the fact that we can't look back on the last century with any pride is certainly difficult for some young people. Kids want to be proud of something and need to identify with something”. Several history teachers noted in this article that their students were asking more ‘revisionist’ questions. The worry for Herr Lutz is the effect that the upsurge in neo-Nazism among young people in Germany “is going to have now and in the future” (Fawcett, 2001, pp. 16-17). This article is significant in that it raises the question of whether teaching the Holocaust is an antidote to racism and prejudice. In 1997 a survey of 7,927 students at 120 schools in 60 towns in Sweden was conducted. It reported that “a third of Swedish 12 to 18 year olds do not believe the Nazis' extermination of the Jews ever occurred” (Reported in the *TES*, 4 July 1997). Dr John P Fox has written in *The Holocaust Encyclopaedia* (Fox, 2001) that throughout Europe the Holocaust is studied at school and university level with varying degrees of attention being given to the subject from country to country. He concludes his entry on Holocaust Education in Europe writing that this “reflects positively on the intention in Europe to resist any resurgence of National Socialism and other extremist movements based on racism” (2001, p.305). However Kinloch (2001) has questioned whether teaching about the Holocaust can prevent future genocides. The views of the German and Swedish students above would seem to indicate that Holocaust education is not an inoculation against racist and anti-Semitic propaganda.

In her article about teaching the Holocaust, Moloney (Moloney, 12 September 2003) - who used a quotation from a letter I had written to *Teaching History*, “the key to teaching the Holocaust well is not having more time but being clear in our own minds of our objectives” (Russell, 2001a) – also included a revealing quotation from Dr Stephen Smith, director of the Beth Shalom Centre in Nottinghamshire, “many teachers with whom we come into contact convey the Holocaust sensitively to their students. However, there are also many who pay only lip service, are purely historical in their approach and do not adequately understand the literature”. This is an interesting quotation which implies criticism of those teachers who take a “purely historical” approach to teaching the Holocaust and supports the argument put forward in this thesis that the objectives of teaching the Holocaust in history are unclear. Within her article Moloney identifies this principle issue: “the main problem seems to be that teachers are unclear about why they are teaching the Holocaust. Is the rationale behind it primarily historical, moral or social?”. It is this question which is central to this thesis.

This thesis takes as its starting point Kinloch’s 1998 review of Michael Burleigh’s *Ethics and Extermination* in which Kinloch asserted that history teachers will not teach the Holocaust effectively until their objectives are clarified. Inferences drawn from history can guide present actions and illuminate our understanding of how and why things happen in society. In an attempt to clarify the objectives of teaching the Holocaust in school history, this thesis traces the history of the Holocaust as a topic for study in the National Curriculum. The views of teachers on the subject of teaching the Holocaust in school history have been researched in an attempt to discover whether these match the intentions of those who demanded the inclusion of

the topic in the History Curriculum. Finally, this thesis aims to encourage discussion of what appears to me to be the fundamental question, what is important about teaching the Holocaust in school history?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **DEBATES ABOUT HISTORY AND METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THIS STUDY**

This thesis examines, through analysis of working documentation and interviews with key actors, the rationale (or lack of rationale) behind the inclusion of the topic of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History. Having researched why the Holocaust was included and has become increasingly prominent on the History National Curriculum, I felt it necessary to probe the question of how history teachers approach this topic; how have they interpreted the Holocaust as a topic in the National Curriculum for History? For this purpose I decided to conduct interviews with history teachers to discuss their experience and perception of teaching the Holocaust in history. This thesis highlights the varied motivations and approaches of history teachers to teaching the Holocaust in Key Stage 3. It is an ambitious project. However, the reasons for the prominent position of this topic in the National Curriculum for History, and what history teachers see as being important about the topic of the Holocaust, appear to be related. This chapter outlines the methodological and ethical issues related to this study as well as debates about the nature of history. It is split into three sections. The paragraphs below discuss historical research as a research methodology and explain the historical methods adopted and their values and limitations. This chapter then moves on to discuss the decision to interview history teachers; and finally outlines the problems with tackling an emotive issue like the Holocaust.

## **HISTORICAL RESEARCH AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Arthur Marwick has noted that, “the question historians address is simply ‘what happened?’, followed quickly by ‘why?’ and ‘how?’”. This thesis adopts an historical methodology in order to research why and how the Holocaust has come to be a prominent topic in the National Curriculum for History, because, “what happened in the past influences what happens in the present” (Marwick, 2001, p.2).

History does not fit easily into either qualitative or quantitative research paradigms in their traditional sense. Marwick writes that “history is an autonomous discipline with its own specialised methods” (Marwick, 2001, p.17), though, that said, Cohen and Manion note that historical methodology is predominately qualitative:

This is so because the proper subject-matter of historical research consists to a great extent of verbal and other symbolic material emanating from a society’s or culture’s past. The basic skills required of the researcher to analyse this kind of qualitative or symbolic material involve collecting, classifying, ordering, synthesising, evaluating and interpreting. At the basis of all these is sound personal judgement.

(Cohen & Manion, 1989, p.54)

It is true that historical research constitutes an analytical paradigm, and most historians’ work continues to be based on documentary evidence. Discussion of the methodological issues surrounding the use of documentary evidence is included below. The following paragraphs discuss the nature of history as background to the more detailed discussion of historical research as a research methodology which follows.

### **What is history?**

The first part of this thesis sits within the discipline known as the history of education. This is one of many different types of history (social, political, women's, the history of medicine and so on) all of which "are governed by the need to conform to certain agreed standards and principles" (Marwick, 2001, p.3). There is broad agreement among historians of these principles (Marwick, 1984; Stanford, 1986; Thomson, 1969). History can be defined as an account of the past based on available evidence that remains from the past. Eric Hobsbawm has written "historians are professionally obliged not to get it wrong – or at least to make an effort not to" (Hobsbawm, 1990, pp. 12-13). It is the truth verifying process which historians employ in an effort "not to get it wrong" that makes history a distinctive discipline. This is not to say that once an event or personality from the past has been researched and written about by an historian that no further analysis is required. Marwick explains that it is the historian's task to revisit, refine and revise previously researched histories as additional materials become available and from different perspectives as new areas of interest develop (Marwick, 2001, p.47). This understanding of history (that is the way in which modern historians research and write about the past) has developed from centuries of historical writing. Because history is a reconstruction of the past it is open to the interpretation of the historian completing the research. Modern historians are encouraged to make clear their prejudices and assumptions when completing historical research and writing but the historian's experience of the present is likely to have some affect on the account given. The influence of the present on the historian's account of the past is referred to by JH Hexter as the historian's "second record" (Hexter, 1971). We turn to history to understand how things have come to be as they are; the following

paragraphs serve to outline the evolution of historical scholarship. The brief history below draws on the historiographies provided by Marwick in his *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (2001) and Richard J Evans in his *In Defence of History* (1997), as well as Fritz Stern's *The Varieties of History from Voltaire to the Present* (1956) and Ernst Breisach's *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (1994).

The Western tradition goes back to Herodotus (c.484 BC–c.425 BC) and Thucydides (c.455 BC–c.400 BC) who were writing towards the end of the great classical age in Ancient Greece; Polybius (c.198 BC–c.117 BC) who was writing when Greece was falling under the domination of Rome; and Livy and Tacitus (c. AD 55–AD 120) and Plutarch (AD 50–AD 120) who were historians of Imperial Rome. They saw their work as providing moral illustration. It was intended to be educational, “a preparation for life, especially political and military life” (Marwick, 2001, p.53). The Greek and Roman writers chronicled events, their writings were essentially “a narration of memorable events designed to preserve the memory and propagate the knowledge of glorious deeds, or events which were important to a man [sic], a family, or a people” (Marwick, 2001, p.53). Much of their work is what is now termed contemporary history. During Medieval times historical writing tended to continue in this tradition. The basis of historical writing in the post-classical period was theological, left in the main to monkish chroniclers who chronicled events with the aim of working out God's purpose in the world. Their belief in divine intervention inhibited their analysis of historical causation, “though often themselves expert forgers, medieval chroniclers were quite uncritical in their treatment of documentary evidence” (Marwick, 2001, p.55). During the Renaissance the ancillary

techniques associated with modern historical study began to be developed, but the view that God was ultimately responsible for events continued to dominate. This was challenged by the rationalist historians of the Enlightenment who saw events as governed by human forces. However, the perceived purpose of history continued to be one of moral illustration. The Romantics of the early nineteenth century had a different view. They saw the purpose of history as finding out about and preserving the past. In their view history should be cherished as the foundation for understanding and appreciating the institutions of state and society in the present. The Romantics' conservative view of history was influenced by the German historian Leopold Von Ranke who "did little to cast off the prejudices and assumptions of his nation and class" (Marwick, 2001, p. 65). Ranke held conservative views "supporting the repressive Press Law passed in the German Confederation after the 1830 upheavals, and rejoicing in the events of 1870-1 'as the victory of Conservative Europe over the revolution'" (Marwick, 2001, p.65). However Marwick notes that despite his politics, "Ranke did not abuse his methods and his sources as was the case with some of his younger compatriots" (Marwick, 2001, p.65). Ranke made a major contribution to historical scholarship, and though his critics point out that he may not have adhered to his own principles of historical research (Evans, 1997, pp.22-3), his methodology has been the historian's basic training since the nineteenth century:

Whatever the means they use, historians still have to engage in the basic Rankean spadework of investigating the provenance of documents, of enquiring about the motives of those who wrote them, the circumstances in which they were written, and the ways in which they relate to other documents on the same subject.

(Evans, 1997, p.19)

In the preface to his *Histories of the Latin and Teutonic Nations 1494-1514* (1824)

Ranke wrote:



To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices this work does not aspire: it wants only to show how it actually happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).

(Translation in Gooch, 1952, p. 74)

Like historians of the nineteenth century, Ranke saw God's plan behind the events of the human past, "not for him the scepticism of the Enlightenment" (Marwick, 2001, p.64). Ranke stated that "every epoch is immediate to God", meaning says Evans that "God in His Eternity made no distinction between periods of history; all were the same in His eyes" (Evans, 1997, p.17). Ranke's view that it was not for the historian to make judgements about the past based on their experience of the present distanced him from the Prussian school of German historians. As the following chapter demonstrates the distance between Ranke and historians such as Herodotus encapsulates the debate over the purpose of school history: should school history be taught according to Rankean methodology, or is school history different from academic history and more in line with Herodotus' view of history as providing moral illustration?

### **Is history a science, an art or a distinctive discipline?**

It can already be seen from the brief historiography above that the perceived purpose of history has changed over time; and views about the purpose of history inform how historians believe the past should be researched and written about. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) wanted history to be governed and researched by a process; laws which he believed would allow future events to be predicted. While those who followed Ranke's methodology were 'scientific' in the way in which they approached their sources, Comte was calling for history to become scientific in the sense of general laws (Marwick, 2001, p.70). This call for a more scientific approach would recur;

the debate over the nature of history is noted by Marwick as one of the “five major issues” which were being discussed in the field of historical scholarship at the end of the nineteenth century<sup>11</sup> (Marwick, 2001, p.79). In 1862 the French historian Fustel de Coulanges declared “history is, and should be, a science” (Stern, 1956, p. 179).

This perception of history as science encouraged the view that:

Out there, in the documents, lay the facts, waiting to be discovered by historians, just as the stars shone out there in the heavens waiting to be discovered by astronomers; all the historian had to do was apply the proper scientific method, eliminate his [sic] own personality from the investigation, and the facts would come to light.

(Evans, 1997, p.21)

The issue of whether or not history was a science was addressed by the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey in his *Introduction to Historical Knowledge* (1883). According to Dilthey there was a distinction between scientific and cultural knowledge, and since history was cultural knowledge it need not conform to the norms of science (Marwick, 2001, p.81). In the *Encyclopaedia and Methodology of History* (1868) by Johann Gustav Droysen, “Droysen asserted the validity of Rankean methodology, but many historians drew from Dilthey confirmation that they were right to approach history as a literary subject” (Marwick, 2001, p.81). Twenty years later CW Langlois and Charles Seignobos, authors of *Introduction to the Study of History* (1898) dismissed as “idle” questions such as “whether history is a science or an art; what are the duties of history?; what is the use of history?”. Marwick writes, “Langlois and Seignobos did regard history as a science whose methods differ from

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<sup>11</sup> This was the second in Marwick’s list “five major issues”, the other four were: i) Is the central concern of history the political state and relationships, as Ranke thought? ii) Could history be ‘objective’ or was it always subject to the assumptions and prejudices of the historian? iii) As new techniques were developed (psychological, statistical, and so on) were they to be: (a) treated with suspicion; (b) embraced and trumpeted as superceding all older techniques; or (c) considered as merely a further addition to the growing range of methods and approaches at the disposal of historians? iv) How legitimate, and how important, were the new areas for study which from time to time were proposed – such as the masses, economic motives and interests, religious superstition, urbanisation, demography, women?

all other sciences!” (Marwick, 2001, p.81). Their view of history was influenced by what they perceived the aim of history to be, “[it] is not to please, nor to give practical maxims of conduct, nor to arouse the emotions, but knowledge pure and simple” (Quoted in Marwick, 2001, p.81). However, in Trevelyan’s opinion history was an art. In his famous essay *Clio, a Muse*<sup>12</sup> he stated that “no one can ever give a completely or wholly true account of the French Revolution”, he went on, “he [the historian] will give the best interpretation who, having discovered and weighed all the important evidence obtainable, has the largest grasp of intellect, the warmest human sympathy, the highest imaginable powers”(Quoted in Stern, 1956, p. 231). Trevelyan is described by Evans as essentially a nationalist historian; his major works were on England. Trevelyan’s objection to the ‘scientific’ understanding of history was influenced by the fact it was German (Evans, 1997, p.26). “And who is the mother country to Anglo-Saxon historians?” Trevelyan wrote, “the methods and limitations of German learning presumably suit the Germans, but are certain to prove a strait waistcoat to English limbs and faculties” (Quoted in Stern, 1956, p.229). He regretted that “the historians of today were trained by the Germanising hierarchy to regard history not as a ‘story’ but as a ‘science’” (Stern, 1956, p.234). The defeat of Germany in 1918 represented for Trevelyan the defeat of German ‘scientific’ history. As historians of different nations vigorously debated the origins of the War it became clear that despite their rigorous scientific training they seemed no closer to “a properly neutral and ‘objective’ attitude to the recent past” (Evans, 1997, p.28). Following the end of the First World War German scholarship went out of favour. Many historians who had studied in Germany denounced German scholarship as pedantic and anti-democratic (Evans, 1997, p.28). The world was now a far less

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<sup>12</sup>This was published in the *Independent Review* in 1903 and republished in 1913.

certain place which gave rise to scepticism and disorientation among historians and led HAL Fisher (Fisher, 1935) to the conclusion that there was no pattern in history. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that historical objectivity reasserted itself. Historians like EH Carr (1961) urged history and the social sciences to move closer together. He saw that historians were the product of their own environment and times and as such were unable to get at the facts of history. Carr therefore wanted the discipline to adopt a more scientific approach and involve greater quantification. Indeed, historians internationally were calling for a more scientific approach to history. The group of historians associated with the journal *Annales* shared Carr's desire. In the United States these beliefs were taken further. The econometric historian Robert Fogel drew a clear distinction between 'scientific' and 'traditional' history. Evans describes 'scientific' history:

Scientific history, made possible above all by the computer, rested not on vague, incomplete, implicit and inconsistent sets of assumptions about human behaviour in the way that traditional history did, but on explicitly elaborated, sometimes mathematical models that could be rigorously tested by quantitative means.

(Evans, 1997, p.39)

In 1974 Fogel published a two-volume study of slavery in the old American South with Stanley L Engerman (R. Fogel & Engerman, 1974). *Time on the Cross* aimed to prove the value of a rigorous scientific method. Fogel and Engerman contradicted previous research completed in this area concluding that the economic efficiency of slavery was such that the slaves benefited from standards of living at least as high as those of free workers at the time. However, their quantification and statistics failed to deliver Fogel and Engerman 'scientific' certainty; their work was heavily criticised (Evans, 1997, p. 41). One group of critics wrote, after a lengthy re-examination of the data:

*Time on the Cross* is full of errors. The book embraces errors of mathematics, disregards standard principles of statistical inference, mis-cites sources, takes quotations out of context, distorts the views and findings of other historians and economists, and relies on dubious and largely unexplained models of market behaviour, economic dynamics, socialisation, sexual behaviour, fertility determination, and genetics (to name some).

(David, 1976, p.339)

GR Elton was also critical of this approach to history. In 1983 Fogel and Elton published *Which Road to the Past?* (R. W. Fogel & Elton, 1983) in which they debated 'scientific' versus 'traditional' history. Elton saw history as a distinct discipline unrelated to science, "history is a study different from any other and governed by rules peculiar to itself" (Elton, 1991, pp.62-3). Elton's *The Practice of History* (1967) is seen as a defence against Carr's relativistic approach to history. Elton agreed that history was a search for the objective truth but that historians' motivations bore no relevance to the study of history and that a narrative of political events should form the basis of historical study. By the 1980s the search for a scientific method of history had failed to yield any definitive results (Evans, 1997, p. 43); during this decade the debate over the nature of history was eclipsed by the challenge of post-modernism (see below). While history may not be a science the discipline can claim to be involved in the sciences: scientists, social scientists and historians are all engaged in different elements of the study of human beings and their environment. Felipe Fernandez-Armesto explains the existence, growth and importance of science in history:

Though Carr insisted that history was a science, I do not think that he appreciated, as we are beginning to today, the degree to which historians have to be scientifically educated...Human beings are obviously part of the animal continuum. We are enmeshed in the ecosystems of which we are part, and nothing, in my submission, in human history makes complete sense without reference to the rest of nature. That is why historical ecology, or environmental history, deserves a growing place in the curriculum. It is also why on a more frivolous level, when people ask me 'what is your period?', I always say 'from primeval slime to the future,' and when they ask me 'what is your field?', I say 'I only do one planet'. History now has to be scientifically informed in order to encompass the natural environment.

(Fernandez-Armesto, 2002, p.153)

### **The post-modernist challenge**

The understanding of history presented in the paragraphs above was challenged by post-modernists such as Hayden White who argued that history was a branch of literature and that the 'narratives' of historians do not differ significantly from novels. In the post-modernist view:

Texts were arbitrary assemblages of words that themselves had come into being only through an arbitrary process of human invention. Each time we read a text, therefore, we put meaning into it ourselves. So it was with the historian also. Thus what historians wrote was their own invention and not a true or objective representation about past reality which was irrecoverable.

(Evans, 2002, p. 7)

Post-modernist theory had wider implications:

The questions they [post-modernists] raise – about the possibility or impossibility of attaining objective knowledge, the elusive and relative nature of truth, the difficulties involved in distinguishing between fact and fiction – do not merely challenge historians to re-examine the theory and practice of their own discipline, they also have wider implications that go far beyond the boundaries of academic and university life. In this sense the problem of how historians approach the acquisition of knowledge about the past, and whether they can ever wholly succeed in this enterprise, symbolises the much bigger problem of how far society can ever attain the kind of objective certainty about the great issues of our time that can serve as a reliable basis for taking vital decisions for our future in the twenty first century.

(Evans, 1997, p. 9)

The threat from post-modernism prompted Evans to write *In Defence of History* (1997). Not all historians viewed post-modernism as a serious threat, and post-modernist arguments were ignored by a number of historians (Evans, 1997, pp 4-5). Others who did not necessarily agree on the nature of history were united against the post-modernist challenge. Elton claimed post-modernist theory was “the intellectual equivalent of crack”. He said, “we are fighting for the lives of innocent young people beset by devilish tempters who claim to offer higher forms of thought and deeper truths and insights” (Elton, 1991). Raphael Samuel, an historian on the socialist Left, warned that “the deconstructive turn in contemporary thought” encouraged a view of history “not as a record of the past more or less faithful to the facts,” but “as an invention, or fiction, of historians themselves” (Samuel, 1992, pp.220-1) which he found unacceptable. Marwick feared history students might be persuaded by the post-modernists “that the history of the historians is worthless” (Marwick, 1995, p.5) and denounced post-modernist thought as a “menace to serious historical study” (Marwick, 1995, p.29).

Many of the criticisms of history raised by post-modernists had in fact already been considered by professional historians. One example Evans cites is the post-modernist theory espoused by David Harlan that historical texts could no longer be regarded as having the fixed and unalterable meaning given by their author. Evans goes on to question whether historians had ever believed that meaning can be fixed in this way (Evans, 1997, p. 103). Indeed, Marwick has stressed the importance of using language as clearly and precisely as possible for this reason. He discusses the distinction between “witting and unwitting testimony” for historians grappling with

primary sources in repeated editions of his *The Nature of History* and *The New Nature of History* (Marwick, 2001, p.1, p.12, p.172). The question of whether objective certainty regarding contemporary issues is possible, a question relevant to Chapter Five of this thesis, was also raised by post-modernists. But this also was an older debate considered previously for example by historians writing after the First World War.

Interestingly in terms of this study Evans (1997, pp.124-5) writes that the Holocaust presented a further challenge to the arguments put forward by post-modernists: the post-modernist hyper-relativism which claimed that history was incapable of establishing any real facts about the past, viewed historical documents as texts, the facts they contained as rhetoric and the histories produced based upon the documents as literature, gave countenance to revisionist claims of Holocaust denial. Here, notes Evans, evidence mattered; the historical evidence of the Holocaust is the whole argument against ‘revisionist’ (deniers’) claims. The Holocaust happened. Post-modernist claims about the nature of history seemed to trivialise mass murder. But if the post-modernist accepted this, their theories would be brought further into question. Accepting that there was evidence which establishes the Holocaust as historical fact would mean accepting evidence of other historical events and personalities. White was among those who revised their position. According to White, he had been concerned in his earlier work to draw attention to the fact that historians did not simply write up their findings in report style but used literary methods to construct what they were writing and use of such methods inevitably brought a “fictive” element to their work. White’s later work drew a sharper distinction between fiction and history.



History survived the post-modernist challenge because it is an autonomous discipline with its own distinctive, well tried methods (Marwick, 2001). This is not to say that post-modernism offered nothing to history. Carr in 1961 had written about what disciplines such as sociology could offer history and Evans pointed out in his 1997 text that the same could be argued about literary criticism and linguistic analysis:

Historians should approach the invading hordes of semioticians, post-structuralists, New Historicists, Foucauldians, Lacanians and the rest with more discrimination. Some of them might prove more friendly, or more useful, than they seem at first sight.

(Evans, 1997, p. 9)

The challenge from the post-modernists enabled debate and a re-evaluation of history, which has emerged in rude health as demonstrated in *What is History Now?* (Cannadine, 2002). While post-modernism may well have been a “paper tiger” (Fernandez-Armesto, 2002, p.149) the post-modernists did have an impact on history, “even as the tide receded, post-modernism left a rich residue on the shore, encouraging historical beachcombing” (2002, p. 149). Indeed, Evans wrote in this same volume, “more people are writing more history than ever before, in an unprecedented range of sub-disciplinary specialisms and expositional modes” (Evans, 2002, p.xi).

### **Making moral judgements about the past**

The above demonstrates how the principles and purpose of history have evolved. While there is broad agreement regarding the nature of history in modern times debates remain; the most relevant to this thesis being the issue of whether or not it is the historian's place to make moral judgements about the past, and whether it is possible to be objective about history. Carr did not believe that it was the historian's role to make moral judgements but rather to understand how the past has contributed to human progress (Evans, 1997, p. 49). This view is reminiscent of Ranke for whom "every epoch is immediate to God". It was perhaps Professor David Knowles who was the greatest proponent of this view stating "the historian is not a judge, still less a hanging judge" (Knowles, 1955, p.19) . Evans suggests that Knowles did in fact make moral judgements, but that Knowles' principle is a good one to follow (Evans, 1997, p. 51). Knowles was a medievalist and it is perhaps even more difficult for contemporary historians researching twentieth century history to avoid making moral judgements:

And if anyone cavils at the statement that it is not our business to pass moral judgements on Hitler or Stalin – or, if you like, on Senator McCarthy – this is because they were contemporaries of many of us, because hundreds of thousands of those who suffered directly or indirectly from their actions are still alive, and because, precisely for these reasons, it is difficult for us to approach them as historians and to divest ourselves of other capacities which might justify us in passing judgement on their deeds: this is one of the embarrassments – I should say the principal embarrassment – of the contemporary historian. But what profit does anyone find today in denouncing the sins of Charlemagne or of Napoleon?

(Carr, 1961, pp.77-78)

There are several issues here. Carr warns against judging twentieth century figures such as Hitler "bad", since this propagates too simplistic a view of history which fails to examine, for example, the wider role of European society in creating Hitler. What Carr is saying in the above quotation is relevant to the point made in the previous

chapter regarding Supple's argument that the Holocaust must be taught in school history because it was such a terrible moral event, "how, for example, could human beings dump a truckload of babies into a burning pit and appear to feel nothing?...it is crucial that this history be part of the mainstream syllabus"<sup>13</sup>. Evans suggests that what is required to understand phenomena such as Nazism and the Holocaust is "detachment". He writes "the historian has to develop a detached mode of cognition, a faculty of self-criticism and an ability to understand another person's point of view" (Evans, 1997, p.252). In the preface to a later book, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Evans goes further, explaining that he views many of the histories previously written on the Third Reich to be contaminated by the rage or horror of their authors,

It seems to me inappropriate for a work of history to indulge in the luxury of moral judgement. For one thing, it is unhistorical; for another, it is arrogant and presumptuous. I cannot know how I would have behaved if I had lived under the Third Reich, if only because, if I had lived then, I would have been a different person from the one I am now.

(Evans, 2003, p.xxi)

The final sentence in the quotation above from Carr may go some way to explain why there was a desire to include the Holocaust as compulsory in the National Curriculum for History. At a time when Holocaust survivors are coming to the end of their natural lives, is there a fear that if educational policies and materials are not in place then what is taught and learned about the Holocaust might diminish in its perceived importance like Charlemagne and Napoleon? This issue is discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. The campaign for the inclusion of the topic of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History is discussed in Chapter Five. There is a further point made by Carr regarding moral judgement which is important to note generally (but not applicable in the case of the Holocaust). Carr points out that moral standards are relative; what is accepted by our society in the twenty first

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<sup>13</sup> See page 25.

century would not have been acceptable to Victorian society for example. As such it is not right for the historian to judge past events; this is something that Hexter (1971) has also drawn attention to. His “second record” works on two levels referring to the assumptions and biases of the historian completing the research, and to the attitudes of modern society from which the historian cannot detach themselves.

### **The problem of dealing with contemporary research**

The issue of historical objectivity and “detachment” is relevant to Chapter Five where it will be returned to; the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that it was impossible for those constructing the National Curriculum for History to do so with detachment. The issue of detachment is relevant to historians of any period. Contemporary historians face this challenge along with other challenges such as lacking access to relevant archives. For example, it is likely to be 30 years or more before military historians have access to state papers about the 2003 war in Iraq. There may well be documents archived under the 30 year rule which I have not seen but which would be of interest to this study. I am aware of documentation held by members of the History Working Group (HWG), some of which I have seen but do not have copies of, which I have been unable to make use of. However, historians researching any period can face this problem since no historian is likely to ever be in receipt of all the evidence relevant to their study. Indeed, history is a study of the past based on the available evidence. The clear benefit of completing contemporary research in this instance is that I have been able to talk to those involved in making history because they are still alive<sup>14</sup>. Nonetheless, Hobsbawm has suggested that it is not the role of the historian to research the recent past:

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<sup>14</sup> One member of the HWG has died since this research was begun. John Roberts died on 30 May 2003.

Like Britain itself, anchored in the nineteenth century the British working class is in danger of losing its bearings. But its present situation and prospects are a subject for the reporter and the sociologist. They are not yet the subject for the historian.

(Hobsbawm, 1984, p.193)

However Professor Clyde Chitty disagrees, “has the sociologist techniques for analysing contemporary events that the historian does not have; or are we to assume that the study is of a frivolous nature fit only for the journalist?” (Chitty, 1991, p.12). There are difficulties in researching contemporary events just as there are difficulties in researching any period of history. The contemporary historian is in no less a position of strength than the historian of the future since, as has been noted above, histories are never complete and need to be revisited and refined regardless of when they were first written:

The historian is not a kind of celestial chief justice, sentencing the guilty and setting free the innocent. He [sic] is part of the process he describes, and his judgements can never be more than provisional.

(Marquand, 1977, p.791)

Chapters Four and Five of this thesis are based on contemporary history because it is through researching and understanding the recent past that the present is understood more clearly and possibilities for the future become apparent:

There is such a thing as a usable past. We may not be able to stop history from repeating itself, but we can use the past to explain how our society and economy and politics came to be as they are, and to work towards an understanding of how things might be.

(Hennessy & Seldon, 1987, p.3)

### **Increasing specialisation and making this thesis manageable**

In the past 40 years historians have increasingly specialised in different elements of history. *What is History Now?* (Cannadine, 2002), a collection of essays which emerged from a symposium held to discuss this question 40 years after Carr's original publication, is evidence of this including as it does separate chapters on "What is Social History Now?", "What is Political History Now?", "What is Religious History Now?" and so on. Increasing specialisation has brought negative as well as positive results as Marwick explains, "the creation of new specialisms generally entailed advances in historical knowledge, but rigid compartmentalisation also led to over-reliance on particular methods, and blindness to the advantages to be obtained through varying the approach" (Marwick, 2001, p.97). Fernandez-Armesto has also written about the increasing specialisation within history and the implications of this noting that "the work of the professional historian has never been as multifarious" (Fernandez-Armesto, 2002, p.149):

The results have been mixed. They include the curse of over-specialisation: historians dig ever deeper, narrower furrows in even more desiccated soil until the furrows collapse and they are buried under their own aridity. Yet on the other hand, whenever one climbs out of one's furrow, there is now so much more of the field to survey: so much enriching new work, which can change one's perspective or broaden one's framework of comparison. There is simply so much more to learn from. The amount of output, of course, is now frankly unmanageable. Even a quite narrow specialist is unlikely to be aware of - much less read - everything of relevance.

(Fernandez-Armesto, 2002, p.150)

There is a vast amount of literature on the topic of the Holocaust and related issues. In the preface to his book *The Coming of the Third Reich* Evans (2003) notes that the standard bibliography of works on the Nazi period stood at more than 37,000 entries in the year 2000 (Evans, 2003, p.xvi). This thesis, particularly the following chapter, draws upon and provides an overview of some of the literature on the topic of the

Holocaust. Given the size of the bibliography of works on this period of history and the fact that this thesis is not principally about the Holocaust but rather how the topic is approached in school history, I have not endeavoured to read this entire bibliography. I have read some of this literature as well as literature on the topic of teaching the Holocaust in history. Based on this reading I have developed the issues that seem to me interesting and germane. This has been particularly necessary in order to maintain a clear focus, but readers may identify issues that have not been pursued but they feel warrant attention.

### **Authenticity and Reliability**

Sceptics who point to the fact that all sources are 'biased', and conclude from this that all historians are bound to be misled by them, are as wide of the mark as politicians who imagine that future historians will take their memoirs on trust.

(Evans, 1997, p.20)

The historical method as outlined above operates equally in educational as in general history (Brickman, 1982). The discussion below focuses on the application of the principles and practice of historiography to the issues that have arisen during this study. This thesis draws on data gained from a number of semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in the creation and development of the National Curriculum for History. Documentary evidence including the working documentation of the HWG, letters, and newspaper articles are used alongside oral sources. The rest of this section discusses these sources and their values and limitations.

### **Oral testimony as historical evidence: interviewing key actors**

Roberts, in his response to my request for an interview to discuss his experiences on the HWG replied, “you are, of course, turning to oral evidence – of all historical sources, in my view the least reliable!” (Correspondence, 14 May 2002). According to John Tosh such scepticism regarding oral evidence is not uncommon within the mainstream of the historical profession (Tosh, 1991, p.207). Tosh is critical of the professions’ unwillingness to discuss “the actual merits and drawbacks of historical research” (Tosh, 1991, p.207). He highlights that in 1970 Marwick’s otherwise comprehensive list of primary sources in *The Nature of History*, oral sources were not included; which indicates that the move towards acceptance of oral evidence is relatively recent.

Despite being ignored throughout the nineteenth century by modern academic history, and viewed with scepticism in the twentieth and into the twenty first century, according to Tosh oral history is the basis of the discipline of history. Tosh divides oral sources into two categories: oral history which involves “first-hand recollections of people interviewed by an historian” and oral tradition which describes “the narratives and descriptions of people and events in the past which have been handed down by word of mouth over several generations” (Tosh, 1991, p.206). The work of both Herodotus and Thucydides drew heavily on both of these forms of oral evidence as did chroniclers and historians of the Middle Ages. Tosh gives the example of William of Malmesbury whose twelfth century writings incorporate oral tradition and first hand testimony. From the Renaissance onwards documentary evidence grew in importance though historians continued to draw upon oral evidence in addition to documents. It was really as a result of the new professional historians



“cast in the Rankean mould” that oral evidence ‘fell by the wayside’. Rankean historians “were taken up by the study of written documents, on which their claim to technical expertise was based, and their working lives were largely confined to the library and the archive” (Tosh, 1991, p.207). Tosh notes that many of the documents studied by these and modern historians are oral in origin. Though modern historians are aware of this they are nervous about adding to the volume of available oral evidence by conducting interviews themselves (Tosh, 1991, p. 207). According to Tosh the cause of this nervousness:

Is partly that historians are reluctant to see any compromise with the principle that contemporaneity is the prime requirement of historical sources and oral sources have an inescapable element of hindsight about them. But perhaps there is a more deep-seated aversion to any radical change in the habits of work required for historical research, and a reluctance to grapple with the implications of scholars sharing in the creation (and not just the interpretation) of new evidence.

(Tosh, 1991, p. 207)

There are several factors which have influenced a growing acceptance of oral evidence. For example, technological developments in the twentieth century have meant that in some cases paper records in the form of private and official letters have diminished as use of the telephone has increased. For historians attempting to research twentieth century politicians there has sometimes been little option but to interview their contemporaries in order to gain impressions of the subject since, as in the case of Herbert Morrison, some politicians from this era have left few private papers. The development of the social sciences where interviews are a major research tool has been another influence (Tosh, 1991, pp. 207-8).

As with all methods of research there are difficulties with regard to the conduct of interviews. Tosh explains, “in an interview each party is affected by the other. It is the historian who selects the informant and indicates the area of interest.” He goes on, “the presence of an outsider affects the atmosphere in which the informant recalls the past and talks about it” (1991, p. 213). Tosh highlights the limitations of personal memory:

Memories, however precise and vivid, are filtered through subsequent experience. They may be contaminated by what has been absorbed from other sources (especially the media); they may be overlaid by nostalgia (‘times were good then’), or distorted by a sense of grievance about deprivation in childhood which only took root in later life.

(Tosh, 1991, p. 213)

It might also be that interviewees have forgotten something which the historian may find useful, although in some cases questions might prompt interviewees’ recollections. Dr Trude Levi is a Hungarian Jew who has given many talks about her experiences during the Holocaust. In her book *Did you ever meet Hitler, Miss?* she touches on the issue of memory:

We were only once taken out of Birkenau-B2 camp during our time there, when we were sent out for a bath and given clean clothing. I had forgotten the incident completely until someone asked me one day whether any of the guards had ever hit me. Then it came back to me; we were walking barefoot over extremely sharp stones on our way to the bath. One of the stones rolled over and I slipped out of the line. The next second, I was lying on the ground. One of the guards hit me so hard on the nape of the neck that I had blacked out for a moment and lost my balance. I managed to get up and get back into the line before they could hit me again. Because I was concentrating so hard on where to tread I remember very little else about the incident, where we were going or what the surroundings were like. But I do remember this was the only time we left the camp.

(Levi, 2003, p.16)

It is important to bear in mind when conducting interviews not only the fallibility of memory but that interviewees, like politicians in their memoirs (see below), may offer a particular version of events portraying their actions in a certain light. While this is interesting in itself it is important, in order to be accurate, to have some corroborative evidence, “oral evidence like all verbal materials, requires critical evaluation deployed in conjunction with all the other available sources” (Tosh, 1991, p. 215). This study has drawn on oral evidence from individual members of bodies established to advise on and review the content and structure of the National Curriculum for History. Interviews have been triangulated against each other as well as with available documentary evidence. One of the benefits of this approach for the contemporary historian of education is explained by Chitty:

The methodology used by the teacher-as-researcher often takes the form of an interactive combination of in-depth interviews with key people and textual analysis. The contemporary historian of education is often in a fortunate position: having used the interviews to confirm the conclusions reached from the textual analysis, he or she can return to the documents to confirm the accuracy of what has been disclosed in the interviews – thereby providing a form of **dialectic inter-action** between the two.

(Chitty, 1996, p.4. Emphasis in the original.)

In addition to being useful for the purposes of triangulating data, there are other advantages to using oral and documentary sources alongside each other. Seldon and Pappworth (1983) see personal interviews as necessary for filling in the gaps in documentary evidence. Interviewing members of the HWG would provide data which was unavailable in their minutes as well as providing an opportunity for interviewees to expand on the points minuted thus giving greater depth to HWG working documentation.

Fitz and Halpin (1994) provide a fourfold explanation of their decision to conduct elite interviews in their research on Grant Maintained schools<sup>15</sup>: first, personal interviews provide an insight into educational policy making which is not available in documentary form and therefore unavailable in the public domain. Second, interviews are a means of clarifying, confirming or amending published material and different narrative accounts. Third, this methodological tool assists in identifying and understanding networks of individual and agencies involved in educational policy making. Finally, personal interviews were necessary to become familiar with the “assumptive worlds” (McPherson & Raab, 1988) of the key actors involved with the policy making (Fitz & Halpin, 1994, p.33). The decision to conduct personal interviews with key actors was based on this reasoning. The interviews conducted enabled me to clarify, confirm or amend different narrative accounts. The Interim Report produced by the HWG did not recommend that the Holocaust and the two World Wars should be taught in history. As is discussed in Chapters Four and Five this recommendation came later in the Final Report. Gerwitz and Ozga (1994) have discussed the need to “know more about these people” as their explanation for conducting elite based research. Who were these individuals and what prompted them to make the decisions they made? During interviews with members of the HWG it was possible to probe questions regarding why the Holocaust was not included in the Interim Report and how it came to be included in the Final Report. Fitz and Halpin also talk of the pull of “seductive excitement” (Fitz & Halpin, 1994). There was an element of personal curiosity involved in the decision to conduct personal interviews and a “seductive excitement” about meeting individuals from the

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<sup>15</sup> Like the National Curriculum this was a key feature of the ERA 1988.

groups which had advised on and revised the History Curriculum that I had been teaching.

As yet the minutes of the HWG and related working documentation are not in the public domain. These documents have however been drawn upon in previous research by Phillips (R. Phillips, 1998a) for instance. Phillips interviewed all of the members of the History Working Group (HWG) as well as gaining access to the Group's minutes during his PhD research. His work examined the origins, creation and implementation of the National Curriculum. His book, *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State* (R. Phillips, 1998a) arose out of his PhD study. One of his areas of interest was whether the HWG experienced any political pressure during their work. He has written, "I was interested here in the extent to which HWG members felt influenced by various parties ranging from the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister or DES officials to 'extra parliamentary' pressures such as the New Right<sup>16</sup> or the influence of the press" (R. Phillips, 1998b, p.11). The extent of the political and "extra parliamentary" pressure the Group was under concerning the inclusion of the two World Wars and the Holocaust is discussed in Chapter Five. Phillips acted as gatekeeper and provided contact details of one member of the HWG who in turn provided further contact details for members of the HWG. Access to the HWG's working documentation was gained in the same manner as it had been by Phillips with an offer from a member of the HWG to borrow personal copies of this material. I contacted the DfES and Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) for permission to quote from the Minutes. HMSO granted permission in so far as the

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<sup>16</sup> This term has been defined by Chitty (1989) as a collection of educationalists, philosophers and economists who influenced successive Secretaries of State for Education and Prime Ministers. The New Right encompassed various right-wing groups such as the Hillgate Group which began publishing campaigning pamphlets at the end of 1986.

material was Crown Copyright. I was aware that Phillips had been granted permission on the proviso that he did not attribute quotations from the Minutes to their source. While such a proviso was not made to me, I decided to adopt this approach on the basis that these documents were subject to the 30 year rule and not due to be released into the public domain for 17 years. However, in order to avoid confusion and appearance of the sentence, ‘according to one member of the HWG’, too often I have referred to individual members in relation to the sub-committees they served on from September 1989 when, during their 13th meeting (31 August – 1 September), the Chairperson announced the setting up of three panels to deal with the tasks ahead: Alice Prochaska convened the Programmes of Study Panel on which she was joined by Peter Marshall and Peter Livesy. Jim Hendy convened the Responses Panel which Tom Hobhouse and Robert Guyver also served on. Carol White was the convenor of the Assessment Panel and she was joined in her work on this panel by Ann Low-Bear, Gareth Elwyn Jones and Tim Lomas. Brief biographies of the members of the HWG as well as further details about the Group and their role are detailed in Chapter Four.

Personal interviews were conducted with four members and one ‘observer’ of the HWG<sup>17</sup>. Interviews are, “one of the major tools of social research” (Hitchcock and Hughes, p. 153, 1995). Extensive use of this technique of data collection across the social sciences and in educational research has resulted in enormous diversity in the form and styles of interviews that have developed. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995)

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<sup>17</sup> Due to difficulties regarding time and distance (one member of the HWG now lives in the United States of America for example) four further ‘interviews’ were conducted by post (in one case the recipient emailed me his responses) and another two were interviewed over the telephone. The methodological implications of these methods of data collection are discussed later in this chapter. In total I contacted ten out of the 13 members of the HWG (including the Chairperson) in addition to the HMI ‘Observer’. I did attempt to contact the other three members of the Group, but was unable to. However, the data gained from the ten members and one ‘observer’ contacted was sufficient for the purposes of this study.

point to a range of interview types including standardised interviews encompassing structured or survey interviews; semi-structured interviews; and group interviews which are either structured or semi-structured. In a structured interview questions tend to be closed and are asked in the same sequence each time. This is because there is an assumption that there is such a thing as objective truth. However, critics of this approach such as Elliot Mishler have described structured interviews as “systematic and hierarchical” because “interviewers initiate topics, direct the flow of talk, decide when a response is adequate, and only interviewees disclose their views” (Mishler, 1990, p. 30). Under the heading of non-standardised interviews are ethnographic, unstructured group, oral, life history and informal interviews as well as conversations and eavesdropping. Unlike structured interviews, the semi-structured interview is much more flexible and for this reason “tends to be the most favoured by educational researchers” (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 157). This form of interview allows researchers to use a list of key questions as a prompt rather than a fixed schedule. The same key questions are asked each time but can be re-ordered by the interviewer who is able to probe and encourage respondents to expand on their answers. Since respondents were sometimes interviewed in their homes<sup>18</sup> and it was their memories, opinions and working documentation which were of interest, interviewees held the balance of power and I considered that I needed to develop a rapport with them and gain their trust if I was to gain the richest possible data. Lofland (1971) points to the importance of the interviewer familiarising themselves with the biographical and contextual features of their interviewee’s history, background and outlook. Prior to conducting interviews I researched individuals locating articles and books which they had published, and read over the minutes to

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<sup>18</sup> Three interviews were conducted in interviewee’s homes; two were conducted in neutral settings, one at the Royal Festival Hall in London and another in a public house in Swindon.

glean an understanding of their position on key issues which might reveal something of their character. I focussed on four key questions during interviews with members of the HWG:

1. Did you think that World War Two and the Holocaust should be included in the National Curriculum for History? Why?
2. Do you recall why it was decided not to include World War Two and the Holocaust on the Interim Report?
3. Why did the History Working Group change its mind and include the Second World War and the Holocaust on the Final Report?
4. Robert Phillips has suggested in his book, *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State*, that this change of heart was due to political pressure and refers to a question in the House of Commons<sup>19</sup>. Do you recall any political pressure to include this period?

In addition I wanted to ask specific questions of different members of the HWG. For example, I wanted to discuss with one member who was on the responses committee

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<sup>19</sup> **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the teaching of history within the National Curriculum.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are waiting for the final report of the national curriculum history working group, which they expect to receive by the end of the year. They will then publish their proposals for the History Curriculum.

**Mr. Marshall:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the Interim Report of the working group was greeted with shock and dismay by the many who believe that the causes and history of the second world war should be part of the National Curriculum? After all, 1940 was our finest hour; why is it too fine for the history mandarins?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I can assure my hon. Friend that the proposals of the interim working group have been looked at again by the History Working Group, and that the final proposals will contain full programmes of study on all the units, so that matters can be taken fully into account.

**Mr. Janner:** Will the Minister explain her previous answer? Does this mean that the national curriculum will contain the rise and fall of Nazism and the second world war?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** As I understand it, yes.  
(Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), Vol. 161, p.172)



(dealing with responses received from the public following the publication of the Interim Report) and who has written an article about this experience:

- Do you recall whether any members of the Working Group felt strongly that the period of the Second World War should be included in the Interim Report?
- The responses that came in seem interesting. It was also interesting reading your article about the responses. There is one point where you say that appeals to include the Holocaust and World War Two was on moral rather than historical grounds.
- Do you recall a submission from the Holocaust Educational Trust?

As I conducted interviews additional data was gathered and so further questions had to be introduced in order to triangulate that data. For example, the first member of the Group vaguely recalled an apology being made by the DES to the Chairperson of the HWG following an exchange in the House of Commons. During subsequent interviews I asked interviewees whether they recalled any apology. I sometimes reordered questions so that the interview flowed in a conversation-like manner and for the same reason (because I did not want to be reading from a fixed schedule but rather I wanted to make the interviewee feel at ease and as though they were engaged in interesting conversation) questions were not always worded in exactly the same way. In this sense the approach adopted could be said to fall between the interview guide approach and standardised open-ended interviews as described by Cohen et al (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). In the interview guide approach a list of topics and issues to be covered are drawn up in advance and the interviewer decides during the interview the exact wording and sequencing of questions. This means that interviews are conversational and situational, the interviewer has a guide which makes this approach more comprehensive than the informal conversational interview (where no such guide is used and questions are natural and emerge from the conversation) and logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. There is a

danger that important and salient topics may inadvertently be omitted and the flexibility of the interview in terms of wording and sequencing could result in interviewees giving very different responses making comparability of responses difficult. Standardised open-ended interviews see the interviewer determine the exact wording and sequence of questions in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. The two main advantages of this approach over the interview guide approach is that comparability of responses is increased as respondents are answering the same question. It also means that data are complete for each person interviewed. There is however a lack of flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances and the standardised wording of questions can constrain and limit the naturalness and relevance of questions and answers (Cohen et al., 2003, p.271). My approach drew on these two models in a way that drew on their advantages and limited their disadvantages. I had the flexibility and naturalness I required while also ensuring that each interviewee answered questions on the topics I wanted to cover.

### **Recording Interviews**

Of the five interviews conducted with members of the HWG only one was recorded. The decision to record interviews was made by interviewees. While recording produces a complete record I was concerned that those who agreed to be recorded might not feel free to express their views fully. It seems these fears may have been largely unfounded since it was the interviewee who allowed our interview to be recorded who offered me personal copies of the HWG minutes at the end of the interview; the interviewee appeared relaxed and open. Recording was helpful in that due to the flexible nature of the interviews both questions and answers could be

'rambling', making it more difficult to note down verbatim though that is what I did where interviewees preferred interviews not to be recorded. I used a small device (an Olympus micro cassette recorder Pearlorder J1), aware that the presence of mechanical equipment is a distraction and perhaps a smaller device would be less intrusive and more likely forgotten.

### **Transcribing**

Cohen et al stress the importance of transcribing, writing that "this is a crucial step, for there is potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity" (Cohen et al., 2003, p.281). Cohen et al see the interview as a social encounter and not solely an exercise in data collection. They suggest that one of the main problems with transcripts is that they present the interview as a record of data rather than a record of a social encounter. Mishler (1986) has noted that the main disadvantage of audiotapes is that the visual and non-verbal aspects of the interview are not recorded. Morrison (1993, p.63) recounts an incident where an autocratic head teacher, while talking about the importance and virtues of mutual respect and democratic decision making, shook her head vigorously from side to side and pressed the flat of her hand in a downwards motion away from herself as if to silence discussion! These actions are contextually important and alter the nature of the data recorded on the audiotape. Video recording would provide a more complete account of the interview recording non-verbal communication, but Cohen et al note that this then becomes very time consuming to analyse (Cohen et al., 2003, p.281). I did not encounter any incident like the one described by Morrison. Even so I was aware that transcripts inevitably lose data from the original encounter. There are differences between the spoken and written word. When

speaking, people might begin the same sentence several times and will ‘um’ and ‘er’ and stop talking mid-sentence to begin talking about something else. I was not proposing to analyse the speech patterns and complete any textual analysis. I wanted to compare the content of the responses from interviewees and examine their accounts to build up a picture of what happened to make the HWG change its mind about the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum. Because I was not completing any linguistic or textual analysis I ‘tidied up’ this transcript removing some of the ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ to make the transcript read better<sup>20</sup>. My main motivation here was that I wanted the interviewee to approve the transcript and let me use their name alongside their comments. The transcripts are honest representations of the interviews. I included in brackets information that I considered important and relevant. The following is a line taken from a transcript of an interview with a member of the HWG: “I think some members of the group were more persuasive than others in the way they talked and had more influence, I’ll put it that way (light hearted laughter)”. Cohen et al highlight the importance of recording different kinds of data in the transcript of an audiotape for example, the speaker’s tone of voice, the inflection of the voice, short and long pauses and silences, the mood of the speaker, the speed of talk and so on. As well as the spoken words such data are important, and once noted become a matter of interpretation (Cohen et al., 2003, p.282). Had I not included the bracketed information in the example above, the meaning of what was being said could be interpreted differently. In this example the interviewee demonstrates tact but implies that particular members of the HWG were more influential than others. Had I failed to include the bracketed information the comments of this HWG member

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<sup>20</sup> The original tape is in my possession. Future research including work involving linguistic analysis is therefore possible.

may be opened up more widely to interpretation, had he not laughed in the light hearted manner which he did, I may have read some bitterness or frustration into the comment “I’ll put it that way”.

Where interviews were not recorded I asked interviewees questions and wrote down their answers verbatim in my notebook. As soon as possible after the interview I typed up the interview. Once again I cut out ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ and indicated in brackets any additional non-verbal information as well as any notes on the mood and tone of the speaker.

### **Telephone Interviews**

Using the telephone to conduct interviews is an effective way of gathering data commonly used in survey research. Such an approach is quick and less demanding in terms of the time and effort (and expense) of travelling to meet interviewees. This is one advantage of telephone interviews highlighted by researchers including Dicker and Gilbert (1988), Nias (1991), Oppenheim (1992) and Borg and Gall (1996) who have discussed the merits and disadvantages of telephone interviews. However, interviews conducted over the telephone do pose particular difficulties. It is, for example, very difficult to detect irony over the phone since you are unable to observe the faces or body language of interviewees’. Time on the telephone can also be more limited than personal meetings which in my experience have been conducted over a number of hours and always involved some sort of refreshment, and usually lunch. The personal interviews conducted have therefore been relaxed and the conversation more wide ranging as I have conversed with interviewees more generally and got to know them a little prior to asking interview questions. One of

the interviews I conducted over the telephone lasted for 30 minutes and the other for 40 minutes; while some pleasantries were exchanged less of a rapport was built with these interviewees as compared with those met in person. Oppenheim discusses the need for the interviewer to be prepared for the interview and have prompts and probes ready so that the interviewee does not 'dry-up' on the telephone (1992). I prepared in the same way for the telephone interviews as I did for the interviews I conducted in person. All of the HWG members and observers I could contact were sent the same letter and information about my research. Respondents contacted me following my letter to organise an interview either in person or on the telephone at a time that was mutually convenient. Therefore, all respondents were prepared for the interview in the same way. The interviews I conducted over the telephone were fruitful and the data gathered was used to triangulate responses from other members of the HWG.

### **Postal 'interviews'**

In four cases I sent a list of questions to HWG members who, because of their workload and where they lived, could not meet with me and preferred this method to a telephone interview. This research method may be better described as a questionnaire. The same key questions were sent to respondents as had been asked of those whom I met and interviewed. Instead of me listening and making detailed notes or recording and transcribing interviews (depending on the preference of the interviewee) respondents wrote their own detailed answers in response to my questions. As in the case of telephone interviews the disadvantage of this approach was the lack of a rapport with the respondent. But once again as with the telephone interviews the data collected was valuable, particularly for the purposes of

triangulation. This approach also had an advantage over telephone interviews as it is difficult to write down responses during the interview. I did make detailed notes while conducting telephone interviews, typed these up immediately and sent the notes to respondents to check over and amend. Those who wrote their own answers down had time to consider the questions and their response and I was able to quote from their responses freely without typing up notes and sending copies of my work to respondents for them to check over and return. Obviously it was more difficult in these cases to probe and ask for clarification, but had this been necessary (the written responses were very detailed) it would have been possible to contact respondents again by post, or even by telephone or e-mail if I had a brief query.

### **Interviews with members of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and the History Task Group**

Chapters Four and Five track the development of the topic of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History from the Interim Report to the current version of the History Curriculum. For this reason I wanted to meet with members of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and the History Task Group (HTG) to gain an understanding of why the current Programmes of Study (PoS) are as they are. I needed to address questions such as, who were the individuals on these groups? What was their brief? Were they under any political pressure to make particular changes? Was there any debate over the topic of the twentieth century world and the Holocaust among the group? I met with one member of the SCAA Advisory Group for History (the Chairperson declined a meeting) and two members of the History Task Group. The data gained from these meetings was supplemented by literature which has been published on the work of the HTG (Arthur, 2000, pp.2-4)

as well as newspaper articles. These meetings were informal ‘just for information’ interviews during which I was able to ask questions and gather data which was then written up as a series of facts along with any quotes which I had been given. These notes were then sent to ‘interviewees’ to be checked for any errors; these meetings were not recorded. Conducting these meetings in this way was valuable since an insight was gained into the working of these groups. The researcher always knows more than they can tell. While I cannot include some of the interesting and revealing anecdotes I was told, I gained a greater sense of the selection of these groups and how they worked which has influenced and informed my writing. Had the individuals I met been formally interviewed and named in this thesis I am convinced the data would have been less rich. While I cannot name those I met, these individuals gave me an insight into the work of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and the HTG and quotations (which I was given permission to use but not attribute to a named source) more revealing than I would have been given had I insisted on naming my sources.

#### **Access and anonymity**

I did not meet any serious difficulties in terms of access to members of the HWG; though on the whole members interviewed wished to remain anonymous. Members of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and HTG were even less willing to be formally interviewed and identified, and as noted, the Chairperson of the SCAA Advisory Group declined to be interviewed. It is not unusual for researchers to experience difficulty in gaining access to elites (Finch, 1986; Hunter, 1993; Ostrander, 1993; Raab, 1987). Perhaps access to the HWG was easier because they completed their work some time ago and in a sense they were former elites. Those who continued to hold office posed a greater difficulty in terms of access.



Lord Janner declined to be interviewed and referred me to the HET who, he said, were in a better position to help with my research.

While not essential, I would have preferred to name all the interviewees quoted in this thesis. However my priority was gaining access to individuals and I was prepared to offer anonymity where requested, mindful of Fitz and Halpin's assertion, "we still think it is unlikely that civil servants would agree to be involved in policy research unless, or until, anonymity is assured" (1994, p.36). One interviewee had been a civil servant, and the cooperation of as many individuals as possible involved in the development of the National Curriculum for History was important to my study. Transcripts or notes made during interviews or meetings were sent to all interviewees to check and amend before any part of the conversation was included in the thesis. This was designed to gain the interviewee's trust and cooperation. I hoped it would also mean that I would be able to attribute comments to named individuals. However, as will be shown in Chapter Five, history has proved a contentious subject in the National Curriculum. I raised some sensitive issues and perhaps for this reason some interviewees wanted their comments to remain anonymous. For this reason I, like Ball (1990), have quoted some interviewees but not others. Where interviewees wished to remain anonymous but gave permission to be quoted I asked them how they wished to be referred to in the thesis.

## Using Documents

The use of documents presents a number of methodological issues. I will discuss the documents used in this thesis in turn, beginning with newspapers. Newspaper reports do not only provide a chronicle of events, but attempt to shape them. Reports may contain the opinion of the journalist or take the political view of the editor or owner of the newspaper. It is important to remember that all newspapers present contemporary events from a particular ideological viewpoint. Marwick writes “these sources are very rich for attitudes, assumptions, mentalities, and values” (Marwick, 2001, p.168) but they cannot be taken on trust. Another example would be the HWG minutes. It is important to remember that:

Primary sources did not come into existence to satisfy the curiosity of historians. They derive ‘naturally’, ‘organically’, as it were, or, more straightforwardly, ‘in the ordinary course of events’, from human beings and groups of human beings living their lives, worshipping, making decisions, adjudicating, fornicating, going about their business or fulfilling their vocations, recording, noting, communicating as they go, very occasionally, perhaps, with an eye on the future, but generally in accordance with immediate needs and purposes.

(Marwick, 2001, p.164)

Minutes of meetings are not necessarily a true or complete record of all that was discussed, “minutes, reports of meetings, and so on, recording what a body as a whole *agreed* its decisions to be, can be incomplete and slanted” (Marwick, 2001, p.166). In an interview with Phillips following the completion of their work on the HWG, one of the Group alluded to a “slim majority” which resulted in the absence of World War Two as a specific study unit in the Interim Report (R. Phillips, 1998a, p.80). However, the minutes do not reveal a debate or vote on this issue. Who were the “slim majority”? How forcefully did the minority disagree? What were the arguments? The architects of the National Curriculum would have been aware that they were making history and they discussed some sensitive issues. Secretaries can

be instructed not to minute something, or be careful with the wording. However, minutes are records that meetings took place and the HWG minutes have provided some interesting data.

This thesis also benefits from written materials obtained from the archive of the HET in London. These documents include a submission by Greville (now Lord) Janner QC MP, John Marshall MP, Robert Rhodes James MP and Jeff Rooker MP on the *Teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History*; letters from the then Secretary of State for Education John MacGregor; documents relating to the establishment of the Trust and its early work; and copies of questions asked in the House of Commons by Janner and John Marshall about the teaching of World War Two and the Nazi Period in schools. I wrote to Lord Janner for an interview to discuss the early work of the HET and the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History. I had in July 2001 received a schools newsletter from the Trust which boasted “our first great success was to ensure the inclusion of the Holocaust on the new National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 3”. I was interested in any documentation such as letters and newspaper cuttings from the time when the Trust was established. Lord Janner replied to my letter suggesting that I would be better to contact his colleagues at the HET directly as he did not have the information I sought and that they would be a greater help. He passed me on to the Head of Education at the Trust who gave me access to their archive and granted me permission to photocopy any relevant materials from it. I was asked not to photocopy any letters from public figures who had written to decline the opportunity to be a Patron of the Trust.

Chapters Four and Five draw upon letters and documents from the HET files. Here the issue of reliability is not the only concern; there is also the issue of authenticity. The authenticity of the various documents contained within the HET files could be assured in a number of ways: The covering letter sent with the submission from the Members of Parliament (MPs) was written on House of Commons notepaper. The submission was reported on in a number of newspaper articles. The reply from John MacGregor was signed by the Secretary of State and written on headed notepaper from Elizabeth House, then headquarters of the DES (Department of Education and Science). The files also contained original letters from various individuals who had been approached to be Patron of the Trust, again signed and on particular notepaper. Copies of newspaper articles and questions raised in the House of Commons were checked and cross-referenced with original newspapers and Hansard. Documents such as drafts or copies of letters sent out by the HET (a number of which appeared to have been generated by Janner) were more problematic. There were letters in the files which appeared to be replies and therefore validated them. One question the historian asks is whether there is anything to be gained or lost by planting frauds, forgeries or hoaxes. The answer in this instance is no. The HET is open and proud of its campaign to ensure that the Holocaust was a compulsory part of the school curriculum, in the words of the schools newsletter, “our first great success was to ensure the inclusion of the Holocaust on the new National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 3” (Holocaust Educational Trust Bulletin, April – June 1990, Issue No.1). I was requested not to photocopy letters from or make reference to individuals who had written declining the invitation to become Patrons of the Trust. This was so as not to cause embarrassment to the individuals concerned or to the Trust. These documents were not relevant to my study in any case. Given that I was allowed

access to these documents and requested not to use them, and that the Trust is proud of its claim that it ensured the inclusion of the Holocaust on the History Curriculum, it also seems unlikely that anything would have been removed from the files. However, archives are subject to primary sedimentation (the organisational process of selecting and reducing documents). While it may be doubtful that anything was deliberately removed prior to my being given access to the files there may have been documents which would have been of use to this study which were not archived.

This thesis also draws on the memoirs of political figures. Since the authors of these memoirs belong to the period of study these too are primary sources. Such sources, like oral testimony, are subject to the fallibility of memory. Like all historical sources, memoirs should be carefully analysed since politicians write their memoirs for a purpose: to provide their own account of their life and career, to defend or explain and ‘put on record’ their actions in government. The authors of these accounts are likely to be writing their memoirs some time after the event using diaries and notes from their period in office. As such certain additions can be made with hindsight. A quotation from Thatcher’s *The Downing Street Years* comes to mind. Concluding her writing in the National Curriculum Thatcher writes, “by the time I left office I was convinced that there would have to be a new drive to simplify the National Curriculum and testing” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 597). This may be true, but when Thatcher wrote this sentence in the first volume of her memoirs published in October 1993, she may well have been aware of the announcement of the Dearing Review made in April 1993. Nonetheless, Thatcher’s memoirs provide an interesting insight into the construction of the National Curriculum for History.

## TEACHER RESEARCH

Having researched why the Holocaust was included and has become increasingly prominent in the National Curriculum for History, I felt it necessary to probe the question of how history teachers have interpreted the topic of the Holocaust on the History Curriculum and how they approach this. Chapter Six is based on data gathered from ten secondary school teachers of history. In September 2003 40 multiple choice questionnaires (appendix 2 contains a copy of this questionnaire) were sent out to history teachers at 20 schools<sup>21</sup>. This sample took in grammar, secondary modern, faith and independent schools. Nine returns were received, this number rose to 15 after a follow up letter was sent out at the beginning of November. Contacting the teachers who responded to the questionnaire proved difficult. In all cases it was necessary to make several telephone calls, sometimes over a two or three week period, to the teacher's schools. In one instance, a history Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) centrally based at Kent Local Education Authority (LEA), and working with both of the secondary modern schools in the sample, proved impossible to contact. When contact had been made with teachers, school trips, forthcoming OFSTED inspections and workload meant that interviews were difficult to arrange. Despite having 15 questionnaire returns it was possible to interview only ten teachers. Data collection took a longer period than anticipated (the tenth interview was completed on 27 January 2004). However, despite the size of the sample the data gathered has aided reflection on the teaching of the Holocaust in school history and has resulted in an interesting and important chapter.

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<sup>21</sup> I was interested to contact a second member of each history department in order to gain an insight into how clear objectives were within the same department.

Cohen et al write of the limitations of multiple choice questionnaires stating that this form of questionnaire “seldom gives more than a crude statistic, for words are inherently ambiguous...this is the heart of the problem of questionnaires – that different respondents interpret the same words differently”(Cohen et al., 2003, p.251). As will be discussed in the following chapter there is no universally agreed understanding of what the term ‘Holocaust’ encompasses, so this problem identified by Cohen et al would have been compounded and the results of my teacher research crude indeed if this had been my sole method of data collection. However for my purpose the fact that different teachers would read the same questionnaire in different ways was a strength rather than a weakness since I wanted the questionnaire to act as the basis for a follow up interview with each respondent. The questionnaire was designed therefore to “gain some purchase on complexity” (Cohen et al., 2003, p.251) or in other words capture some basic personal information about the respondents and a snap shot of their views. On receipt of a completed questionnaire I contacted the respondent to arrange an interview at their convenience. The interviews took place between September 2003 and January 2004 and all were conducted in the school where the respondent taught. I visited eight schools in total. Each interview lasted for between 25 and 40 minutes and all were recorded and transcribed. During the interview teachers were able to explain their position and further outline their views and the issues surrounding the questions I had included on the questionnaire. Prior to interviewing each teacher I drew up an interview schedule. These were broadly the same but each was tailored to the respondent’s questionnaire return. For example, if the respondent had indicated on their questionnaire that they had used resources developed by the HET or made use of their services in some other way, instead of asking, have organisations such as the

Holocaust Educational Trust made themselves and the services they offer known to you? Are you aware for example that they can organise for Holocaust survivors to come into school and talk to students?, I would ask, how did you find out about the work of the HET? Could they do more to highlight their services and support teachers?. During interviews I reordered questions in order that they flowed in a conversation-like manner, for the same reason I sometimes reworded questions. The interviewing approach adopted therefore once again fell between the interview guide approach and standardised open-ended interviews as described by Cohen et al (Cohen et al., 2003, p.271). The basic interview schedule is listed below along with a brief rationale for including each question on the schedule. These questions were designed to gain basic information regarding the amount of time spent teaching and learning about the Holocaust in history lessons, the pedagogic strategies used, teachers understanding of and attitudes towards teaching the Holocaust and the relationship between the Holocaust and other examples of crimes against humanity:

1. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of school history?

*This was intended partly as a 'warm up' question but is important in that interviewees' response to this question is likely to have a bearing on what the interviewee perceived the principle aims and objectives of teaching the Holocaust in history to be.*

2. You note that your prime objective when teaching the Holocaust is [insert questionnaire response indicated by respondent]. Would you say that this was your sole objective?

*This question allowed teachers to explain their response and clarify their position. It also probed whether teachers had a single focus or they had highlighted the objective they felt was most important, but in their teaching they also attempted to deliver a series of other objectives.*

3. Nicolas Kinloch has written in *Teaching History* that history teachers "should start and end with what happened and why". How do you respond to this view?



*This question invited teachers' views about the debate among historians and educationalists on whether the Holocaust should be taught from a moral or historical viewpoint.*

4. Do you think the Holocaust is unique? Should it be taught alongside events such as the genocide in Rwanda?

*This question was included to gauge how well worked through the uniqueness debate<sup>22</sup> was among teachers.*

5. Do you find teaching the Holocaust any more difficult than any other topics in history?

*This question probed the difficulties and issues which surround teaching the Holocaust in Year 9 history as outlined in Chapter One. This question aimed to see how far the issues outlined were felt by classroom teachers at the current time: do teachers find teaching the Holocaust more emotional than teaching other subjects? Do they teach the Holocaust from a moral point of view? Do they teach other topics from a moral point of view? Are there difficulties in terms of time or resources?*

6. How many lessons are generally devoted to teaching the Holocaust in history? What is the duration of each lesson?

*Answers to this question provided an insight into the amount of time being spent in history lessons on the topic of the Holocaust across the sample.*

7. You have indicated on the questionnaire that you have found [insert title of resource] useful in planning and teaching lessons on the Holocaust. How have you used this resource?

*This question allowed for discussion regarding the values and limitations of popular resources such as Anne Frank's Diary; the Reflections teaching pack and similar educational materials: did teachers find these resources useful? The QCA Scheme of Work could also be discussed here: did teachers find it useful?*

8. Have organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust made themselves and the services they offer known to you? Are you aware for example that they can organise for Holocaust survivors to come into school and talk to students?

*This question aimed to assess how well aware teachers were of available support and whether they felt they needed more – or less - support.*

9a. I am grateful you chose to take part in this research, can I ask why you chose to do so?

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<sup>22</sup> The debate about the question of whether the Holocaust is unique is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

- b. I am very grateful for your time. I wonder if you have been involved in other area of research and debate I history education?
- c. Do you read *Teaching History*? Do you find it useful?

*These questions were designed to probe how well informed teachers were about current debates in history education and how far they felt involved in educational debates. Would teachers like a greater involvement in curriculum decision making?*

The key questions in terms of the focus of this study were one, two, three and six. The rest of these questions provided background and an opportunity for teachers to flesh out their position. Teachers were not sent transcripts to read and approve. My motivation in sending transcripts to those involved with education reform was in an attempt to gain permission to use their names and attribute quotations to their source. Teachers were given a personal guarantee that they would be represented honestly and fairly, and were guaranteed personal and institutional anonymity<sup>23</sup>.

### **Analysing Transcripts**

Issues surrounding transcribing have been outlined above on pages 66 to 68. Aware of these issues the same procedure as previously outlined was followed: any non-verbal information I considered important was included in brackets in addition to any notes on the mood and tone of the speaker. Once again, because I was not conducting any textual analysis, some ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ were cut to improve the reading of the transcripts. Once familiar with the interview data I analysed and interpreted the transcripts extracting patterns and themes. This research is presented in Chapter Six.

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<sup>23</sup>Further research involving these teachers in the future is possible as these details are held by myself.

## TACKLING EMOTIVE ISSUES

Tackling emotive issues like the Holocaust can be problematic. I felt it necessary in the opening paragraph of this thesis to make it clear what my work is not about. Marwick (2001) makes clear that when writing history language must be explicit and precise so as to reduce misunderstandings and misrepresentations. I endeavour in this thesis to be clear and exact, though historians can still encounter criticism when they challenge taken for granted assumptions. Take for example Linda Colley's book *Captives* in which she details the experience of "hundreds of thousands of English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish men, women and children who were taken captive in different regions of the extra-European world during the first quarter millennium of British imperial enterprise" (Colley, 2002, p.3). The majority of these people she says were "insignificant". "They were soldiers, minor traders, sailors, camp followers, various women folk and children" (Colley, 17 October 2002) whose experience as captives and as slaves (in North Africa) provides a very different perspective on empire than it is traditionally understood. Colley attempts to undertake "a work both of individual recovery and imperial revision" (Colley, 2002, p.xvii). She has produced a history of people who were also victims of Britain's empire building. But despite noting in her acknowledgments that, "I have been constantly reminded while writing *Captives* – and have sought throughout to make clear – that other, very different stories exist about the empire that the British once made" (Colley, 2002, p.xvii), and making clear in her introduction her actual motivation, Colley's work was challenged by Professor Catherine Hall during BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* in October 2002. Hall felt that Colley's work might undermine the suffering of black people enslaved and oppressed by the British Empire. Hall's defence of black slaves is similar to Deborah Lipstadt's defence of

the memory of the Holocaust and its victims which is discussed in the following chapter. Research involving sensitive issues including the Empire and the Holocaust is closely scrutinised and fraught with accusations of racism and anti-Semitism; both areas have become highly politicised. Work like Colley's is important if we want to understand the full historical picture. Interestingly, it was Hall and not Colley who raised the issue of comparative suffering:

I would want to put that [Colley's] picture of white vulnerability and white insecurity which we are getting from the stories of those captured in India, or Britons in North America, or in North Africa, against other people's insecurities and vulnerabilities in the Empire over this period. So okay, hundreds of thousands of Britons were captured in war. But their status as captives of war was different from the status for example of those who were enslaved, a very different situation to be a slave from being a captive.

(Hall in the BBC Radio 4 programme, *In Our Time*, broadcast 17 October 2002)

Hall spelled out her point, "each individual story is worth telling. But what the implication of these stories are in terms of rethinking histories of empire might be something of a different matter". Fernandez-Armesto defended Colley in the programme:

It doesn't take anything away from the plight of Black slaves to say that white people were also enslaved and were in a sense captives of their own empires because I think Linda has done a great service by reminding us that one of the things which makes empire wicked and evil is its effects on the imperial master as well as the victims.

(Fernandez-Armesto in the BBC Radio 4 Programme, *In Our Time*, 17 October 2002)

Melvyn Bragg ended the programme by asking the panel,

Do you think that the received perception of slavery and its associations increasingly solely with the British has coloured our view of empire so much that it has made it extremely difficult to talk about the British Empire over the last 30 to 40 years? Has it become too awful and too massive to assess and tackle imperial studies?

Colley's response was particularly relevant to this thesis:

I think empire is like war. It is a recurrent human practice, indeed its still with us in various forms. While we may hate war – we should hate war – we still want to study it, we need to study it, and the same applies to empire. It's difficult, it's often horrible, it's deeply contentious as this programme has shown, but that is precisely why we need to look at it more.

(Colley in the BBC Radio 4 Programme, *In Our Time*, 17 October 2002)

Given that this thesis is unlikely to resolve the issue of what history teachers' objectives should be, my main aim is to encourage debate about *how* the topic of the Holocaust should be approached in school history. It is a debate which is difficult to tackle given the enormity and complexity of the Holocaust; but it is an important debate which it would seem needs to be looked at. Given the above example, I see no harm in having reiterated a principle aim of this study here, in addition to highlighting a major pitfall in conducting work which involves sensitive issues.

The following chapter discusses some of the issues surrounding the Holocaust and the teaching of the Holocaust in school history.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ISSUES SURROUNDING TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY**

The debate surrounding how the Holocaust should be understood and presented in history lessons is complex. It stems from two areas of debate focusing on the historical versus moral purpose of school history and nature of 'the Holocaust'. This chapter examines these debates beginning on a macro level by considering the purpose of teaching history before analysing arguments about how the Holocaust should be understood.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL HISTORY?**

Kinloch has stated that when teaching the Holocaust we should start and end with what happened and why (Kinloch, 1998). As noted in Chapter One, his difficulty with history teachers dealing with moral questions is that he does not see it as the role of teachers to create a new society. However, Terry Haydn views school history as being slightly different from academic history. He looks at historical periods and events and considers how these can help students and how they might impact on their lives when they have left school. He writes, "if we cannot do justice to a topic such as the Holocaust, what is the point of inflicting history on young people?" (Haydn, 2000, p.136). Haydn sees that different periods and events are useful for teaching different aspects of history. For example, the Industrial Revolution can teach students about economics, supply and demand, the labour market and globalisation; 1066 and the death of Harold provides an opportunity to do some work on evidence and reliability (Telephone Conversation, 18 June 2003). There are differing views

among historians and educationalists regarding the purpose of school history. Slater wrote in *Teaching History in the New Europe*, “history is an unsettling and sometimes uncomfortable subject. It is controversial and very often sensitive. There is some consensus about its importance but much less agreement about what it is *for*” (Slater, 1995, p.xi. Emphasis in the original). Slater states that school history has intrinsic and extrinsic aims. He suggests that intrinsic learning objectives for school students could include, “‘knowing the difference between AD and BC’, understanding the concepts of ‘cause’ and ‘change’, understanding that historical statements must be consistent with available evidence” (Slater, 1995, p.126). When teaching the Holocaust an aim such as, to improve students’ ability to recognise and respond appropriately to similar events, would be described by Slater as extrinsic because such an aim is not concerned with the discipline of history; it is extrinsic to history, it is about changing society. Kinloch argues that school history should be taught as academic history; solely for intrinsic purposes. However, like Haydn, Slater sees history as an opportunity for teaching about wider social issues provided that history is the basis for this and that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic aims is made. He also notes, reminding us of the views of Meagher (1999), McLaughlin (1999), and Illingworth (2000), that the intrinsic and extrinsic aims of history cannot always be separated:

There are irresistible social and ethical reasons for helping young people to live in liberal democratic societies, or be opposed to sexism or racism, but these are broader *educational* aims; they are not historical. However, historical perspectives and thinking can make a crucial contribution to our understanding of race, discrimination and liberal democracy...Historical, personal and social aims are enmeshed and not always easily unravelled, but their emphasis is different and the distinctions remain. They are none the worse for that, provided, that is, we recognise and publicly declare these distinctions. Broader and extrinsic educational aims may well help us to select issues which will then be studied with intrinsic historical procedures.

(Slater, 1995, p. 126)

Slater makes clear a further distinction between the intrinsic aims of history which can be guaranteed, and the extrinsic aims which history can only enable.

In their book *Understanding History Teaching: Teaching and learning about the past in secondary schools* (2003) Chris Husbands, Alison Kitson and Anna Pendry set out the two traditions which have shaped school history: the ‘great tradition’ and the alternative tradition (pp. 7-14). These two traditions are clearly summarised and presented in the table below taken from this text:

**Figure 3.1** The two traditions of history teaching

	<b>The ‘great tradition’</b>	<b>The alternative tradition</b>
Learners and pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises the didactically active role of the teacher.</li> <li>• Assumes a high level of teacher subject knowledge.</li> <li>• Learner’s role is largely passive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises constructivist models of learner engagement with the past.</li> <li>• Places a premium on teacher’s ability to manage student learning activities.</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterised by a concern with national history.</li> <li>• Focuses on the understanding of the present through engagement with the past.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterised by a variety of content reflecting world history and the experiences of a variety of groups.</li> <li>• Stresses the importance of learning about a variety of historical situations and contexts.</li> </ul>
Purposes of learning history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined through the content of the subject.</li> <li>• Focuses substantially on the cultural capital of historical content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined through the contribution of the subject to wider general education.</li> <li>• Focuses substantially on preparation for working life and the acquisition of skills.</li> </ul> <p>(Husbands et al., 2003, p. 12)</p>



The alternative tradition developed during the 1960s and 1970s and challenged the ‘great tradition’ of history teaching. Husbands et al do note however that the assumptions underpinning the ‘great tradition’ have never been uncontested, though it was not until the establishment of the Schools’ Council in 1963 that the ‘great tradition’ came under sustained pressure (Husbands et al., 2003, p.9). It was through the work of the Schools Council History Project (SCHP<sup>24</sup>) that the alternative tradition or ‘new history’ came about. Their projects developed an approach to history teaching which broke away from traditional, academic methods and attempted to engage students in the process and study of history. Through use of active learning the aim was to make history relevant and interesting to students. According to Slater, it was “the most significant and beneficial influence on the learning of history and the raising of its standards to emerge this century” (Slater, 1989, p. 2). History was becoming more than a lesson in memory recall; empathy and cause were now considered by students who used primary sources as evidence. The work of theorists such as Coltham and Fines (1971) also helped to reconceptualise school history in these two decades. Coltham and Fines’ work *Educational Objectives for the Study of History: A suggested framework* attempted to set out the skills that could be developed through history.

These developments in school history mirrored developments in academic history. As was shown in the previous chapter, history as a discipline has changed and developed over time. Developments in academic history have impacted upon approaches to school history. The influence of academic history upon school history was most obvious in the 1960s and 1970s when, in academic history, the grand

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<sup>24</sup> This later became known as the Schools History Project (SHP).

narrative came under attack from so-called 'new histories'. At the same time as 'new histories' were being researched and published on the lives of, for example, the working class poor (Thompson, 1965) and women (Rowbotham, 1973), assumptions about the content of the school History Curriculum were similarly shifting to become more inclusive. As Husbands et al note, "the content base of history degrees shifted markedly in the 1960s and 1970s, with consequent implications for the knowledge and conceptual base of those graduates who subsequently became history teachers" (Husbands et al., 2003, p.10).

According to Mary Price, changes in the approach to history teaching were very much required. In 1968 she wrote that history was "in danger". Regarded by students as a "useless and boring" subject she feared "history could lose the battle not only for its place in the curriculum but for a place in the hearts and minds of the young". Price felt that a series of factors contributed to the fact that history was "losing the battle" to other subjects: history syllabuses were tired and narrow with a focus on British history; there was a notion that history was suitable only for more able students; and the teaching of history was didactic, relying on note taking and rote learning (Price, 1968).

By the time the Government announced the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, the 'great tradition' of history teaching "was under substantial attack from a quite different tradition of history teaching" (Husbands et al., 2003, p.12). However, 'new history' had not been universally adopted. There were criticisms of this approach. In order to complete 'in-depth' studies some content had to be sacrificed. Traditional teaching was also more successful in transmitting a sense of chronology

to students. The introduction of the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in 1988 polarised the debate as examination boards appeared to have been influenced by the proponents of ‘new history’. Wrote Beattie, “whatever else it may be, history is not new” (1987, p.24). He was critical of the approach not least because he saw it as giving rise to moral relativism which he viewed with contempt, “if God is not the examiner, how will such judgements [as a GCSE answer to the question, to what extent do you think that Germany was fairly treated by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles?] be assessed?” (Beattie, 1987, p.7). Beattie saw history as “a detailed factual story”; moralising, in his view, was not central to the role of the historian. He criticised attempts to make history more relevant to students:

Emphasising the importance of relevance of current events directs attention to areas (such as the present Middle Eastern situation) on which historical scholarship is necessarily silent. This turns history into ‘politics’ or ‘current affairs’, and the pretence of introducing pupils to historical enquiry is dropped: history is simply redefined as whatever is in today’s newspapers.

(Beattie, 1987, p.8)

Beattie’s arguments were typical of the thinking of members of the so-called New Right. This group contained proponents of the ‘great tradition’ of history teaching, arguing for greater emphasis on British history in the school curriculum on the grounds of national identity, pride and common cultural values (Husbands et al., 2003, p.121).

Just over a quarter of schools were following a Schools History Project syllabus as the debate about history in the National Curriculum erupted (R. Phillips, 1998a, p.18). In England and Wales the formation of the National Curriculum for History saw fierce debate among educationalists, politicians and in the media<sup>25</sup>. While

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter Five for a detailed discussion of this.

vigorous debate took place in other subject areas, and particularly over the English curriculum, the level of political interest in the formation of the History Curriculum was not mirrored elsewhere. Not only were questions directly relating to the History Curriculum raised in the House of Commons, but leading politicians as well as the Prime Minister herself, became involved in the “great history debate” (R. Phillips, 1998a). Marwick’s understanding of history explains why this discipline may have proved such a contentious subject in the National Curriculum:

It is only through a sense of history that communities establish their identity, orientate themselves, understand their relationship to the past and other communities and societies. Without history (knowledge of the past), we, and our communities, would be utterly adrift on an endless and featureless sea of time.

(Marwick, 2001, p.32)

Ideologically history is a powerful subject which shapes national identity (R. Phillips, Goalen, McNully, & Wood, 1999). In her diary detailing her experiences as a member of the HWG, Dr Alice Prochaska wrote that, “history is of all the subjects most vulnerable to misuse for political reasons” (Prochaska, 1990, p.81). This point is supported by Professor Sirkka Ahonen who views school history in Estonia as invention; designed by politicians to support first the communists and then the independent state of Estonia. Under communism Moscow controlled the framework for the school History Curriculum. The content was intended to develop in students a sense of nationalism; the Soviet Union was their “Fatherland”. Estonia was viewed as “an ethnic territory” and the proportion of curriculum time available to teach Estonian history was limited to ten percent. In 1991 Estonia gained independence, “the new curriculum sought to empower the population to work hard for a new state” (Ahonen, 2001, p.183). Students were presented with a history of their country’s inevitable development towards an independent nation-state. This interpretation of history excluded the minority of Russian speaking Estonians comprising 36 percent

of the population, they were not part of the new Estonia, and their history was “embedded in the story of the evil occupant, the Soviet Union” (Ahonen, 2001, p. 183).

The ideological importance of history was not lost on the Conservative Government. In his supplementary guidance to the HWG, which was set up to advise the Secretary of State for Education on the content of the National Curriculum for History, Kenneth Baker said that school history should “help pupils come to understand how a free and democratic society has developed over the centuries” placing at its “core the history of Britain, the record of its past and, in particular its political, constitutional and cultural heritage” (Supplementary Guidance to the History Working Group). Mark Steel has written that in 1981 “Britain seemed to be two entirely different countries...in one was the dole, Alexei Sayle, the Beat singing *Stand Down Margaret*...in the other Charles Married Di” (Steel, 2001, p.104). Given the political and social climate of the 1980s a particular presentation of school history may have been important to the Government. The ‘great tradition’ of history teaching, as described on the table on page 87, saw history as a means of transmitting important messages about national identity based on notions of a shared cultural heritage and a progressive development of democracy (Husbands et al., 2003, p.116). Thatcher believed firmly in the ‘great tradition’; she stressed the importance of students learning facts and dates. Indeed, the issue at the heart of the “great history debate” (R. Phillips, 1998a) was the Conservatives’ conviction that children should learn more facts, especially about ‘British’ history:

History is an account of what happened in the past. Learning history, therefore, requires knowledge of events. It is impossible to make sense of such events without absorbing sufficient factual information and

without being able to place matters in a clear chronological framework – which means knowing dates.

(Thatcher, 1993, p.595)

During Prime Minister's Question Time on 29 March 1990, John Stokes MP asked:

Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is considerable anxiety about the teaching of English history in our schools? Instead of teaching only what are called themes, why cannot we go back to the good old days when we learnt by heart the names of the kings and queens of England, the names of our warriors and battles and the glorious deeds of our past?

The Prime Minister replied that:

As usual, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. What children should be taught in history is the subject of vigorous debate. I agree with him. Most of us are expected to learn from experience of history and we cannot do that unless we know it. Children should know the great landmarks of British history and should be taught them at school.

(Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 668, 29 March 1990)

It could be argued that history as perceived in this sense, without the procedural concepts such as historical evidence and explanation, may be better described as antiquarianism. Even if history is about content alone, Thatcher's perception of the subject is perhaps questionable since, as made clear in Chapter Two, history is not static. New historical evidence as well as different methodologies mean that our understanding and interpretation of historical events and personalities are revised. History is a discipline which is constantly growing and developing. Kettle has suggested that for the Conservatives the debate surrounding the National Curriculum for History was not about what history is; he suggests that in fact they had realised that there was something much bigger at stake:

Margaret Thatcher has fought many historic battles for what she sees as Britain's future. Few of them, though, are as pregnant with meaning as her current battle for control over Britain's own history ... The debate is

a surrogate for a much wider debate about the cultural legacy of the Thatcher years. It is about the right to dissent and debate not just history but a range of other assumptions. If the Prime Minister can change the way we are taught history, she will have succeeded in changing the ground rules for a generation to come. It is a big prize.

(Kettle, 1990)

Indeed, Crawford believed the purpose of the National Curriculum was:

To help produce a particular kind of society by using history education as a vehicle through which to disseminate a specific set of values and beliefs by attempts to control definitions of the past designed to help justify political action, promote particular social trends and develop economic doctrines.

(Crawford, 1995)

Crawford's perspective is supported by Kenneth Clarke's decision that in order "to draw some sort of distinction between the study of history and the study of current affairs"(DES, 14 January 1991) no event from the previous 20 years would be taught in the history classroom. This decision meant that "the building of the Berlin Wall is history; its destruction is not" (Nash, 18 January 1991). Clarke's '20 year rule' implied a distrust of history teachers and seemed to question their professionalism. Indeed, as the following chapter highlights, the National Curriculum itself is open to this interpretation.

A driving factor in the Conservative Government's insistence that history must be a static, factually based subject was the introduction of league tables. Baker had "tried to 'sell' the National Curriculum to his influential critics on the far Right of the Conservative establishment (including the Prime Minister herself) on the grounds that it would serve as convenient justification for a massive programme of national testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16" (Chitty, 2002, p.69). Of key importance therefore were the attainment targets, over which there was controversy when it came to history; the debate focused on the 'fact versus skills' approach to history teaching. The New

Right argued for greater emphasis on facts and the grand narrative implying that the HWG, teachers and others in education were in favour of an approach which ignored knowledge altogether. The HWG spent a good deal of time discussing assessment and the issue of knowledge based attainment targets (R. Phillips, 1998a, pp.60-2).

The minutes of their fifth meeting note that:

It would be important for pupils to be able to recall salient events and historical facts, but these had to be learned in context. They agreed that recall was necessary to attain a particular demonstration of knowledge. Use of recall would however need to be expressed very clearly, for example as a sensible use of memorised facts rather than rote-learning of facts and information in text-books.

(NC/HWG (89) 5<sup>th</sup>, 9.5)

This quotation helps to demonstrate how the HWG worked to present the Conservative Government with a compromise between ‘new history’, which was gaining increasing support in the history classroom, and the ‘great tradition’ favoured by the New Right. In their Final Report (DES, 1990) the HWG referred to the debate over the nature and function of history writing that:

There exist many, often strongly-held and divergent, opinions about school history. Even before the publication of our Interim Report we were aware of this from our own experience, from the volume of correspondence received, and from meetings held with a range of people. We consider it neither desirable nor possible to search for a formula which could please everyone and drew up our proposals according to our terms of reference.

(DES, 1990, p.1)

In this and their Interim Report the HWG attempted to define school history listing the subject’s purposes:



1. To help understand the present in the context of the past.
2. To arouse interest in the past.
3. To help give pupils a sense of identity.
4. To help give pupils a sense of their own cultural roots and shared inheritances.
5. To contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding of other countries and other cultures in the modern world.
6. To train the mind by means of disciplined study.
7. To introduce pupils to the distinctive methodology of historians.
8. To enrich other areas of the curriculum.
9. To prepare pupils for adult life.

(DES, 1989. pp.5-6; 1990, p.1-2)

This list of aims could be described as a compromise between the 'great tradition' and 'new history' – the alternative tradition - or indeed, of the polemic argument between Carr and Elton as set out in the previous chapter. Numbers two, four, five, eight and nine are in line with 'new history', while one, three, six and seven represent traditional viewpoints on the nature and purpose of history. Rather than resolving the debate and providing a clear rationale for school history, the National Curriculum "was based around a policy of compromise which appeared to hold the two traditions in creative tension" (Husbands et al., 2003, p.13). Thus Husbands et al write that "there were those [teachers] firmly embedded at one extreme or another of each tradition, but most history teachers moved, in terms of their own practice, between the assumptions of the two traditions" (Husbands et al., 2003, p.13).

Reviews were conducted and revisions made to the National Curriculum in 1994 and 1999. These reviews, which streamlined the History Curriculum and reduced the level of prescription of content are discussed further, in particular relation to the Holocaust, in Chapter Five. It should be noted here however that these reviews did little to clarify the rationale for teaching school history. The 1995 version of the National Curriculum for History, published following the 1994 Dearing Review, failed to include any rationale. It would appear that the current curriculum, published in 1999 for implementation by September 2000, remains a compromise between the ‘great tradition’ and ‘new history’ as is indicated by the following quotation from this document:

History fires pupils’ curiosity about the past in Britain and the wider world. Pupils consider how the past influences the present, what past societies were like, how these societies organised their politics, and what beliefs and cultures influenced people’s actions. As they do this, pupils develop a chronological framework for their knowledge of significant events and people. They see the diversity of human experience, and understand more about themselves as individuals and members of society. What they learn can influence their decisions about personal choices, attitudes and values.

In history, pupils find evidence, weigh it up and reach their own conclusions. To do this they need to be able to research, sift through evidence, and argue their point of view – skills that are prized in adult life.

(DfEE, 1999, p.14)

The National Curriculum for History also highlights ways in which the teaching of history can contribute to learning across the curriculum; this includes promoting citizenship through history. The introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum impacts upon the teaching of school history. This is discussed further below.

## TEACHING HISTORY TODAY

Husbands et al begin the first chapter of their book by discussing the hijacking of the four American Airlines planes on 11 September 2001 which were flown into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon building; the fourth crashing into the Pennsylvania countryside. They discuss the dilemmas that this presented history teachers on 12 September<sup>26</sup> (Husbands et al., 2003, pp. 3-7). The events of 11 September provide a recent example where history teachers have been called upon to help students try and understand the modern world; in the days following 11 September some students went to their history teachers to talk about what had happened and why (Godsell, 2001). History is an important subject for learning about and understanding the world as it is, as Rogers points out:

We cannot have a perception of the present that is not strongly influenced by a version of the past – some sort of version – which we have internalised in the course of growing up, and articulated in our adult lives. Such versions vary and *matter* because they determine how we understand and behave towards events that occur in our present world.

(Rogers, 1984, p.20)

Indeed, it was recommended at the 1991 Council of Europe Conference in Tuusula<sup>27</sup> that history should be compulsory for all students up to age 16 for this reason. The Conference noted that, “it is impossible to understand the current situation in the Baltic, in the Soviet Union, in Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia without a grasp of history which should be every pupil’s right” (Quoted in Slater, 1995, p. 29).

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<sup>26</sup> Such as, “was it professionally sensible to address the issues directly at all or, which is similar, was it professionally defensible not to address the issue? In what circumstances might it be professionally defensible to ignore, in 12 September’s history lessons, what had happened on 11 September? How far might the necessity of responding to the events of 11 September be outweighed by a reluctance to deal with situations where so many facts were as yet unknown, or a desire to protect young people from damaging exposure to an already traumatic set of images and events, or the pressing need to maintain pupils’ focus on the work in progress?” (Husbands et al., 2003, pp.4-5).

<sup>27</sup> *Teaching about European History and Society in the 1990s*, Tuusula, Finland, August 1991.

Haydn, Arthur and Hunt (Haydn, Arthur, & Hunt, 1997, p.27) have pointed to the value of school history in helping students to develop a critical edge particularly useful in the modern age. They ask their readers to consider twentieth century events, the era of the spin doctor, media manipulation and sound bite politics using the words of Longworth (1981) to support their point:

It does require some little imagination to realise what the consequences will be of not educating our children to the sort of differences between essential and non-essential information, raw fact, prejudice, half-truth and untruth, so that they know when they are being manipulated, by whom and for what purpose.

Such aims highlight the revolution that has taken place in school history in terms of purpose and method during the 1970s and 1980s since Price (1968) wrote her article. However, the Historical Association (HA) remains aware that many of the issues highlighted by Price are of continuing relevance. They launched a Campaign for History (as the National Curriculum was being designed) in 1988 and again in 1998. These campaigns aimed to secure the survival of history as a school subject. The Dearing Review (which took place in 1994 and resulted in the revised 1995 Curriculum) did not reverse Clarke's decision that students could 'drop' history at the age of 14. Then, in early 1998 the Labour Government announced the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy meaning that primary schools would have much less time to teach subjects such as history. The 1998 campaign therefore promoted the idea that all young people aged five to 19 had a right to history education. However, concerned as schools must be with their performance in the league tables, Muriel Whitehead wrote to *Teaching History* in March 2002 that, "our headteacher recently informed us that our 'less able' should be encouraged to drop 'difficult, academic subjects like history' so that they can 'concentrate on securing a C in the subjects they can cope with'"

(Whitehead, 2002). Whitehead noted in her letter that it was the students deemed 'less able' that would benefit from studying GCSE history most. Current proposals to redesign the school curriculum for 14-19 year olds could further undermine the position of history in the National Curriculum. Husbands et al concluded that among the history teachers they interviewed, "views on the future of the History Curriculum in schools were fairly bleak" (Husbands et al., 2003, p. 114). History as a school subject continues to have to argue its case.

## **CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

Citizenship was introduced as a compulsory National Curriculum subject for Key Stages 3 and 4 in September 2002. The introduction of citizenship to the school curriculum has been used to support the case for school history. Andrew Wrenn has argued that citizenship can improve the status and time history has on the school curriculum (Wrenn, 1999). The view that the introduction of citizenship may be a way of securing and improving the position of school history is echoed by Andrew Granath who wrote in the *TES Teacher* in June 2002:

Probably the best hope for the subject is to argue the case for its inclusion within the citizenship element of the Key Stage 3 strategy. The QCA views history as the most likely single subject to deliver complex citizenship concepts such as democracy, representation, justice and tolerance.

(Granath, 2002)

The introduction of citizenship has reinvigorated the debate over whether school history should be taught for intrinsic or extrinsic purposes. Some see citizenship as damaging because it is about values education, and overt positions on values can be used to distort rigorous objective history teaching. Research completed by Husbands et al found that:

Not all our case study schools were comfortable with the notion of political education, however, or at least not in an explicit form. For some, the political understanding and values which can certainly emerge from a study of history should remain relatively implicit.

(Husbands et al., 2003, p. 128)

Michael Riley, however, is among those who believe that objective historical rigour is not the final product but circuitously it takes teachers and students into values (Byrom & Riley, 2003; Riley, 2000). Kate Hammond has similarly argued (using the example of the Holocaust) that history teachers can use the moral to clamber into the historical (Hammond, 2001). In edition 104 of *Teaching History* Hammond discussed pupils' moral and historical reasoning in the same lesson sequence indicating that, as Meagher (Meagher, 1999) had argued in edition 94 and McLaughlin (McLaughlin, 1999) in edition 96, historical criteria cannot be isolated and taught independently of moral development. This approach is endorsed by Counsell who argues in her *History for All* paper in the Historical Association's *Past Forward* report (Counsell, 2002c) for the need for motivation to be emotionally engaged but intellectually sustained. This is only subtly different from Riley's position in that he is more comfortable with references to values being overt. Counsell is more cautious about this lest teachers, in the name of citizenship, lead students into judging whether people in the past were 'good' or 'bad' as part of a history lesson. She writes, "this seems to me unacceptable, and also unnecessary – the humanising process by which rigorous historical learning affects values, and affects our human sensibility, is indirect, and none the less powerful for being so" (Correspondence, 10 June 2003).

*Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools: Final report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship* identified three components that should inform Citizenship Education:

- **Social and moral responsibility:**  
Children learning from the very beginning self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, both towards those in authority and towards each other.
- **Community involvement:**  
Pupils learning about becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community.
- **Political literacy:**  
Pupils learning about and how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge, skills and values.

(QCA, 1998, p.40-1)

Although it has been left to schools to decide how to implement Citizenship Education and “it is almost impossible for any one subject to cover all that is required in teaching Citizenship Education” (Arthur & Wright, 2001, p.21), Jerome Freeman, Principal History Officer for the QCA has stated that, “by building on current good practice history departments should be in a strong position to contribute to Citizenship Education” (Freeman, 2002, p.28). Indeed, the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy singled out history, along with English and geography, as subjects which provide a distinctive contribution to the promotion of citizenship (Arthur & Wright, 2001, p.30). Arthur and Wright outline the opportunities history provides for students to:

- Broaden their experience of different peoples and cultures and appreciate the pluralist nature of society;
- understand how values and human rights emerge within a society;
- analyse a variety of societal perspectives at both national and international levels;
- discuss the validity of evidence, motivations and opinions of people of different social, economic and political contexts;
- develop the ability to make value judgements and be familiar with the moral aspects of studying history;
- learn about the development of British democratic processes; and
- trace the development of citizens rights.

(Arthur & Wright, 2001, p.27)

The introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum means that history teachers have greater scope to link historical examples to citizenship themes and to issues which are relevant today.

## **TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY**

Having outlined some of the debates concerned with teaching school history, this chapter now moves on to consider issues specifically surrounding teaching the Holocaust in school history. In September 2001 a special edition of *Teaching History*, which focused solely on teaching the Holocaust in history, was published. The editorial began, “it is unusual – it may even be unprecedented – for an edition of *Teaching History* to devote itself to the teaching of one historical topic” (Counsell & Kinloch, 2001). This edition contained a deliberate range of contrasting perspectives and views on the topic of the Holocaust making manifest the central question, is rationale behind the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History historical, social or moral? It is perhaps unsurprising that history teachers’ approaches to the Holocaust are diverse since there is a lack of consensus regarding the basic assumptions which underpin this teaching, such as, for example, what the



term 'Holocaust' means. The discussion below is focused on definitions of this term. This chapter then moves on to outline the question of whether the Holocaust is unique, and the implications of this debate for classroom practice.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

The issue of terminology is important. In an interview with Dr John P Fox, author of *Teaching the Holocaust: The report of a survey in the United Kingdom* (Fox, 1989), he explained that he has not used the term 'Holocaust' for some years. Instead he talks about "the Nazi persecution and genocide of the Jews" (Interview, 21 January 2004). This is because he feels the emphasis on the Holocaust, and therefore the Jewish victims of Nazi racism and genocidal policy, "hides" the suffering and fate of millions of other victims of National Socialism. Dr Fox also has difficulty with the term 'genocide', because inevitably people talk about definitions. The term 'genocide' was defined by Raphael Lemkin in 1943 as the planned annihilation of a people. Lemkin described genocide as a progressive process, a "co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" (Quoted in Paris, 2002, p. 334). The problem of labels is a very real one; there is an argument for abandoning the terms 'the Holocaust' and 'genocide'. For decades the Armenian people have been campaigning to have the killings of hundreds of thousands of their ancestors in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 recognised as genocide. This has been met with a determined campaign by the Turkish Government to deny genocide. In the BBC 2's *Correspondent* programme, broadcast on 26 January 2003, Fergal Keane highlighted the broken promises to the Armenian people from both President Clinton and President George W Bush. Both Presidents had said that they would recognise

this genocide, but Turkey's threat to withdraw military bases forced the American Congress to abandon legislation which would have used the term 'genocide' (BBC, 2003). During President Clinton's term in office he opened the Holocaust Memorial Museum in New York<sup>28</sup>. There was debate regarding the content of this museum, Paris writes:

The Armenian-American community wanted recognition of its history, but some members of council [set up to decide the content of the Holocaust Museum] worried that including the Armenian story might open the door to recognising other tragedies, such as the ravages of Pol Pot in Cambodia, or the massacres of North American Indians. The question was, who is "in" and who is "out"? Where were the boundaries to be drawn?

(Paris, 2003, p. 334)

This is the problem that Dr Fox makes reference to. If different mass murders are categorised under different headings, debates develop concerning a hierarchy of victims, "the problem is that any action of mass murder that does not fit that definition therefore can't be described as genocide. But then how do you rate the memory of the fate of those victims of innumerable cases of state directed mass murder in the modern world? Are they not worthy of memory?" (Interview, 21 January 2004). The uniqueness debate outlined and discussed below is linked to this issue of definitions. Stannard writes about the support received by the Turkish Government from the Israeli Government in the campaign to deny the Armenian genocide, he notes that this relationship is quid pro quo:

The Turkish government has repaid these generous efforts on its behalf by publicly sating not only that (as their Jewish friends obligingly have confirmed for them) there was never an Armenian genocide but that the Nazi assault on the Jews was indeed historically unique. This is the process...that Roger W Smith has called 'denying genocide by acknowledging the Holocaust'.

(Stannard, 1996, p.196)

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<sup>28</sup> Paris (2002, p.336) notes that there was a certain irony in President Clinton opening the Holocaust Museum in Washington in April 1993 with the words "never again" as Bosnian civilians were being killed.

The use of the term 'genocide' has implications not only for the memory of the dead, but for how we treat the living. The refusal of the West to define events in Rwanda in 1994 as 'genocide' meant that the international community were not required to act under the 1946 Genocide Convention (Melvern, 2000). This example demonstrates the importance of definitions.

Prior to this research I understood the term 'Holocaust' as a generic term for National Socialist genocide. There are those who support such a view, Alan S Rosenbaum for example refers to "the Nazi-engineered Holocaust against the Jews, Gypsies and millions of others" (Rosenbaum, 1996, p.1). Similarly Robert Stradling, in the Council of Europe publication *Teaching Twentieth Century European History*, states:

The term 'Holocaust' is used to refer to the annihilation of more than 16 million people by the Third Reich during the period 1933-45. Nearly six million victims were Jews, which represented over two thirds of the total population of European Jewry, and a quarter of the victims were children. Other victims included Polish, Russian and Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war, the Roma/Gypsy populations, socialists, homosexuals and people with mental and physical disabilities.

(Stradling, 2001)

However this interpretation of the Holocaust is contested, and increasingly it has become a term which refers solely to the Jewish experience. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London are examples of this. The latter uses the following definition:

Under the cover of the Second World War, for the sake of their ‘new order’, the Nazis sought to destroy all the Jews of Europe. For the first time in history, industrial methods were used for the mass extermination of a whole people. Six million were murdered, including 1,500,000 children. This event is called the Holocaust.

The Nazis enslaved and murdered millions of others as well, gypsies, people with physical and mental disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, trade unionists, political opponents, prisoners of conscience, homosexuals and others were killed in vast numbers.

(From the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum)

The word ‘Holocaust’ comes from the Greek, ‘Holos’ meaning ‘whole’ and ‘caustos’ meaning ‘burnt’. Bresheeth et al note that originally the term meant a sacrifice consumed by fire or a burnt offering. Later it came to mean “a sacrifice on a large scale” and by the late seventeenth century, “the complete destruction of a large number of persons – a great slaughter or massacre” (Bresheeth, Hood, & Jansz, 2000, p.4). A good deal of literature has been produced about the origins and use of the term ‘Holocaust’. There is some degree of contention over the issue of whether the term encompasses all of the victims of National Socialism, and over whether it is an appropriate description of the Jewish experience. Amos Oz writes:

I do not use the word ‘holocaust’ when I refer to the murder of the Jews of Europe. The word falsifies the true nature of what happened. A holocaust is a natural event, an outbreak of forces beyond human control. The murder of European Jews by the German Nazis was no holocaust.

(Oz, January 1988, p.19)

Elie Wiesel has also wrestled with the term, which he in fact may have been the first to use to describe the Jewish experience (Paris, 2002, p. 330). Wiesel writes:

I have seen it myself on television in the country in which I live. A commentator describing the defeat of a sports team, somewhere, called it a ‘holocaust’. I have read it in a very prestigious newspaper in California, a description of the murder of six people, and the author called it a holocaust.

(Wiesel, 1988, p. 13)

The term 'Shoah', preferred by some including Kinloch, is Hebrew for 'a great and terrible wind'. Kinloch explained that:

I always use the term Shoah and mean the Jewish experience, and the more general genocide to cover ALL the victims of Nazism, including the Shoah. This leaves me free to accept the term holocaust to mean ANY example of deliberate mass murder: I'm quite happy to see such references as Mike Davies' when he talks about Late Victorian Holocausts.

(Correspondence, 25 June 2002)

Ann Low-Beer, who was one of the members of the HWG, feels the most appropriate term is "the Final Solution" since this is how people at the time referred to the persecution (Interview, 29 July 2002). Indeed, Ian Kershaw has commented that even in the late 1970s when the US TV series *Holocaust* was broadcast "the word [Holocaust] itself was not so common" (Quoted in Richards, 23 January 2003). National Holocaust Memorial Day, held on 27 January each year, is an example of the fact that the term Holocaust has, as Steven Katz has written, "become so much part of the landscape" (Katz, 1994, p.1). Bresheeth et al offer a definition of the Holocaust describing this as the Nazi attempt to destroy European Jewry, which was part of a vast operation of genocide encompassing millions of Gypsies, people with mental and physical disabilities, homosexuals and political and religious prisoners (Bresheeth et al., 2000, p.3). For the purpose of clarity this is the definition I have adopted. Unless otherwise stated the term 'Holocaust' refers to the Nazis' persecution and murder of the Jews.

I have also used the term 'Holocaust education' in this thesis to describe teaching about the Holocaust and the events which led up to it and moral and social lessons drawn from the Holocaust. However, not all those in the field support the use of this term to describe the teaching of social and moral lessons arising from the Holocaust.

The American writer Sam Totten (1999) sees that lessons which, for example, involve classroom discussion of universal themes such as tolerance (where the Holocaust is used as the starting point for discussion) should be more accurately referred to as “prejudice reduction” or “human rights awareness”. Short, in response to Totten’s view that “Holocaust education is a misnomer when used to refer to anything other than the genocide itself and events leading up to it”, has written that Totten’s emphasis on terminology is misplaced and that “the priority is not to challenge the legitimacy of the term” (Short, 2003a, p.121). Although it could be argued that strictly speaking Totten has a point, the term is now commonly used to describe teaching about the Holocaust and the events which led up to it; as well as lessons which can be drawn from the Holocaust concerned with human rights.

## **IS THE HOLOCAUST UNIQUE?**

Since the Second World War ended, there have been dozens more genocides in countries such as Rwanda, Cambodia, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. So what more can be done to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten and its crimes never repeated?

(Crace, 2002, p.4)

It is in asking why the deaths of 14.5 million Kulaks is not a feature of school history that a fundamental question is revealed: is the Holocaust a unique event in history, or is it an example of an appalling act of genocide? While the uniqueness debate is not new in academia, it remains relevant in the history classroom: there is a view that if the Holocaust is unique then its status in the National Curriculum for History would be unquestionable. However Kinloch notes that, “a major problem for those who believe that we can avoid future genocides by studying the Shoah is the issue of historical uniqueness” (Kinloch, 2001, p.11). If the actions of Hitler and the Nazis are unique and incomparable then surely it is impossible to argue, as Ian Gregory

does, that teaching about the Holocaust, “reflects our determination that never again should such an atrocity be perpetrated” (Gregory, 2000b, p.50). By definition such an event could never be repeated. On the other hand, if the Holocaust is an example of genocide then we as history teachers need to consider why this genocide is exclusively included as a compulsory part of the History National Curriculum, and why we do not spend more time teaching about other genocides. Further, if the Holocaust is a unique *Jewish* experience there are implications in terms of the attention given in history lessons to examining the Nazis’ treatment of the Gypsies, homosexuals, people with mental and physical disabilities, political prisoners and religious groups.

Between 1939 and 1945 millions of people died at the hands of the Nazis. Among the victims were six million Jews, millions of Soviet citizens and prisoners of war, millions of Polish and Yugoslav civilians, at least 70,000 men, women and children with mental and physical handicaps, over 200,000 Gypsies, and unknown numbers of political prisoners, resistance fighters, deportees and homosexuals (Bresheeth et al., 2000, p.3). These figures are approximate, in other texts it is noted that estimates for example of the numbers of Gypsies killed ranges between 500,000 to over one million (Gregory, 2000a, p.43). There is disagreement among those who argue the Holocaust is unique over the bases of this belief. The statistics are not the issue however; those who argue the Holocaust is unique no longer tend to do so on numerical grounds: there is evidence suggesting greater numbers of people were victims of the atrocities in Stalinist Russia and Mao’s China compared with the Holocaust. For the proponents of the uniqueness argument it is not the number of victims that makes the Holocaust unique, but that the killing was underpinned by an unbending anti-Semitic ideology:

The Holocaust is phenomenologically unique by virtue of the fact that never before has a state set out, as a matter of intentional principle and actualised policy, to annihilate physically every man, woman, and child belonging to a specific people.

(Katz, 1996, p.19)

*Introducing the Holocaust* presents the Holocaust as an example of genocide. Other examples cited include the case of the Native Americans, the Armenian Massacres and ‘ethnic cleansing’ in former Yugoslavia. Similarly Seymour Drescher presents parallels between the Holocaust and the Atlantic Slave Trade (Drescher, 1996) and Robert F. Melson argues the Holocaust and the Armenian Massacres are comparative histories (Melson, 1996). To argue as American scholar Steven T Katz that the Holocaust is unique on ideological grounds demands that the Holocaust be interpreted not only as incomparable but also as a uniquely Jewish experience.

According to Katz:

A close study of the relevant comparative historical data will show that only in the case of Jewry under the Third Reich was such all-inclusive, noncompromising, unmitigated murder intended.

(Katz, 1996, p.20)

Katz refutes interpretations of the Holocaust that allow for comparisons to be drawn with other mass killings:

I know of no method or technique that would allow one to weigh up, to quantify and compare, such massive evil and suffering, and I therefore avoid altogether this sort of counterproductive argument about what one might describe as comparative suffering.

(Katz, 1996, p.19)

Deborah Lipstadt, Professor of modern Jewish and Holocaust studies at Emory University, shares this interpretation. Lipstadt refers to comparative histories as “immoral equivalencies” (Lipstadt, 1994, p.212). She argues against Ernst Nolte’s suggestion that the Nazis borrowed their methods from Stalin (Nolte, 1988) setting out the “crucial contrasts” between the two dictators:



Whereas Stalin's terror was arbitrary, Hitler's was targeted at a particular group... The fate of every Jew who came under German rule was essentially sealed. In contrast, no citizen of the Soviet Union assumed that deportation and death were inevitable consequences of his or her ethnic origins.

(Lipstadt, 1994, p.212)

Kinloch takes issue with this argument:

It seems at least possible that inhabitants of the central Asian Soviet republic of Kazakhstan, for example, might have regarded the forcible imposition of collectivisation on nomads, with its resultant famine, as a deliberate and murderous assault upon their ethnicity.

(Kinloch, 2001, p.11)

Similarly, the Rwandan genocide saw the ruthless pursuit of Tutsi families and anyone who protected them:

The massacres are systematic in nature, whole families are exterminated – grandparents, parents and children. No one escapes, not even newborn babies...the victims are pursued to their very last refuge and killed there.

(UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, 25 May 1994  
<http://www.rwandafund.org/sections/about/genocide.htm>)

Michael Marrus and Raul Hilberg also refuse to accept the Holocaust as unique. In *The Holocaust in History* Marrus suggests the term “unprecedented” is more useful than “unique” writing that, “no event occurs without antecedents, and few would assert that there were no preceding instances of massacre or anti-Jewish persecution that bear a relationship to the murder of European Jewry. The real question is: how much of a break with the past is this particular event?” (Marrus, 1987, p.20).

However, there are historians and educationalists who would argue that there are at least elements of the Holocaust that are unique, if not in terms of scale or on ideological grounds, in terms of the industrial method and planning behind the killing. Zygmunt Bauman argues the Holocaust is a unique modern genocide (1989), James M Glass (1997) discusses the use of technology in the mass-murder of the

Jews. But speed cannot be the Holocaust's claim to uniqueness: Philip Gourevitch in his book about the Rwandan genocide, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*, writes that the rate of killing was three times that of the extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust after the Nazis had resorted to the gas chambers to speed up their killing (Gourevitch, 1999). And, as Stannard notes, in terms of technology the dropping of the Atomic Bomb resulted in the deaths of 200,000 innocent Japanese civilians in a single nuclear instant (1996, p.172). Phillip Lopate is not convinced that the speed or technology involved in the killing is important:

Does it really matter so much if millions are gassed according to Eichmann's timetables, rather than slowly, crudely starved to death as in Stalin's regime, or marched around by ragged teenage Khmer Rouge soldiers and then beheaded or clubbed? Does the family mourning the loved one hacked to pieces by a spontaneous mob of Indonesian vigilantes care that much about the abuses of science and technology? Does neatness count, finally, so damn much?

(Lopate, 1989, p.292)

## **IS IT POSSIBLE TO STUDY UNIQUE EVENTS?**

Before discussing some of the reasons it might matter so much that the Holocaust is understood as unique, this chapter briefly outlines some of the problems for historians in such a claim. Understanding any event as unique impacts upon the study of history as Rogers explains:

If events really were *unique* – each utterly unlike every other in all important respects – the whole process of understanding and explaining by analogy would be impossible. But this would abolish the possibility of historical explanation altogether.

(Rogers, 1984, p.24)

Rogers' point is supported by Elton, "the unique event is a freak and a frustration; if it is really unique – can never recur in meaning or implication – it lacks every measurable dimension and cannot be assessed" (Elton, 1967, p.11). If the cry of

'never again' is to have any substance, the Holocaust must be understood as comparable and comprehensible. Rather than arguing the Holocaust is unique, Gregory asserts that "the Holocaust is surely the most important single event of the twentieth century" (Gregory, 2000b, p.52). It seems impossible as an historian to judge one event to be more important than another. This is particularly so if by making such a claim special status is conferred upon that event, as Elie Kedourie puts it:

Just as no event is coherent or intelligible except in the context of other events, so no event can be specially privileged by the historian as being the sole key to, or the crucial explanation of, history or some stretch thereof. Some such implication, among many others, is to be derived from Ranke's famous statements that every epoch is directly before God and that before God all generations of mankind are equal. This must be so, since the historian *qua* historian does not dispose of a standard or measuring rod, independent from and external to the events, which might enable him to declare one epoch more crucial, or one generation more important, than another.

(Kedourie, 1984, pp. 184-5)

It can be argued that historical events must be viewed in context, as part of a continuum, if they are to make sense. Sarah Rees Jones sees the Holocaust as part of a history of anti-Semitism: a deep rooted pan European prejudice without which, "twentieth-century anti-Semitism could not have taken the form it did."<sup>29</sup> (Rees Jones, 2000, p.22) At the Jewish Museum in Berlin Daniel Libeskind's building and the exhibition it houses depict the Holocaust as cutting across Jewish life and culture as two-millennia of German-Jewish history is explored. In the words of W Michael Blumenthal, it is:

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<sup>29</sup> That said the Holocaust was never inevitable. It is important for students to understand Christian anti-Judaism, but not see it as a prime cause of the Holocaust. It would be a mistake to say that the Holocaust is a result of Christian anti-Judaism; that tradition could have continued or been overcome without it ever coming to the Holocaust.

In depicting the ups and downs of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Germany, the museum illustrates what becomes possible when religious, cultural or ethnic minorities are able to contribute their unique talents to national life – and how terrible the consequences are for all when intolerance and prejudice prevail.

(Blumenthal, 2001)

Such a presentation of the Holocaust allows lessons to be drawn for future generations in a way that could not be achieved if the Holocaust was understood as unique and incomparable. In an interview with Erna Paris, Raul Hilberg made clear the point that lessons cannot be learned from the Holocaust if it is understood as unique:

For me the Holocaust was a vast, single event, but I am never going to use the word *unique* because I recognise that when one starts breaking it to pieces, which is my trade, one finds completely recognisable, ordinary ingredients that are common to other situations, such as Rwanda or Cambodia and possibly many others I have not examined. In the final analysis, it depends whether we want to emphasise the commonality with other events, or the holistic totality – in which case the Holocaust stands by itself. But I consider the latter perilous. Do we want one Rwanda after the other? You know, when a group of Tutsis sits around and watches a neighbouring village burn, when they say, ‘well, that’s them, it’s not going to happen to us,’ they are repeating the history of the Dutch Jews who, when they heard about the Holocaust in Poland, said, ‘this is the Netherlands; it can never happen here.’ They are also repeating the words of the Germans in 1096 when they heard what the crusaders were doing in France. It is staggering to draw that line through the centuries and look at the sameness of language. You have to say, ‘wait a minute, what’s going on? Should we not look at this? Of course we should.’ The alternative is to see the Holocaust as outside of history, as not part of anything. And it is impossible to learn from something that is so apart.

(Paris, 2002, p.335. Emphasis in the original.)

Hilberg talks in this quotation about drawing a line through history and paralleling the Holocaust with similar atrocities from history in order to really understand what the causal factors of genocide are. However, according to Lipstadt’s thesis attempts to compare the Holocaust to other mass killings are designed to help Germans come to terms with their past; she believes comparative histories imply Germany’s actions

were no worse than other countries. In Lipstadt's view this is not far removed from the aims and methods of Holocaust deniers:

Intent on rewriting the annals of Germany's recent past, both groups [comparative historians and Holocaust deniers] wish to lift the burden of guilt they claim has been imposed on Germans. Both believe that the allies should bear a greater share of responsibility for the wrongs committed during the war. Both argue that the Holocaust has been unjustifiably singled out as a unique atrocity.

(Lipstadt, 1994, p.209)

Lipstadt sees denial as a spectrum on which comparative historians and neo-Nazis feature. She labels those who acknowledge the Holocaust as an appalling act of genocide, but question the uniqueness of the *Jewish* experience as relativists or "not yet deniers" (Lipstadt, 1993, p. 215). Stannard condemns Lipstadt's work as "intellectual thuggery" (Stannard, 1996, p.168); there are several points to be made about Lipstadt's thesis. First, there are circumstances such as in this chapter when the uniqueness of the Holocaust is legitimately questioned. Secondly, in view of the difficulties I encountered in the classroom with regard to attitudes towards Germans, Jews and refugees, Lipstadt's argument is worrying and possibly, in Stannard's words, "violence provoking" (Stannard, 1996, p. 167). The German Ambassador Thomas Matussek has commented upon the teaching of Nazi Germany in British schools which he has claimed fuels xenophobia. His comments followed an attack on two German schoolboys in London:

I want to see a more modern History Curriculum in schools... I think it very important that people know as much as possible about the Nazi period and the Holocaust. But what is equally important is the history of Germany in the past 45 years and the success story of modern German democracy. This is necessary to convey to young people that the Germans have learned their lesson and that they have changed.

(*The Guardian*, 9 December 2002)

## **IS THE CLAIM FOR UNIQUENESS “A FEARFUL PLEA FOR REMEMBRANCE”? (Rosenbaum, 1998, p. 2)**

The issues of denial and uniqueness seem to be connected. In her first chapter Lipstadt refers to the attempts of individuals to deny the Holocaust and says that, “as time passes and fewer people can challenge these assertions, their campaign will only grow in intensity.” (Lipstadt, 1993, p. 3) Lipstadt shows concern for the future of Holocaust education:

Colleagues have related that their students’ questions are increasingly informed by Holocaust denial: ‘how do we know that there really were gas chambers?’ ‘What proof do we have that the survivors are telling the truth?’ ‘Are we going to hear from the German side?’ This unconscious incorporation of the deniers’ argument into the students’ thinking is particularly troublesome. It is an indication of the deniers’ success in shaping the way coming generations will approach the study of the Holocaust.

(Lipstadt, 1993, p. 4)

These quotations are examples from Lipstadt’s work which show concern for the future and the impact the claims of Holocaust deniers may have when there are no survivors left to discuss their experiences. Is the desire to attribute unique status to the Holocaust concerned to ensure that the Holocaust is remembered and to that end has a secure place on the school curriculum?

Brown and Davies, in some small-scale research based on teacher’s perceptions of the Holocaust, identified four issues for further investigation. One of these was the fact that teachers may not perceive the Holocaust as being significantly unique (Brown & Davies, 1998). Teachers appeared to view the Holocaust as unique in the sense that all historical events are unique; they saw it as providing an opportunity to learn about “the nature of humanity and human beings.” One teacher explained that in teaching the Holocaust a “broader role which...[assists the]...growth of tolerance” is performed. A variety of other topics were mentioned by history teachers which were noted for the

role they played in encouraging a more tolerant and democratic society. These topics included the actions of William the Conqueror following the Invasion in 1066; the massacre at Drogheda; the clearing of the Scottish Highlands; Slavery; Living Conditions in nineteenth century urban centres; the Vietnam War; and the wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Brown and Davies, 1998, p. 79). This view of the Holocaust within the History Curriculum is reminiscent of that put forward by Paula Mountford who uses lessons on the Holocaust to “encourage pupils to recognise the relevance of a past event to today’s world” (Mountford, 2001, p.28). The first lesson in the sequence begins with students deconstructing recent newspaper stories and identifying themes such as racism and physical violence. Students then make links between these themes and other topics they have studied in Years 7-9. Lessons on topics such as slavery, the suffragettes, the peasant’s revolt, and the luddites are recalled. The problem for Brown and Davies with such an approach is that, “the Holocaust becomes simply one of very many events which could be used as a tool to teach about tolerance” (Brown and Davies, 1998, p. 79). However, in his recent defence of Holocaust education for social and moral purposes Short has advocated this kind of approach and recognised the need for teachers to be convinced of the importance of teaching the Holocaust to ensure the topic receives curriculum time:

Debating the wider merits of the subject is not just a matter of theoretical interest, for the way the Holocaust is perceived is likely to influence the way it is taught and will almost certainly have a bearing on the amount of attention it receives. The historical significance of the Holocaust may not, therefore be the only factor determining its status in the curriculum. If teachers believe the subject to be devoid of useful lessons, they might, quite reasonably, demand that it be given a more restricted role in students’ education; after all, space on the curriculum is both highly prized and in short supply.

(Short, 2003b, p.277)

Brown and Davies, who are similarly concerned that the Holocaust is taught in schools, are wary of such an approach but endorse the view that teachers need to be convinced of the importance of the Holocaust in order the topic remains part of the school curriculum. They write that teaching the Holocaust for broader educational goals such as the growth of tolerance and learning about the nature of humanity:

Has a powerful attraction and would *seem* to lead to a situation in which the place of teaching and learning about the Holocaust is secure. However, if the Holocaust is not perceived as unique in a more significant way than any other historical and, in the main, it is seen only as an example, then the motivation to teach it may be weakened.

(Brown & Davies, 1998, p.79. Emphasis in the original.)

For Brown and Davies the place of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum is important. In their view the unique status conferred upon the Holocaust will ensure it remains central to the History Curriculum. However, the paragraphs above have demonstrated that there are questions regarding whether the Holocaust is unique. Perhaps even more significant is the issue of whether anything can be learned from the Holocaust if it is perceived as unique. Indeed, in the above quotation Short makes the point that the historical significance of the Holocaust may not be enough to ensure that teachers teach about the Holocaust.

This chapter has discussed two themes which are central to this thesis: the role of school history and the question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The following chapter examines in detail the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE PLACE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

In an attempt to clarify the objectives of teaching the Holocaust in history, I have traced the history of the Holocaust as a topic for study in the National Curriculum for History. This chapter explores the formation of the National Curriculum for History and the position of the topic of the Holocaust within this. A chronology of curriculum developments and key events is provided on pages six to 14 to help guide the reader through this chapter as well as the next. This chapter provides essential background for the two which follow: Chapter Five sets out a history of Holocaust education in England before examining the views of curriculum designers on the topic of the Holocaust, and Chapter Six analyses the views of history teachers and how they have interpreted the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum.

#### **THE ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 heralded the development of a National Curriculum for England and Wales. Kenneth Baker<sup>30</sup> announced proposals for a “national core curriculum” on London Weekend Television’s *Weekend World*, broadcast on 7 December 1986. There followed in 1987 an Education Reform Bill upon which the ERA was based (Chitty, 2002). The ERA provided for the establishment of a national curriculum of core (Maths, Science, English) and foundation (Technology, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Art,

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<sup>30</sup> As detailed in the chronology on pages six to 14, Kenneth Baker was Secretary of State for Education between May 1986 and July 1989.

Music, Physical Education) subjects. For each subject there were objectives known as attainment targets for the knowledge, skills and understanding which students should be expected to have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they were aged seven, 11, 14 and 16. These were 'key ages' and therefore students aged between five and seven were in Key Stage 1, students aged seven to 11 were in Key Stage 2, students aged 11 to 14 were in Key Stage 3 and those aged 14 to 16 were in Key Stage 4. Programmes of Study (PoS) would also be drawn up to detail the content, skills and processes which would need to be covered during each Key Stage (KS). The attainment targets (ATs) and PoS would together form the basis of the Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs) which would assess students at the end of each Key Stage (National Curriculum History Working Group Terms of Reference). Working groups were established to develop the ATs and PoS for each National Curriculum subject. This conception of the National Curriculum was one of the reasons that Lawton and Chitty (1988), along with other commentators, believed the National Curriculum to be fundamentally flawed:

The curriculum is conceived of entirely in terms of subjects, with little or no acknowledgement of the debate which has been going on both inside and outside the DES for at least the last 10 years. Although largely educated and trained *within* subject disciplines, teachers have to learn to apply their knowledge and skills in ways which stretch far beyond single subjects and inevitably cross subject boundaries. They have to ask, as HMI working groups have done, what are the essential areas of learning and experience to which all children have a right of access.

(Lawton & Chitty, 1988, pp.3-4)

This is an important issue with regard to the topic of the Holocaust, which does not sit easily within any one subject boundary.

## THE ROLE OF THE HISTORY WORKING GROUP

The HWG was set up to advise the Secretary of State on the statutory framework for History. The group met for the first time on 24 January 1989. The original group comprised ten members: Commander Michael Saunders Watson (Chairperson), Mr Robert Guyver, Mr Jim Hendy, Mr Tom Hobhouse, Dr (now Professor) Gareth Elwyn Jones, Mr Peter Livsey, Mrs Ann Low-Beer, Dr Alice Prochaska, the late Dr John Roberts and Mrs Carol White. In addition all of the National Curriculum working groups had an ‘observer’ from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) and representatives from the Department of Education and Science (DES) also attended the HWG’s meetings.

Phillips (R. Phillips, 1998a, p.54) notes the importance of knowing something about the characters who served on the HWG for establishing the likely direction this group would take. Michael Saunders Watson owned Rockingham Castle in Leicestershire and was Chairperson of the Heritage Education Trust; he shared with Baker an interest in history and heritage. In an interview for *The Independent* on 8 April 1990 Saunders Watson said “he felt he’d been appointed by Baker because of the need to have somebody outside the academic world” and also, “Baker had stayed at his house one night”. Blum has commented that Baker’s decision to appoint Saunders Watson as Chairperson on this basis was dubious (Blum, 1990). However, according to one of the Group’s ‘observers’, Saunders Watson quickly understood the current debates in history and education (Interview, 20 June 2002). Indeed, Melanie Phillips in *All Must Have Prizes* described Saunders Watson’s appointment as a “spectacular own goal” (M. Phillips, 1996, p.148). *If* Baker had wanted a ‘lackey’ he had made a mistake. Saunders Watson was determined that despite the

level of political interest and attempts to apply pressure on the group<sup>31</sup> their work would be their own. He defended the decisions made by the HWG and argued the case against knowledge based attainment targets which, as is discussed in the following chapter, was the favoured approach of Thatcher and the New Right.

Baker appointed two teachers to the group; Robert Guyver (a primary school teacher and Chairperson of the Devon Association of Teachers of History) and Carol White (a secondary school teacher who had expressed concerns about elements of the Schools History Project). Ann Low-Beer and Dr Gareth Elwyn Jones (now a Professor) both worked in teacher education. Ann Low-Beer was a lecturer in Education at Bristol University. She had also run short courses on history and the primary school for primary teachers, and had written articles critical of the use of empathy in history lessons (Low-Beer, 1967, 1988, 1989, April 10 1987). Gareth Elwyn Jones was based at the University of Wales Swansea. His role was to link and coordinate the approaches of the HWG with the Group's Welsh counterpart, the History Committee for Wales. John Roberts was a high profile academic historian and Warden of Merton College, Oxford. His commitment to Oxford meant that due to the demands on his time he resigned following the publication of the Interim Report<sup>32</sup>. Professor Peter Marshall, who specialised in European History, replaced him. Marshall was Rhodes Professor at King's College, London. Alice Prochaska was Secretary and Librarian to the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. She had also been a member of the History at the Universities Defence Group and as such realised that the presentation of school history was of importance if the subject was going to survive in universities. She had experience of working

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<sup>31</sup>See discussion on political pressure in Chapter Five.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter Six for further discussion and the significance of this.

with academics and school teachers. Like Jones (1991) and Guyver (1990), Prochaska later wrote of her experiences on the HWG (1990). She had previously published a *History of the General Federation of Trade Unions* (1982). Peter Livsey was a secondary school adviser. Henry Hobhouse was author of *The Forces of Change: Why we are the way we are now* (1989) in which he argued modern history has been shaped less by the actions of human beings than by three natural forces: population growth, food supply, and disease. He had an interest in politics and served as the Conservative Chairperson on Somerset County Council between 1989 and 1992. Jim Hendy was Director of Education at Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. Chris Culpin (author of school history textbooks) was co-opted onto the group later (from 23 October 1989) as was Dr Tim Lomas (a history teacher with the reputation of being expert in the area of assessment, co-opted from 10 July 1989). From the DES Michael Phipps, who was head of the schools curriculum policy division concerned with arts and humanities, attended all but one meeting until 29 September when he was replaced by Barney Baker. Jenny Bacon, head of Schools Branch 3, also attended some meetings until August 1989 when Anthony Chamier took over the post. Jenny Worsfold was responsible for producing the minutes, helping to draw up agendas and coordinating the work of the HWG and DES, she was assisted by Phil Snell<sup>33</sup>, Lesley Storey and John Goodwin. Roger Hennessey was Staff Inspector for history and was invited to be HMI Observer to the HWG. However, according to the Group members Hennessey did more than observe the Group's work: he influenced the decisions and thinking of the HWG and worked very closely with the Chairperson and with the secretary, Jenny Worsfold. Alice Prochaska (1990) reflected that Roger Hennessey and Jenny Worsfold were two of

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<sup>33</sup> Cheryl Bailey took over from Phil Snell in August 1989.

the most important people, despite not technically being members of the group. Of Hennessey she wrote, “[he] dedicated an enormous amount of his time to the task of advising us in his official capacity of ‘observer’” (Prochaska, 1990, p. 83). An indication of Hennessey’s views on school history can be found in *History from 5 to 16 Curriculum Matters 11* (DES, 1988), an HMI document for which he was mainly responsible. It is worth digressing here to write something about this paper and Hennessey’s thinking about school history; this HMI document appears to have informed the Group’s work. Members of the HWG were issued with a list of background reading in January 1989 on which the document featured (List of background reading for members of the History Working Group, January 1989). During the Group’s second meeting, members of the HWG were told that comments on the HMI document were due at the end of February and although these might not be issued in published form, they would be made available to the Group (NC/HWG (89) 2<sup>nd</sup>).

The preface to the HMI document made clear that its aim was to encourage professional debate:

This paper is addressed not only to heads and teachers but also to school governors, local education authority elected members and officers, parents, employers and the wider community outside the school. Like other earlier publications in the Curriculum Matters series, this is a discussion paper intended to stimulate a professional debate and to contribute to reaching national agreement about the objectives and content of the school curriculum. The debate will now take place within the arrangements for developing the National Curriculum contained in the Education Reform Act.

(DES, 1988, p. iv)

Comments were invited from readers of the document, to be sent to the Staff Inspector for History by 28 February 1989. As noted by Chitty and Lawton in the quotation on page 121, HMI working groups had been probing the question

“what are the essential areas of learning and experience to which all children have a right of access?” Hennessey viewed this as an important question and saw that it could, as noted in the preface to the HMI document, now be debated through the development of the National Curriculum; about which he was positive. In an article for *The Historian* in autumn 1988 Hennessey wrote, “the National Curriculum offers all parties an unrepeatable opportunity. It is just possible that two major developments will coincide: the National Curriculum, and the ‘higher wisdom’ which might arise from a synthesis of all the debating of the last decade” (1988). Hennessey believed that a major problem with the status quo prior to 1989 was that no one had ever sat down and considered what we as a society want our 16 year olds to know and be able to do by the time they leave school. He further saw a role for the development of the National Curriculum for History in ending the skills and knowledge debate, and putting a stop to those who said that history was irrelevant (Interview, 26 June 2002). The reasons for studying history and the aims of teaching history in schools outlined in the HMI document are a fusion of the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ approaches discussed in the previous chapter. The aims and objectives of teaching history in schools; issues surrounding the planning of history courses; some of the principles of teaching and learning history; and implications for the assessment of history were discussed in the HMI paper. Assessment of history in the National Curriculum was a contentious issue. As has been noted and is further outlined below, Thatcher and the New Right rejected ‘new’ history and believed that factual knowledge alone should be tested. However, the HWG saw content and skills as inter-dependent and insisted that assessment was based on knowledge *and* understanding of historical concepts. This same view is put forward in the HMI paper:

A knowledge and understanding of past events, when they occurred and what might have been their causes and consequences, is certainly a necessary part of understanding history. But closely linked to a growing understanding of events of the past should be an increasing mastery of historical skills. These are inter-dependent activities which ought to develop together.

(DES, 1988, p.23)

The response of the teaching profession to the establishment of the HWG was perhaps less positive than that of Hennessey's. Three members of the Group interviewed were particularly aware of the general unpopularity of the proposed National Curriculum "the idea of being told what they [teachers] must teach was anathema" (Prochaska, 1990, p.80), and the establishment of a working group hand picked by the Government and closely supervised by civil servants. One member, who was later appointed to the Responses Panel, said that his brother accused him of being the mouth piece of the establishment (Interview, 2 April 2002). Both this member and two other members of the Group said that they agreed to serve of the HWG because of the conspirator's argument throughout history; if I do not do it, someone else will:

It [the National Curriculum] was very controversial, lots of people had said they would have nothing to do with it, they didn't want to be seen as Thatcher's poodles! My friends said I should do it because they thought I would be good at it (well, they were my friends) and if I didn't do it someone else who might not be as good would do it.

(Interview, 29 July 2002)

Like Alice [Prochaska<sup>34</sup>] writes in her article you had this feeling, well if I don't do it then someone else will and they'll make a worse job of it. Which of course is nonsense and has been the collaborators argument throughout history! [But] I felt it was the right thing to do.

(Interview, 24 June 2002)

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<sup>34</sup> "You are only given the chance to say yes or no, not to put forward more suitable people. So someone even less suitable may well take your place if you say no. Then, since the legislation is in being and the National Curriculum will come about regardless of individuals' scruples, the opportunity to help make it as good as possible is not to be turned down" (Prochaska, 1990, p.81-2).



Baker wanted to see the Group's Interim Report by 30 June 1989. Their report was to indicate the contribution history should make to the school curriculum; their provisional thinking about the knowledge, skills, and understanding students should have acquired by the end of each Key Stage; and the Group's thinking about the PoS and ATs (National Curriculum History Working Group Terms of Reference). The Group did not have a free hand. The supplementary guidance to the Chairperson made clear that the National Curriculum for History should have an emphasis on British history (National Curriculum History Working Group Terms of Reference). This point was reiterated by Baker when he visited the group during their first meeting at Elizabeth House in London. Baker was also concerned about the teaching of contemporary history. Despite agreeing that "an international dimension was important to history, particularly in the twentieth century" he "warned that this should not be achieved through making history into twentieth century studies" (NC/HWG (89) 1<sup>st</sup>). The issues of an emphasis on British history and the teaching of the late twentieth century would be recurrent debates during the formation and revision of the National Curriculum for History.

The HWG's Interim Report did not meet with the approval of the Prime Minister. She was "appalled" (Thatcher, 1993, p.596) by the contents of the Report. Thatcher wrote in her memoirs:

It [the Interim Report] put emphasis on interpretation and enquiry as against content and knowledge. There was insufficient weight given to British history. There was not enough emphasis on history as chronological study. Ken Baker wanted to give the report a general welcome while urging its chairman [sic] to make the attainment targets specify more clearly factual knowledge and increasing the British history content. But this in my view did not go far enough. I considered the document comprehensively flawed and told Ken that there must be major, not just minor, changes. In particular, I wanted to see a clearly set out chronological framework for the whole History Curriculum. But the test would of course be the Final Report.

(Thatcher, 1993, p.596)

In a cabinet re-shuffle in July 1989 Baker was moved from Education to make way for John MacGregor who Thatcher believed “would prove more effective in keeping a grip on education reforms” (Thatcher, 1993, p.596). The Prime Minister’s resistance to the proposals outlined by the HWG in their Interim Report may explain MacGregor’s insistence in his letter to Saunders-Watson published with this document that the Group look again at “a number of issues”:

We are publishing the Report today, together with this letter. I have set out below a number of issues which I would like the Group to consider further in developing complete and detailed recommendations for attainment targets, programmes of study and related assessment arrangements, for inclusion in its Final Report at Christmas. You will of course also be taking account of public reaction to the Interim Report, and I know that you will want to make sure that they can be easily implemented in schools.

(Letter to Cmndr. LMM Saunders Watson from John Macgregor  
published in DES, 1989)

These “issues” were chronology, the proportion of British history recommended, and assessment. In terms of this thesis the issue of British history is the most interesting. MacGregor noted that less than 50 percent of the proposed History Curriculum was made up of British history, “I should like the group to increase this proportion by developing additional core study units devoted to British history and, in the appropriate thematic history study units, to give the British experience a sharper focus” (DES, 1989). As will be discussed in the following chapter, it was within this

statement that a cross party group of MPs saw an opportunity to argue for the inclusion of World War Two and the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History. MPs would not be the only group lobbying the HWG; MacGregor also noted public reaction to the Interim Report should be taken into account. This raises questions regarding historical objectivity which was discussed in Chapter Two: was anybody in a position to make recommendations regarding the History Curriculum with the necessary “detachment” from their own times and preoccupations? In the above extract from his letter to Saunders Watson, MacGregor stresses the importance of the ATs (assessment) making reference to these before making reference to the PoS (curriculum content), perhaps indicating the Government’s priority. The final sentence of this extract makes clear the Government’s expectation that the HWG’s proposals would be easy to implement. Roger Hennessey explained that despite interest from the BBC and a number of publishing houses, the HWG, in planning the National Curriculum, had to give consideration to the resources already available in schools. Only limited Government funding became available for schools to purchase new resources and provide teacher education to support the implementation of the new curriculum. However, according to Hennessey the HWG were committed to developing a creative policy and “did not give in completely to inertia”. For example, new topics including histories of the Maya and Japan were recommended by the HWG (Interview, 20 June 2002). However, teachers may have been teaching about such periods and people prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum and there is a question regarding how much of a departure from the status quo the History National Curriculum really represented in terms of curriculum content: *Native peoples of the Americas* was suggested in the HWG’s Final Report as an optional study unit for Key Stage 3 (DES, 1990, pp.88-9). Within this study unit

there was an option to study either the Inuits; the Iroquois and Algonkian Indians of north-eastern America or the Maya. In *History in the National Curriculum* the Maya is listed with five other past non-European societies from which teachers could choose one to teach in Key Stage 2 (DES, 1991b, p.32). The Maya remained in Key Stage 2 listed in the post-Dearing History National Curriculum of 1995, again as one of six past non-European societies teachers could choose to teach. *Japan: Shogunate to the present day* was proposed as an optional study unit for Key Stage 3 in the Interim Report (DES, 1989, p. 40). In the Final Report, *Japan: 1868 to the present day* was recommended as an optional study unit for Key Stage 4. *Japan 1904 to mid 1960s (from the Russo-Japanese War to the emergence as a major economic power)* appeared in *History in the National Curriculum* (DES, 1991b) as an optional study unit for Key Stage 4. However, post-Dearing the history of Japan ceased to feature as a study unit in the National Curriculum: instead it appears in the 1995 version of the National Curriculum for History in lists of exemplary events students could be taught about in the study unit *The twentieth-century world*, and in *A world study after 1900* in the 1999 National Curriculum.

## **THE POSITION OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR HISTORY**

The Holocaust did not feature as a suggested topic of study in the Interim Report. In fact the HWG never discussed the Holocaust as a topic in its own right; they viewed it as an aspect of World War Two. The decision of the HWG not to include a Study Unit on the Second World War is explored in Chapter Five. The Interim Report contained only one reference to the period of the Second World War; and this was to explain its absence:

In making our choice of content we are aware that a number of events of world-historical importance have been excluded. Some omissions from our selection such as the Reformation, the Great War, or the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, could be the subject of School Designed Themes. It has not been our intention to play down the importance of these or other events, but for every suggested addition, something has to make way, and in the process carefully-designed structures may be put at risk.

(Interim Report, 1989, p. 44)

The HWG had been concerned to have the ATs in place before they began work on the PoS. It was late April 1989 before the Group began to discuss curriculum content. In their Interim Report (which was completed in July 1989, though publication was delayed until 10 August) the Group explained how they had selected curriculum content:

The ‘content’, or historical knowledge, which gives life to the structure of a course, has to be chosen with the greatest of care. This choice is very difficult since it involves the selection of some items, and thereby affirming them, and the omission of other items and implicitly (but not necessarily) denying their importance. The selection must therefore be made according to criteria.

(DES, 1989, p. 10)

The HWG used the following criteria to select curriculum content:

Content should:

- i) be **broad**, for example it should pay attention to technological as well as political developments; to ‘ancient’ as well as ‘modern’ history, to the experiences of many people and the achievements of different cultures, it should also make possible the inter-relationship of local, national and world history;
- ii) make possible different **interpretations** and illustrate a range of points of view;
- iii) help teachers and pupils to raise fundamental questions about human society: moral, ethical, social, economic etc;
- iv) make it possible for pupils to be introduced to their historical **inheritances**, some of which are shared and others individual. A course of history ought to make clear to pupils that our current social, economic, political, cultural and technological arrangements are unique in their time and place and derive from their past;
- v) provide an effective vehicle for the development of a wide range of skills;
- vi) be sufficiently broad to develop skills derived from historical **methodology**;

- vii) support the complete range of **attainment targets** for history outlined in this report.  
(DES, 1989, pp. 10-11. Emphasis in the original.)

In essence the Group's approach was:

A simple and straightforward one based on its ideas on what it wanted pupils to have learned by the time they left schools: to give them a clear understanding of how things, in terms of PESC<sup>35</sup>, came to be as they are in Britain. Given the limited amount of time the Group had selected areas of study to include 'milestones' or turning points in British and in European and world history. The second element had been to give pupils the opportunity of studying other areas of the world, viewed from the inside, to enable them to make comparisons and to become better informed. The Chairman [sic] added that pupil interest had also been a factor for selection.

(Minute 8.5, NC/HWG (89) 14<sup>th</sup>)

The Holocaust first appeared in the Final Report where the HWG recommended two core (compulsory) study units at Key Stage 4. These were *Britain in the twentieth century* and *The era of the Second World War: 1933 to 1948*. The former was "intended to give students an insight into the recent history of Britain through the study of two out of three significant periods in the twentieth century" (DES, 1990, p. 96). This study unit covered Irish nationalism; the suffragettes; Trade Unions; the First World War; Prime Ministers; technological developments; economic issues; Liberal welfare reforms; movements and developments in the 1960s and arts and popular culture (DES, 1990, p. 97). The latter study unit was to introduce "pupils to a great crisis in twentieth century history which left an enduring mark on Britain, Europe and the rest of the world" (DES, 1990, p. 98). This covered the causes of war; the Axis powers; wartime leaders; the origins of the Cold War; technology and the nature of warfare; the Atomic Bomb; the economic consequences of war; casualties of war; civilian life in Britain; broadcasting; painting, posters, war films,

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<sup>35</sup> PESC stands for Political, Economic, technological and scientific, Social and religious, and Cultural and aesthetic. This formula was designed by the HWG to ensure all aspects of historical events; periods and individuals included in the National Curriculum were covered.

literature and entertainment (DES, 1990, p. 99). The Holocaust was included - named for the first time - under the heading 'casualties of war' as essential information from a social and religious dimension in the PESC formula.

Thatcher was little more impressed with the Final Report from the HWG than she had been with the Interim Report. She had felt that MacGregor would take a firmer approach and was surprised when:

On this occasion, however, John MacGregor was far more inclined to welcome the Report than I had expected. It did now put greater emphasis on British history. But the attainment targets it set out did not specifically include knowledge of historical facts, which seemed to me extraordinary...The detail of the History Curriculum would impose too inflexible a framework on teachers. I raised these points at a meeting with John on Monday 19 March. He defended the Report's proposals. But I insisted that it would not be right to impose the sort of approach which it contained. It should go out to consultation but no guidance should at present be issued.

(Thatcher, 1993, p. 596)

The Secretary of State put the HWG proposals out for further consultation; the National Curriculum Council (NCC) Consultation Report was produced in December 1990. This report was drawn up with assistance from its National Curriculum Committee A along with a History Task Group. In a letter from Duncan Graham (Chairperson and Chief Executive of the NCC) to the Secretary of State for Education (now Kenneth Clarke) which was published with the report, it was noted that responses from organisations, schools and individuals had also been taken into account. It endorsed the structure of the History National Curriculum as recommended by the HWG including the PESC model, though the NCC report referred to PESC as the "key elements" stating that students should be taught history from a variety of perspectives: political; economic, technological and scientific; social; religious; cultural and aesthetic. The NCC report also suggested that students

in Key Stage 4 should be taught the core study unit: *Britain, Europe and the world in the twentieth century*<sup>36</sup>. The presentation of the twentieth century continued to encourage the longer view, helping students to understand their world and how the twentieth century had shaped it. The Holocaust is included, as it was in the Final Report, as one aspect of World War Two. Under the heading of *International conflict and co-operation, including the Second World War and its impact* (NCC, 1990, p. 59) the NCC report stated:

Pupils should be introduced to the causes, nature and consequences of conflict and co-operation between nations, with particular reference to the Second World War and its impact. Pupils should be taught about...the experience and impact of the Second World War in different countries: the British home front, occupied countries, the Holocaust, the development of the Atomic Bomb.

(NCC, 1990, p. 59)

## **KENNETH CLARKE AND THE TEACHING OF TWENTIETH CENTURY HISTORY**

The teaching of the twentieth century was a contentious issue. The Secretary of State's guidance (NCC, 1990, appendix A) sent to the NCC in July 1990 had made reference to the presentation of the twentieth century. This was the only reference made to curriculum content which indicates Clarke's particular concern regarding how contemporary history would be taught in the classroom:

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<sup>36</sup> This study unit made reference to events, periods and individuals such as overseas empires; the welfare state; key concepts such as democracy, liberalism, conservatism, human rights, dictatorship, totalitarianism, socialism, communism, nationalisation, welfare state, nationalism, fascism, imperialism, decolonisation, conservation, equal opportunities, ecumenism; key events from and the impact of the two World Wars; relations between different parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; the origins and development of the superpowers; the break up of empires; the United Nations; religion; mass communications; new forms of popular culture; major changes in the British, European and World economies; population growth; migration; individuals including Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill, Gandhi, and Mao Tse Tung; environmental pollution; the Middle East; the role and status of women; changing leisure patterns.



I do not myself propose changes in the content to be prescribed in individual HSUs, but I wish to draw the attention of the NCC to the two core HSUs recommended for Key Stage 4. I have accepted the advice of the Working Group that the two core study units in this key stage should be concerned with twentieth century history; that one should cover British history, and the other embrace – with a wider frame of reference than Britain – the era of the Second World War. However, I believe that both units should be broader in treatment, and provide a better overview of twentieth Century history, including in particular the development of the European Community. I therefore invite the NCC to advise me on how these HSUs should be broadened, without loss of coherence or rigour, to ensure a synoptic survey of history in the twentieth Century, with particular reference to British and European history.

(NCC, 1990, p. 71. Underlining in the original.)

The Secretary of State published the draft order for history on 14 January 1991 based on the NCC's report. In his book *A Lesson For Us All: the making of the National Curriculum* Duncan Graham has written, "when it came to history, the longest running saga in the National Curriculum, Kenneth Clarke simply cut the bits he did not like" (Graham & Tytler, 1993, p.62). There were only minor changes to the Key Stage 4 study unit as set out in the NCC Consultation Report, but Clarke's discomfort regarding the presentation and discussion of current events in the classroom is revealed in the "bits he cut out" of the study unit. The description of the purpose of the study unit in the NCC report read:

Pupils should be taught to understand how the world in which they live has been shaped by the developments in twentieth-century history. They should be helped to consolidate their understanding of earlier periods of history. Through their historical studies they should have opportunities to prepare themselves for citizenship, work and leisure.

(NCC, 1990, p.56)

In the draft order this paragraph was amended with the addition of two sentences in which Clarke stressed that history is separate from current events. To prevent history teachers from making links between history and current affairs Clarke decided to introduce a '20 year rule':

Pupils should be taught to understand how the world in which they live has been shaped by developments in twentieth-century history. *This programme of study should develop historical knowledge which will help pupils to understand the background to the modern world but it is not a course in current affairs. It should focus on events from the turn of the century to the 1960s.* Pupils should be helped to consolidate their understanding of earlier periods of history. Through their historical studies they should have opportunities to prepare themselves for citizenship, work and leisure.

(DES, 1991c. Emphasis in the original.)

The position of the Holocaust remained the same<sup>37</sup> but for the fact the heading it fell under was amended to read *International conflict and co-operation up to circa 1960, including the Second World War and its impact* (DES, 1991c, p.39. Emphasis added). Indeed, the covering letter sent out with the draft order by Anthony Chamier of Schools 3 Branch explained:

The Secretary of State has accepted the NCC's recommendations in respect of attainment targets and programmes of study, subject to one change of substance. His reservation concerns the course of modern history that forms part of the programme for Key Stage 4 (pupils aged 14-16). He recognises that from time to time teachers have to treat matters, in history and in other subjects, which are topical and controversial. He is confident that they will handle these with care and sensitivity and with regard to their duty to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues. However, the Secretary of State considers that it would not be right for him to make the study of events up to and including the present day a statutory requirement as part of National Curriculum History. His view is that the programmes of study should not prescribe teaching about contemporary events and people, many of whom are still living, because of the difficulty of treating such matters with an historical perspective. The Secretary of State believes it is right to draw some distinction between the study of history and the study of current affairs.

(DES, 1991c. Emphasis added.)

The draft order proposed that students in Key Stage 3 be taught four core study units<sup>38</sup> and four complementary supplementary study units.

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<sup>37</sup> Included as essential information from a *social and religious dimension* in the PESC formula under the heading "casualties of war".

<sup>38</sup> These were The Roman Empire; Medieval realms: Britain 1066 to 1500; The making of the United Kingdom: Crown, Parliament and people 1500 to 1750 and Expansion, trade and industry: Britain 1750 to 1900.

Following the publication of the draft Orders for History in January 1991 the statutory orders, *History in the National Curriculum* (DES, 1991b), were published in March; these had to be implemented from September. Key Stage 4 essentially looked as it had done in the draft order. There was a broad treatment of the twentieth century with the core study unit designed so that, “pupils should be taught about themes in twentieth-century history necessary for them to understand their place and that of Britain in the modern world” (DES, 1991b, p.51). However, on page three of the document it was noted that:

The Secretary of State is proposing, subject to consultation, that all pupils at Key Stage 4 will study a full course of history **or** a full course of geography leading to a GCSE or equivalent **or** a short course in both of these subjects...**All pupils will be required to study history and geography until age 14.**

(DES, 1991b, p.3. Emphasis in the original)

Clarke was prompted to make a revision to Key Stage 3 in response to concerns about the lack of twentieth century history which some students would now have access to. The two World Wars were no longer a feature of Key Stage 4 in the 1991 document, *The era of the Second World War* appeared as Core Study Unit 5 in Key Stage 3. Core Study Units 2-5<sup>39</sup> had to be taught chronologically and at least one unit had to be taught in each of the three school years which comprised Key Stage 3 (DES, 1991b, p.35). *The era of the Second World War* stated that:

Pupils should be taught about the causes, nature and immediate consequences of the Second World War. The focus should be on the developing conflict between democracies and dictatorships in Europe in the 1930s, the impact of the war on soldiers and civilians, and post-war reconstruction.

(DES, 1991b, p.45)

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<sup>39</sup> Medieval realms: Britain 1066 to 1500; The Making of the United Kingdom: Crowns, Parliaments and peoples 1500 to 1750; Expansion, trade and industry: Britain 1750 to 1900).

The Holocaust was noted under “the experience of war”, fourth on a list of five aspects of experience of war to be covered. In a DES press release, which accompanied the publication of the Order for History the Secretary of State, explained his position:

In response to comment that pupils who decide to drop history in the final key stage would do little twentieth century history, I have made one other change to the programmes of study [the first change being the ‘20 year rule’]. The programme for Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) now includes a compulsory study unit on the era of the Second World War. This will provide an introduction to twentieth century history at the end of that Key Stage, and give pupils pursuing history in Key Stage 4 more time to concentrate on other aspects of twentieth century history.

(DES, 1991a)

## **THE DEARING REVIEW**

Thatcher concludes her writing in the National Curriculum in her memoirs commenting that by the time she left office in November 1990 she “was convinced that there would have to be a new drive to simplify the National Curriculum and testing” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 597). Thatcher’s understanding of the National Curriculum was different from that envisaged by Baker, and from the final form that it took. In an interview for the *Sunday Telegraph* in April 1990 Thatcher explained her understanding of the core curriculum going on to point out, before it had been completed, where it had gone wrong:

The core curriculum, so far as we have got the English one out, the mathematics and the science – now that originally was what I meant by a core curriculum. Everyone simply must be trained in mathematics up to a certain standard. You must be trained in a language and I would say some literature up to a certain standard, you really must. It is your own tongue. It is not enough to be able to speak it: you must know some of the literature. And you simply must have the basic structure of science. And you must not be allowed to give them up before you are 16... When we first started on this, I do not think I ever thought they would do the syllabus in such detail as they are doing now. Because I believe there are thousands of teachers who are teaching extremely well. And I always felt that when we had done the core curriculum, the core syllabus, there must always be scope for each teacher to use her

own methods, her own experience, the things which she has learned and she or he knows how to teach.

*(The Sunday Telegraph, 15 April 1990)*

Given the lack of a single vision and consensus over the National Curriculum it is unsurprising that its original form was rapidly revised.

It became clear to John Major's Government<sup>40</sup> that the National Curriculum framework and related testing arrangements could not survive in their original form; concerns that the tests involved excessive workload and were educationally unsound led the three largest teaching unions the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) to ballot members on a boycott of all National Curriculum tests (Chitty, 2002, p 72). John Patten, who had replaced Clarke as Secretary of State for Education in April 1992, was finding it difficult to command respect from parents and teachers alike. In April 1993 he announced that a review of the National Curriculum would be conducted by Sir Ron Dearing. Dearing was the Chairperson-designate of the new School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) to be established in October 1993. The Dearing Review was politically important and had to be successful. Teachers had to feel that the curriculum had been revised and provided a workable framework and these revisions would have to be acceptable to the general public: parents and voters. Dearing's Interim Report, *The National Curriculum and its Assessment* was published on 2 August 1993. Complaints regarding curriculum overload and the level of prescription were accepted and possible explanations - some of which appear to support Lawton and Chitty's conviction that the National Curriculum was

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<sup>40</sup> Margaret Thatcher had resigned in November 1990; she was succeeded as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister by John Major who went on to win the 1992 General Election.

fundamentally flawed due to the fact it was conceived of entirely in terms of subjects (Lawton & Chitty, 1988) - were outlined as to why the original National Curriculum had in the process of its development come to take such a form:

The problem of curriculum overload stems, in part, from the fact that original Working Groups established to define the content of each Order were not able to judge the collective weight in teaching terms of the Curriculum *as a whole*. Neither was it possible to avoid some overlap of content *between* subjects. A further problem stems from the fact that the attempt to spell out the requirements of each National Curriculum subject in a clear, unambiguous manner has led to a level of prescription that many teachers find unacceptably constricting. The balance between what is defined nationally and what is left to the exercise of professional judgement needs to be reviewed.

(NCC/SEAC, 1993, pp.50-6)

The Interim Report was welcomed by the Government. Baroness Blatch, deputising for Patten who was ill when the Report was published, announced on behalf of the government, “we accept the report in its entirety” (Quoted in Chitty, 2002, p. 81). Dearing’s Final Report was published on 5 January 1994. With regard to curriculum content, Dearing recommended a reduction in the statutory content of the National Curriculum and that a core of compulsory material should be separated from optional subject matter. Clarke’s intervention at Key Stage 4 to allow students to opt for either history or geography was not only upheld but furthered as Dearing recommended both subjects became optional. Chitty remarks that “as far as the provision for older students was concerned, it is fair to say that Sir Ron Dearing’s Final Report effectively marked the end of the National Curriculum for those beyond the age of 14” (Chitty, 2002, p. 84). Working parties, which were once again carefully selected by government ministers, now began to review all of the National Curriculum subjects. The new arrangements they decided upon would be introduced in September 1995 and teachers were promised no further changes to the National Curriculum for at least five years.

## **THE SCAA ADVISORY GROUP FOR HISTORY**

The SCAA Advisory Group for History met for three two day meetings between January and February 1994. The group comprised 14 individuals in total: a primary head teacher, four classroom teachers, an academic with special needs expertise, an LEA adviser, the Head of Education at the British Museum, a member of SCAA, an Ofsted HMI inspector, three SCAA representatives and a DfE observer. Group members were selected and invited by SCAA to take part in the review (Correspondence, Giovanni Bruggi, QCA Subject Officer for History, 14 May 2004). The Group was apparently comprised in such a way as to attempt to placate all sides in the history debate as far as possible and minimise criticism of the revised History Curriculum in the press. The new version of the National Curriculum for History was published in January 1995. A number of revisions were made to Key Stage 3. Students now needed to be taught six study units. Study units 1-4 had to be taught in chronological order. Study Unit 4 was described as:

An overview of some of the main events, personalities and developments in the period and, in particular, how worldwide expansion, industrialisation and political developments combined to shape modern Britain. Pupils should be taught about one aspect of the period in depth.

(DFE, 1995, p.10)

The overview was to include the First World War and its consequences; the Second World War, including the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs; the legacy of the Second World War for Britain and the world. At least one event, development or personality from the twentieth century had to be studied in depth, a list of examples was provided (see DFE, 1995, p. 13). This was a much slimmed down study unit with its focus on the two World Wars. The National Curriculum published in 1995, in stark contrast to that published in 1991, was a concise document without a rationale for the History Curriculum.

## **THE HISTORY TASK GROUP AND THE CURRENT POSITION OF THE HOLOCAUST**

The new Labour Government swept to power on 1 May 1997. Tony Blair (the new Prime Minister) had espoused a commitment to “education, education, education” throughout the general election campaign. The Government announced a review of the National Curriculum which aimed to focus the school curriculum on outcomes, rather than dictating exactly what should be taught. Thus teachers were to be given greater flexibility by cutting down on the compulsory aspects while retaining the breadth and balance of the curriculum which would be more closely matched to the needs of school students. The aim of the 1998-9 review was made clear to members of the task group during their first meeting; this was to further streamline the National Curriculum and remove as much prescription as possible allowing teachers’ greater flexibility. It was different from the Dearing Review in that it was much more low key. The History Task Group was put together by the QCA<sup>41</sup>. The Group comprised nine teachers; four from primary schools and five from secondary schools most of whom were Heads of History. There was one LEA representative and one representative from higher education in addition to ‘observers’ from OFSTED and DfES and the QCA history subject officers. The Principal Officer for History at the QCA, Gill Watson, chaired the Groups’ five meetings. The agenda was pre-determined and set by the QCA for all subject groups. Professor James Arthur has written that the teachers on the Group, particularly teachers from Key Stage 3, were initially reluctant to make further changes to the History National Curriculum. However, after “persuasion” from “observers” there was a realisation that many

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<sup>41</sup> In 1997 SCAA was merged with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to form the QCA.



history teachers had perceived the PoS more as a syllabus than a curriculum framework. Teachers had also slimmed down the History Curriculum but not always in a consistent way across the PoS (Arthur, 2000, pp.2-3). One of the Group's tasks was to outline a clearer rationale for history by stating the priorities of each Key Stage. However Arthur has written, "it would be a mistake to think that the History Task Group generated, far less discussed, a series of issues for history teaching. The Group did not have time to deliberate at any length and was focused on the work of reducing the content specification of the History Order and incorporating statements about the rationale for history teaching, including statements on ICT and access. The Group was largely preoccupied with technical points and getting the right phrases for ideas that had been largely formed elsewhere" (Arthur, 2000, p.3). The review was really about showing links to other subjects, indicating opportunities for social, moral and spiritual development and questions like, how do you make history more inclusive?.

There remain in Key Stage 3 history six study units<sup>42</sup>. *A world study after 1900* is the only unit to include named historical events that must be taught, the National Curriculum states that "a study of some of the significant individuals, events and developments from across the twentieth century, including the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and their impact on Britain, Europe and the wider world" (DfEE, 1999, p.22) should be taught. This version of the National Curriculum for History was accompanied by non-statutory guidance from the QCA in the form of a complete set of schemes of work for Key Stage 3<sup>43</sup>. Unit 19 *How and why did the Holocaust happen?* (QCA, 2000) is a scheme of work on the Holocaust designed to

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<sup>42</sup> Britain 1066-1500; Britain 1500-1750; Britain 1750-1900; A European study before 1914; A world study before 1900; A world study after 1900.

<sup>43</sup> Schemes are also available for Key Stage 1 and 2.

precede a scheme of work on the Second World War. The QCA advises teachers that Unit 19 takes approximately eight to 11 hours to teach. Because this is non-statutory guidance it is not compulsory for teachers to follow this and teach the Holocaust separately from World War Two<sup>44</sup>, however, the evidence presented in Chapter Six indicates that such an approach is being adopted by a majority of history teachers.

## **THE CHANGING POSITION OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR HISTORY 1989-2000**

Throughout the revisions and slimming down of the National Curriculum the Holocaust has gained prominence and ceased to be an aspect of World War Two, emerging as an area of study in its own right. What is interesting is that a topic currently of such prominence in the National Curriculum for History was not named in the HWG's Interim Report. The following chapter details some of the key developments in Holocaust education in England before addressing the question, why did the HWG change its mind and suggest in their Final Report that the Two World Wars and the Holocaust be taught as part of a compulsory PoS?, and finally discussing how - and more importantly for what aims and objectives - the topic of the Holocaust has been included in successive versions of the National Curriculum for History.

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<sup>44</sup> The two world wars and the Cold War do not each have their own QCA scheme of work but are covered by Unit 18 *Hot war, cold war why did the major twentieth-century conflicts affect so many people?* This unit, expected to be taught over 10-15 hours, is described by the QCA as follows:

In this unit pupils learn about the main conflicts of the twentieth century by identifying key ideas and themes and making links and connections, particularly between the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War. The unit focuses on the widespread impact of these conflicts through the examination of specific events, the personal experiences of individuals and a wide range of visual and written sources.

([http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary\\_history/his18/?view=get](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his18/?view=get))

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN SCHOOL HISTORY:**

#### **THE VIEWS OF POLICY MAKERS**

This chapter traces the history of the Holocaust as a topic for study in the National Curriculum for History and reveals that there was a lack of clarity among those who shaped the National Curriculum for History regarding why this was an important topic for study. Before addressing the question of why the HWG changed its mind and suggested in its Final Report that the Two World Wars and the Holocaust should be taught as part of a compulsory PoS, this chapter looks at the position of the Holocaust on the school curriculum prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum. It will then go on to examine why the Holocaust has become a prominent feature of the National Curriculum for History. It should be noted that what I mean by ‘policy makers’ in the chapter heading is all those who were involved in the curriculum decision making (and revision) process. This includes government ministers and MPs, civil servants, members of working groups, and interested groups and individuals who lobbied ministers and the HWG.

#### **HOLOCAUST EDUCATION PRE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

Efforts to establish the teaching of the Holocaust in schools in England gathered momentum from the early 1980s. In 1983 the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) organised an exhibition about the Holocaust in the East End of London. Paul Flather wrote in the *TES* “the exhibition will include items never before seen in Britain. It should be a major event, and a useful opportunity to teach a difficult

subject". Flather described the accompanying teacher's pack, *Auschwitz Yesterday's Racism* as "extremely useful" (*TES*, 7 January 1983). The ILEA had its own audio visual production unit based in Battersea and in 1985 produced two videos designed to help teachers with classroom discussions about the Holocaust. The first was 39 minutes in duration and intended for use with students aged 13. It was based on the 1983 exhibition and included historical film footage as well as photographs and drawings from Auschwitz State Museum in Poland. The second video began with a 30 minute talk given by Clive Lawton, Education Director of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and was aimed at teachers. In his lecture Lawton addressed the dilemmas of teaching the Holocaust. Prior to the National Curriculum if teachers were going to teach about the Holocaust they had to be convinced of the importance of this topic since it was they who made the decisions about what they taught. Lawton opened his lecture with the statement, "there's not a lot of point about talking about how to teach the Holocaust until we talk about whether to teach the Holocaust". He continued, "there are many, many teachers around the country who are worried about that particular problem". Having outlined why he felt it was important to teach about the Holocaust, and discussed what he believed the term 'Holocaust' encompassed, Lawton moved on to discuss the possible pitfalls involved in teaching the Holocaust and suggested ways that some of these might be avoided. In his lecture Lawton encouraged teachers to consider their objectives before teaching about the Holocaust. He emphasised the importance of having a clear rationale:

You cannot cover the whole subject. You have to find ways into the subject that are going to project the essential issues of what you might want to teach about the Holocaust. I am going to pose some. I'm not suggesting for one minute there is one ideal way of teaching the Holocaust and this is it. I'm just going to propose some and trigger some thinking.

(ILEA, 1985)

Thus Lawton addressed in his lecture the fundamental question, what is important about teaching the Holocaust? in addition to the related questions, how do we define the term 'Holocaust'? and how do we teach the Holocaust?. This video also contained *Talking to Survivors*, a 30 minute programme in which students from Hampstead School, Pimlico School, Tower Hamlets School and Tulse Hill School put questions to Holocaust survivors Rabbi Hugo Gryn, Marsha Segall and Ben Helfgott<sup>45</sup>. A pack of resource material was published along with these videos. In an article for the *Jewish Chronicle* about these resources, Barrie Stead, Chairperson of the ILEA Schools Committee, wrote that the teachers' notes included a section which sought to stimulate teachers' ideas for discussion on how people behave when confronted by a phenomenon like the Holocaust and went on to suggest some contemporary events which gave rise to the same issues of principle. He wrote:

To what extent, for example, are we aware of injustice, prejudice, discrimination, persecution in the world, in Europe, Britain, our own locality, in the playground? What do we do about those injustices? At what point is the line crossed from separate incidents and attitudes to what could be seen as 'State repression'?

It was recommended in the notes that teachers look at the activities of groups such as Amnesty International and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and critically examine

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<sup>45</sup> Ben Helfgott was a member of the 45 Aid Society, a charitable organisation made up of a group of 732 Holocaust survivors who came to Britain after the war in 1945. Most of them were in their late teens. They travelled under the auspices of the Central British Fund, a Jewish organisation which had been active in helping refugees since the rise of Hitler in 1933. Most of them were boys – about eighty were girls. Sir Martin Gilbert has written a book detailing the experiences of this group (Gilbert, 1996). Members of the 45 Aid Society began giving regular talks in the 1980s about their experiences to school students. On 12 June 1989 the *Jewish Chronicle* reported on a talk given by Helfgott to students at a girls' school in North London.

legislation like the Official Secrets Act and the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. This material acted as a prompt to Baroness Cox, the Conservative Education spokesperson, who initiated a debate in the House of Lords on the avoidance of politicisation in education:

But perhaps even more disturbing is some of the material produced specifically on racism such as ILEA's teaching pack called *Auschwitz: Yesterday's Racism*. Much of this pack illustrates effectively the horrors of Auschwitz. That is unexceptionable. But education becomes political indoctrination when loaded questions and foregone conclusions are slipped in among the horrors of the death camp. For example, the teachers' guide suggests that children should make links today by comparing Auschwitz with recent anti-trade union legislation. Note the prefix "anti" as an example of a typical foregone conclusion! The children are also to link Auschwitz with the behaviour of our police on picket lines and with the GCHQ issue. I am not alone in finding this association of ideas and the trivialisation of the horrors of Auschwitz particularly offensive.

(Hansard, H. of L., Vol. 407, Col. 1141, 5 February 1986)

In an interview with Paul Salmons, Co-ordinator of Holocaust Education at the Imperial War Museum, he made a general observation that while the Holocaust has universal lessons, those lessons are not exclusive to this event and it is important not to make comparisons that trivialise the Holocaust (Interview, 12 September 2002). However, Shirley Murgraff, who helped to organise the 1983 exhibition denies that this is what the teachers' notes did. On the contrary says Murgraff, the notes encouraged discussion about contemporary events and the need to be always vigilant in the defence of democracy. According to Murgraff, Lady Cox's comments showed a failure to understand the purpose and method of teachers' notes which she says were meant for professionals who could exercise their own judgement (Correspondence, 22 July 2003). In his article, which answered critics of ILEA's teaching materials on the Holocaust, Stead wrote:

Lady Cox claims that to link the Holocaust with contemporary social issues trivialises it. On the contrary, it would be more offensive to the memory of the millions who died to treat it as a finite historical phenomenon, a freak event with no significance for ourselves.

(Stead, 28 March 1986)

According to Stead, Lady Cox had described the main teaching pack *Auschwitz Yesterday's Racism*, as dealing “with the horrors of Auschwitz very sensitively” (Stead, 28 March 1986). Perhaps Lady Cox’s principle concern lay not with issues surrounding how the Holocaust should be understood and taught, but the impression young people (future voters) may gain in the classroom about the Conservative Government’s policies and practice<sup>46</sup>. Such concerns, as was noted in the previous chapter, later led Clarke to introduce his ‘20 year rule’. It seems Clarke’s mistrust of teachers was shared by Baroness Cox who had on 9 October 1985 been quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* calling on Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education, “to issue clear guidelines for schools aimed at keeping politics out of the classroom”. However, as Lord McIntosh of Haringey explained in the debate in the House of Lords, the teaching material produced by ILEA had been praised in the press and had the approval of the Board of Deputies of British Jews:

The noble Baroness referred to the ILEA material on Auschwitz and after. She has done so in public before. When she did so the last time she was informed in a letter from the education officer to ILEA that the material had not only been prepared in conjunction with the Board of Deputies of British Jews but had been praised by the *Daily Telegraph* in July last year as being excellent teaching material.

(Hansard, H. of L., Vol. 407, Col 1171, 5 February 1986)

This debate is interesting in that it highlights two different perspectives on the teaching of the Holocaust: Baroness Cox sees the Holocaust as being historically important while the materials produced by ILEA were designed not only to present

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<sup>46</sup> Political pressure forced the ILEA to withdraw its teaching materials on the Holocaust. The ILEA was disbanded in 1990.

the facts about Auschwitz but encourage reflection on universal aspects of the Holocaust. The ILEA produced materials which would encourage and support teachers to teach about the Holocaust so that students would have the opportunity to learn about this event and discuss issues arising from it which remain relevant.

### **Teaching the Holocaust: the report of a survey in the United Kingdom (1987)**

In 1987 the Yad Vashem Charitable Trust<sup>47</sup> education sub-committee attempted to audit how widely the Holocaust was taught and examined in history in schools and further and higher education. The *Report on the 1987 survey of United Kingdom Teaching on 'The Holocaust' or 'Nazi final solution to the Jewish question' and related subjects* was published in September 1989; its author was Dr John P Fox. Chapter Two<sup>48</sup> reflected on terminology and Fox's misgivings regarding the term 'Holocaust'. It would appear from the title of this Report that the term 'Holocaust' was used in this survey to describe the Jewish experience, and the phrase "and related subjects" to refer to the experience of 'others' who were persecuted because they did not fit into the Third Reich's regime.

The Yad Vashem Education Sub-Committee<sup>49</sup> designed four questionnaires; one for university and polytechnic departments of History and of Education along with colleges of further and higher education; a second for Local Education Authorities (LEAs); the third category was local examination boards; and the fourth Sixth Form

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<sup>47</sup> Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority was established in 1953 to commemorate the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Yad Vashem is situated on Har Hazikaron, the Mount of Remembrance, and extends over 45 acres on which there are two museums, exhibition halls, outdoor monuments and major archives.

<sup>48</sup> See page 104.

<sup>49</sup> The members of this committee were Ben Helfgott, Antony Polonsky, John Fox, Shirley Murgraff and Ronnie Landau.





Public/Independent schools there is evidence that students were being taught about the Holocaust and were sitting public examinations on this topic. In addition nearly half of the returns from the Public/Independent schools indicated that students aged 13 and above were learning about the Holocaust.

**Figure 5.1**

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Number Sent</b>	<b>Number Return</b>	<b>% Return</b>
i) Universities	55	40	72.7%
Polytechnics	30	24	80.0%
Univ/Poly. Depts of Education, Colleges of Further/Higher Education	128	43	33.6%
ii) Local Education Authorities	122	50	41.0%
iii) Local Examination Boards	8	7	87.5%
iv) Sixth Form Colleges	75	42	56.0%
Public/Independent Schools	88	43	48.9%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>49.2%</b>

(Fox, 1989, p.7)

The Report stated that over the previous decade there had been an explosion in academic work relating to the Holocaust that would support serious historical study of this subject:

Much as 'special subjects' like the Origins of the First or Second World Wars have their own methodology, documentation, bibliography, and advocates of differing schools of thought leading to constant debate (and enrichment) on the subject, so it is with the Holocaust and related subjects.

(Fox, 1989, p14)

The Yad Vashem Education sub-committee, via their survey and this Report, were calling for a greater commitment from educational institutions to a rigorous *historical* study of the Holocaust. While acknowledging the work being done in schools by teachers in departments such as religious education, it was argued that

history was the rightful and logical home of Holocaust studies and history teachers were abdicating their responsibility to this history:

While it was realised at the outset that many Departments of Religious Studies/Education at all levels of the British system of education include some aspects of the Holocaust in their teaching studies, we felt that the main burden of this particular enquiry should be directed at Departments of History. This is because the intellectual discipline of history – obviously enough – should be the vanguard of the teaching process of this primarily historical subject.

(Fox, 1989, p.5)

This survey was the first step in a campaign to establish the Holocaust as a subject for *historical* study in educational institutions. Wrote Dr Antony Polonsky in his introduction to the Report:

We believe, for a number of educational, historical, and moral reasons, that it is wrong to deny students of all ages a sufficient consideration in depth of one of the key historical events of this century, and one which has direct relevance on their present lives and future existence. It is our hope, therefore, that this Report will encourage a more positive attitude towards the Holocaust as a subject worthy of more educational time and attention in the United Kingdom.

(Fox, 1989, p.3)

Fox stated in his conclusions and recommendations:

As one of the university correspondents put it, they were unhappy with the questionnaire, since they felt it resaged a ‘campaign’ for more attention to be paid to the main subject in educational institutions in the United Kingdom. Actually he is quite right. But in such cases, there can be no ‘campaign’, no plans, no battle lines, until basic intelligence has first been obtained. After all, it could well have been the case that the intelligence thus obtained might have assured us all that the academic study of the Holocaust in the United Kingdom was healthy, widespread, intensive, academic, well researched, thoroughly informed, and highly productive in the way of published results. Of course it is not, and this was well known before the Survey was even attempted.

(Fox, 1989, p.63)

However, if this Report was to form the basis of a campaign for a greater commitment to the teaching of the Holocaust in history then it was problematic.

John Plowright, writing a response to the Report in *Teaching History* (1991), was critical of the approach that had been taken. He questioned why the study did not begin with, “first principles, such as establishing the importance of teaching the Holocaust and teaching it in a particular manner” (1991, p. 26). As discussed in Chapter Three, the assumption that the Holocaust is a unique historical event is not universally agreed; Plowright argued that the case for the importance of teaching the Holocaust in history should be made to teachers, rather than relying on the assumed special status of the subject and demanding a place on the History Curriculum on this basis. It was because the Report tended to assume the special status of the Holocaust, rather than setting out the basis of this belief, that Plowright believed it was “seriously flawed” (1991, p. 27). The Report did indicate some debate about how the Holocaust should be taught:

*Whilst many people believe that a study of the history of European anti-Semitism is essential for understanding the origins of the Holocaust, it is generally accepted that the subject consists of three main parts: a) the study of Adolf Hitler and Nazi policies of persecution and extermination towards the Jews of Europe; b) an examination of the Jewish response in Germany and Europe to those Nazi policies; and c), an assessment of the non-Jewish response at government and non-government level, to Nazi policies towards the Jews.*

(Fox, 1989, p.14. Emphasis added.)

A failure to establish the aims and objectives, and therefore the content and method, of history courses on this topic may go some way to explain the problem identified by Brown and Davies of “teachers finding it almost impossible to characterise the purpose of the[ir] work clearly” (Brown & Davies, 1998, p.80). It is all the more surprising that the Report failed to establish “first principles” given that Fox writes, “two things emerge clearly from the results of the survey: suspicion as to its motives and purposes, and misunderstandings about the nature of academic study of the subject known generally as ‘the Holocaust’”. Fox goes on to note that “at the present

moment the subject of the Holocaust is very much a ‘Cinderella’ one” (Fox, 1989, p. 65) indicating the importance of teacher motivation.

### **The Holocaust Educational Trust**

The first meeting of the Holocaust Educational Trust took place in the House of Commons on 25 January 1988. The Trust’s Chairperson was Greville Janner QC. He was a Labour MP, former President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and served on the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group<sup>50</sup>. Janner had begun making inquiries eight months earlier into establishing an educational trust to disseminate resources and provide training and research into “the origin, nature, type and scope of war crimes; including the Holocaust - and related matters” (Letter to Martin Paisner at Paisner & Co. (Solicitors) from Greville Janner, 12 May 1987). The idea of a War Crimes Educational Trust (which would become known as The Holocaust Educational Trust) was born out of a desire among the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group to educate the public in a period of renewed interest in Nazi War Crimes and World War Two. By 16 November 1987 Janner was in a position to write to those who had agreed to serve on the HET with news that the Charity Commissioners had approved the HET and he expected to receive a registered charity number by early December. The Memorandum attached to Janner’s letter named the Trustees: President, Lord Sainsbury; Chairperson, Greville Janner; Treasurer, Merlyn Rees (former Home Secretary); Joint Treasurer, John Wheeler (a Conservative MP); Trustee, Martin Paisner. The Board of Management included Sir Zelman Cowan, Martin Gilbert, Rabbi Hugo Gryn and Ben Helfgott. Cowan was Chairperson of the Press Council, Provost of Oriel College, Oxford and former

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<sup>50</sup> As detailed in the chronology (on pages six to 14) this group was established in 1987 to look into allegations concerning Nazi War Criminals and make suggestions regarding possible legislation.

Governor General of Australia. Gilbert was known as Churchill's biographer as well as for his academic work on the Holocaust. Gryn and Helfgott were both survivors of the Holocaust; in addition Helfgott was Chairperson of the Yad Vashem Committee of Board of Deputies. Philip Rubenstein, Secretary of the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group, was to become Director of the HET which was to "take over all strictly charitable aspects of the work of the War Crimes Group – education in its broadest sense – including historical research" (Memorandum on the Holocaust Educational Trust from Greville Janner QC MP). Professor Elie Wiesel was named as Patron of the Trust. Later the Rt Hon Lord Jakobovits, His Grace the Duke of Norfolk and the Rt Rev Lord Runcie also gave their Patronage. In a letter to Elie Wiesel, Janner commented, "The Holocaust Educational Trust...has the most heavyweight representation there could possibly be" (Letter to Elie Wiesel from Greville Janner, 30 November 1987)<sup>51</sup>. There are examples of warlike imagery in Janner's description of the Trustees as "troops set for battle" and "a powerful mob". A letter to Elie Wiesel written on 9 November 1987 made clear Janner's commitment to furthering Holocaust education:

Your address was memorable and marvellous. It is also highly quotable and I am getting copies of the transcript, for distribution to our Parliamentary War Crimes Group. It will explain in a way that I cannot do why their work is of such lasting importance – and how that importance can grow, even as the Holocaust itself moves away in time... It is appalling that there is no exhibition, no museum, no input into our educational system, to remind – and to fight against indifference.

The HET showed interest in Fox's Report; the author agreed to send a copy of the conclusion of this Report to the HET prior to its publication (Letter to Dawn

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<sup>51</sup> Further additions to the Trust's board were noted in this correspondence. Ivan Lawrence, described as a Conservative, member of the Board of Deputies and a close friend of Janner's was to be the Trust's secretary. It was hoped Elizabeth Maxwell would agree to become a trustee and the Rev Leslie Hardman, whom Janner noted had been Chaplain to the British Forces when they entered Belsen, had joined the Board of Management.

Waterman (at the Holocaust Educational Trust) from John P Fox, 25 February 1988).

One of the Trust's main aims was to establish the teaching of the Holocaust in all schools. They listed their objectives as being:

- To promote research into the Holocaust;
  - To assist with the work of individuals and organisations involved in Holocaust education;
  - To promote the collection of archival materials and artefacts relating to the Holocaust period;
  - To produce written and audio-visual materials on the subject of the Holocaust;
  - To promote the teaching of the Holocaust in schools and colleges.
- (HET document detailing the aims; individuals; and major projects the Trust has been involved with.)

### **Teaching the Holocaust at examination level prior to the National Curriculum**

During April 1988 Spartacus Educational Publishers sent out questionnaires to all history departments in Britain's secondary schools; the responses received provide a further indication of the extent to which Nazi Germany and the Holocaust may have been taught prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum. By the end of 1988, 460 history teachers from 387 schools had returned their questionnaires. The results of this survey indicated the growing preference for Modern World history at GCSE: 48.83 percent of the history departments responding followed a syllabus in Modern World history, while 31.52 percent taught British Social and Economic history since 1750 and 24.03 percent taught the School History Project. Indeed, it was noted in the Interim Report produced by the HWG that "the history of modern Britain and Europe has modest popularity" (DES, 1989, p.8). In May 1989 the Spiro Institute<sup>52</sup> held their first teachers' conference, staged in response to the growing number of schools teaching the Holocaust at GCSE and 'A' level. The conference was designed to support teachers and discuss approaches to teaching the Holocaust. In an

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<sup>52</sup> The Spiro Institute, now called the London Jewish Cultural Centre, is an organisation that has taught Jewish history, culture and Modern Hebrew for over 20 years.

article in the *Jewish Chronicle* reporting on the conference under the headline “Children stunned by Holocaust horror”, Supple is quoted: “you must make it [the Holocaust] mean something. You can get the kids thinking about their own lives and behaviour, like bullying and racism” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 19 May 1989). Supple taught history in Tyneside. She saw a serious and urgent need for materials concerning the Holocaust feeling that current resources were limited and superficial or unsuitable for use with GCSE students. In 1988 Supple embarked on a GCSE topic book on the subject of the Holocaust for use not only in history but across humanities subjects (*TES*, 13 May 1988). Landau, who was both a member of the Yad Vashem Educational Sub-Committee and educational director of the Spiro Institute, is quoted in an article in the *TES* detailing Supple’s project: “every week I receive desperate calls from teachers who complain that they feel under-informed, under-resourced and generally unfit to cope with the enormity of this subject and its implications” (*TES*, 13 May 1988).

The Fox Report, Spartacus Survey and increasing demand from teachers for support, indicates the Holocaust was being taught in secondary school history departments prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum. Campaigners for the extension of Holocaust education, such as the HET, would be concerned that the new National Curriculum would support and extend this teaching and learning.

The above paragraphs demonstrate that in the years immediately prior to the 1988 ERA, efforts to establish the teaching of the Holocaust in schools in England gathered momentum. Interestingly however, only the Yad Vashem education sub-committee was campaigning for the Holocaust to receive greater time and attention



in school history. In the quotation on page 157, Janner is talking in general terms about the lack of input into the education system and stresses the importance of keeping alive the memory of what happened. This was particularly important if the public were to be convinced it was right to put Nazi war criminals on trial despite the passage of time<sup>53</sup>. Nowhere within the HET's aims is the role of school history mentioned.

## THE HWG AND THE TOPIC OF THE HOLOCAUST

This chapter now moves on to address the question: why did the HWG change its mind and suggest in its Final Report that the Two World Wars and the Holocaust should be taught as part of a compulsory PoS? As the previous chapter demonstrated, since the inclusion of the Holocaust in the HWG's Final Report as an aspect of World War Two, the topic has become increasingly prominent in the National Curriculum for History emerging as an area for study in its own right. What motivated the HWG to include this topic? In April 1990 the HET claimed that the HWG's change of heart had been the result of lobbying by MPs and other interested groups:

Children in British schools will soon be learning about the Holocaust as a compulsory part of their curriculum...Many people were dismayed at the Working Group Interim Report's failure to include any form of study of the Second World War in the core curriculum. Protests were made at all levels by Members of Parliament, ex-service and Jewish communal organisations...Following the number of high level submissions both to the History Working Group and to Mr MacGregor – the message seems to have got through.

(HET Bulletin, April – June 1990)

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<sup>53</sup> As noted in the chronology on pages six to 14, the work of the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group resulted in the 1991 War Crimes Act. One of the first activities of the newly formed HET was to produce an educational trigger video entitled *Telling the Story: Nazi War Criminals on Trial* with accompanying notes for teachers.

However, an article published in the *TES* on 13 October 1989 suggested that the HWG's change of heart was unconnected with such lobbying:

Key sections of the National Curriculum History Working Group Report are to be radically rewritten following mounting criticism from MPs and the teaching profession...Much criticism has been levelled at the Government's handpicked team for glaring omissions in their recommendations, such as the rise of fascism, the Holocaust and the atom bomb. The Working Group was taken to task on these issues by an all-party group of MPs last week. *However, it emerges that the history group was already considering a major rethink of the range of compulsory studies to underpin optional studies of British, European and world history.*

(Nash, 13 October 1989, p.3. Emphasis added.)

What prompted the apparent U-turn which saw the HWG name the Two World Wars and the Holocaust in their Final Report? The section below probes this question beginning with discussion of the HWG's decision not to suggest the Two World Wars and the Holocaust as topics for study in their Interim Report. This decision was made during a meeting at Hebden Bridge. The account of this meeting which is presented below has been researched through interviews with members and observers of the HWG. This account was recalled and reiterated by John Roberts, the Chairperson and by the HMI Observer. All of other nine members of the HWG contacted noted and recalled this discussion at Hebden Bridge which led to the omission of the Two World Wars and the Holocaust from the Interim Report, and made reference to the arguments and to Roberts' views. This account is not otherwise available in the public domain. It is not detailed in the HWG minutes.

### **Hebden Bridge (30 May – 2 June 1989)**

The HWG met at Hebden Bridge between 30 May and 2 June 1989. Roberts was unable to attend the first day of this meeting and arrived on the Wednesday morning (31 May). The HWG's discussion on curriculum content and twentieth century history therefore took place during the evening of either 31 May or 1 June 1989<sup>54</sup>. The Group had spent most of the afternoon and early evening debating curriculum content; the aim of this meeting was to draft an interim report for discussion and amendment (NC/HWG (89) 9<sup>th</sup>). Impatient with what appeared to be convincing evidence of the narrow presentation of twentieth century history in many schools, and irritated with what seemed to him as a woeful under-rating of what might be expected from teachers<sup>55</sup>, John Roberts rose to his feet. For a little under an hour he spoke to the rest of the Group about the “real” history of the twentieth century. His audience listened carefully throughout. By around midnight a decision had been made; World War Two and the Nazis would be omitted from the Interim Report as a specific Study Unit. Roberts convinced the group that the topic of the Second World War and Nazi Germany, “conventionally regarded as constituting all that was interesting in twentieth century history” (Correspondence, 14 May 2002), were important, but did not have the same degree of impact as other events.

Roberts was the only academic historian among the group. He had just completed his book, *The Triumph of the West*. R. Phillips noted in his *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State* that, “by their own admission, members of the HWG

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<sup>54</sup> All those interviewed recalled the following discussion took place after dinner at Hebden Bridge. Present at the Hebden Bridge meeting were Michael Saunders Watson, Robert Guyver, Jim Hendy, Gareth Elwyn Jones, Tom Hobhouse, Peter Livsey, Ann Low-Beer, John Roberts (arrived on May 31) and Carol White. Also in attendance were Michael Phipps (DES) and Roger Hennessey (HMI Observer) as well as the secretariat Jenny Worsfold, Phil Snell and Lesley Storey. Alice Prochaska was unable to attend this meeting.

<sup>55</sup> These were the motivations cited by John Roberts in a letter to myself, 14 May 2002.

emphasised the importance of Roberts' influence in the early stages of HWG's lifetime" (R. Phillips, 1998a, p.55). Indeed, this was noted by HWG members during interviews conducted during this study. One member explained that the Group saw the high profile historian as a defence and insurance against any criticism of the Group's proposals (Interview, 24 June 2002). Roberts' understanding of the twentieth century is publicly available; in his *The Penguin History of the Twentieth Century* Roberts argues the Holocaust changed the demography of Eastern Europe and had a catalyst effect on the appearance of Israel. As such the Holocaust is an important topic of study to explain the Middle East situation, the actions of the Muslim world and the suffering of the Palestinian people. According to Group members Roberts' argument was intellectually powerful. He understood the significance of the Holocaust historically, but his long view of history meant that he felt real concern about the representation of the twentieth century in schools. Roberts set out his views regarding the omission of the Second World War and the Nazis from the Interim Report in a letter he wrote to Carrie Supple on 12 October 1989. Despite having resigned from the HWG after the publication of the Interim Report<sup>56</sup>, Roberts received a number of "angry and argued letters about the uniqueness of the Holocaust" (Correspondence, 14 May 2002). One of these came from Supple, Roberts replied to her letter at some length. This letter set out in detail his argument against a specific PoS for World War Two and the Nazis and is summarised here:

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<sup>56</sup> In fact, Roberts had handed a letter of resignation to Commander Saunders Watson at Hebden Bridge. He was unable to balance his commitments as Warden of Merton College Oxford and a high profile historian with sitting on the group. Given what he considered his poor record of attendance he decided to resign following the publication of the Interim Report. He had missed five out of nine meetings. Roberts was replaced by Professor Peter Marshall.

The major themes of the last century were the emergence of the USA and Russia as world powers, the development of Asia and the revolution in expectations accompanying unprecedented population growth. Hitler's personal contribution was to detonate the second phase in the European civil war. His achievements were important but negative, and do not compare to the achievements of Stalin who re-built the Russian Empire of the Tsars, a Japan which gave a death-blow to European imperialism, and a United States which provided a shelter behind which Europe was rebuilt after 1945. The Holocaust was a negative result of Nazism. It wiped out centuries-old Jewish communities and changed the sociology of much of Eastern Europe for ever. A consequence was the acceleration of the appearance of Israel. However, this was the end of a long, sad story of centuries of anti-Semitism, it did not start in 1939. It was the worst, most savage and brutal collective story of the war, and it was an appalling shock to European sensitivities because no-one would have believed it possible in say, 1914. There is therefore a repellent but interesting episode in Europe's history to be explored. But the Holocaust did not change history or have the same impact of for example, the Chinese Revolution.

(Taken from a letter to Carrie Supple from John Roberts,  
12 October 1989)

Roberts also believed that in terms of teaching about the 'modern' world, 1945 was a better year 'zero', "we are all aware of the arbitrary nature of starting-dates. You have to take something as 'given'. Oddly, the world in 1945 is simpler to start with than the world of 1939 (which actually needs to be explained by going back to 1918)" (Letter to Carrie Supple from John Roberts, 12 October 1989). Said the HWG's Chairperson, "John Roberts advocated standing back and looking through a telescope at the century, he was very knowledgeable about it. He thought we should convey a feeling rather than be too specific" (Interview, 11 July 2002). In essence Roberts believed that a curriculum for the twenty first century should take the long view and incorporate the events and areas of the world that were of such importance that children of secondary age needed an introduction to. Such a perspective on history would place the Holocaust among several mass atrocities of the twentieth century. At a later meeting following the publication of the Interim Report, a member of the PoS panel summed up the spirit of Hebden Bridge, "the criteria at

Hebden Bridge went beyond present day civics and towards preparing students for the twenty first century. HSUs had been chosen on the basis of relevance to this point – hence one reason for not including Nazi Germany; it was relevant to the present day but not necessary for the twenty first century” (NC/HWG (89) 14<sup>th</sup>).

A combination of further arguments prevailed in addition to Roberts’ thesis that the Second World War and the Nazis had comparatively less influence on history than did other events. Interestingly, the only member of the Group to have fought in World War Two, Henry Hobhouse, considered this event too complicated for the classroom. Hobhouse had joined the navy in 1942. In his view, history was not equipped to teach about this period adequately without access to the Russian archives (Interview, 30 May 2002). Gareth Elwyn Jones also felt that World War Two and the Nazis should be omitted. He had two concerns, the first was a question of balance and the second was the level of maturity of the students involved, he explained:

The first of my worries was that the study of World War Two, which tended to be part of the wider topic of Nazi Germany and obviously included the Holocaust, occupied too central a role in secondary school history. The study of Fascism, along with Stalin, in my view, loomed too large in what was now christened Key Stage 3, and was the major subject of study for GCSE. Many pupils then went on to study it for ‘A’ level as well, and I thought then and I believe even more strongly now, that this concentration on the twentieth century dictatorships was bad for pupils’ historical understanding. So this was a question of balance. My second, more fundamental, worry was that the full evil of the Nazi regime, and the Holocaust in particular, could be and perhaps has to be superficially dealt with if it is tackled with pupils below a certain age. These are momentous issues and they do have the fascination of evil. But the newsreels and other images of Nazi Germany which in one way make it eminently teachable, in another way, particularly in the case of the Holocaust, make it too frightening to go into the full story in all its horror. But if you don't go into it in all its horror this is an insult to those who suffered. So, I think that to study these topics requires a substantial historical background and a considerable degree of moral

and emotional maturity. My own view was that Nazi Germany and the Holocaust were best studied post 16.

(Interview, 14 May 2002)

Indeed, Roberts had suspected:

Fascism is studied by a lot of people because of a sort of fascination with it. And I suspect that a lot of the fascination with Nazism is unhealthy. Too much fascination with it arises among the young because it seems glamorous (the cult of uniforms and will) and violent. That's why the media go on about it – it is photogenic in every sense. But what is its real importance? What did it change? Nothing like what communism changed by what it did to deflect and isolate Russia.

(Letter to Carrie Supple from John Roberts, 12 October 1989.  
Underlining in the original.)

Roger Hennessey was not persuaded however. Feeling that it was a mistake to omit the two World Wars from the Interim Report he went to discuss this decision with Commander Saunders Watson the morning after the decision had been made<sup>57</sup>. Hennessey recalls that he predicted an outcry over the omission on publication of the Report and also feeling concern that there would be a gap in the curriculum if these events were left out and the Russian Revolution included; students would examine the rule of Stalin but not Hitler. He was concerned, he said, about “the most violent and destructive war in history being omitted from the National Curriculum”. Hennessey thought that the Holocaust could also be approached in terms of events such as the Armenian Massacres and the Atomic Bomb under a heading of “Major Failures of the Twentieth Century” (Interview, 20 June 2002). However, as far as Saunders Watson was concerned the decision on whether to include the Holocaust lay with the whole Group.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview, 20 June 2002, supported by comments made during an interview with the Chairperson, 11 July 2002.

Some group members began to doubt that the right decision had been made shortly after the Hebden Bridge meeting. On 12 June a member who was on the assessment panel prepared a paper discussing content “overload” in Key Stage 4 in which she noted:

I am also concerned about the omission of Nazi Germany and its impact on Europe. It will be an omission which is very hard to explain even though, arguably its “impact” as an agent for change in the modern world has not been great. It is an area which captures the imagination and interest, not only for reasons of sensationalism.

(Content “Overload” in Key Stage 4, 12 June 1989)

Some members interviewed felt that there was an element of ‘kite flying’ among the Group; reaction to the Interim Report would be gauged and taken into account when devising the Final Report. The first draft of the Interim Report was produced at Hebden Bridge. The Group next met in London between 7 and 10 June where they went through the draft report. The Group was required to give one exemplar Programme of Study for Key Stage 4; they chose to outline *Britain in the Twentieth Century*. This exemplar made no reference to the events of the Second World War (DES, 1989, p.68). The Interim Report was published on 10 August; the predicted outcry duly came.

“The new curriculum even writes the Nazis out of history with no mention on the compulsory list of the rise and fall of the Third Reich or the First World War.” (*Today*, 11 August 1989). However, and significantly, Robert Guyver felt the public’s criticism was not based on historical objectives:



There were many complaints about omissions. The omission of the Second World War was regarded as a foolish error not so much on historical grounds as for moral and ethical reasons. The omission of the First World War met with many complaints.

(Guyver, 1990, p.105)

The minutes reveal that a number of responses concerning the teaching of twentieth century events were received following the publication of the Interim Report. During the Group's 14<sup>th</sup> meeting an interim report from the responses panel<sup>58</sup> was given in which he noted a number of responses had been received commenting upon the fact, "that World War Two and the Nazis, the Reformation, and Medicine Through Time had been omitted" (NC/HWG (89) 14<sup>th</sup>). During the same meeting the PoS panel suggested modifications to the history study units (HSUs). In Key Stage 4 the group decided to add a new HSU *The Second World War, its advent, course and aftermath, 1933-1948*. There had been a colloquy of historians held on 5 September at Chatham House in London. A member of the PoS panel (who attended the colloquy) first proposed this new study unit to the other members of the PoS panel on 9 September. Two members of the PoS panel in particular worked on this PoS throughout September. One worked especially hard to inject as much of a world perspective as possible into the unit. As noted in the previous chapter, the decision to include the Second World War and the Holocaust was accepted by the HWG on 29 September 1989.

Meanwhile, responses regarding the omission of the period of the Second World War continued to be sent to the HWG. During the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting on 9-11 October responses to the Interim Report were discussed. Key Stage 4 was the most heavily

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<sup>58</sup> This group was set up by Saunders Watson during the HWG's 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (August 30 – September 1) to deal with the responses the group received to their Interim Report.

criticised Key Stage. One major criticism was that there was too much twentieth century history; but at the same time it was noted that, “the omission of Fascism, Nazism and both World Wars was the most repeated criticism” (NC/HWG (89) 15<sup>th</sup>). During the Group’s 16<sup>th</sup> meeting on the 20 October the responses panel gave a report during which the most commonly mentioned omissions were stated. The first three on this list of six topics were the Holocaust; the rise of Fascism and the rise of Nazi Germany; and World Wars One and Two<sup>59</sup>. It is interesting that responses to the Interim Report cited the Holocaust as a topic in its own right; as previously noted, the HWG viewed the Holocaust as part of the Nazi period and never discussed it as a topic in its own right, separate from the Second World War. It was noted that both the British Legion and Western Front Association wrote about the omission of the two World Wars (NC/HWG (89) 16<sup>th</sup> Annex A). It was also noted in the responses panel’s report that, “secondary teachers’ perceptions of omissions coincided generally with the perceptions of the wider public response (e.g., WWI / WWII, more European history etc.)” (NC/HWG (89) 16<sup>th</sup>). Public reaction to the apparent omission of the Second World War and the Holocaust had an effect on the HWG’s original decision, which was reversed despite their misgivings about its inclusion as a compulsory study unit. In a letter Peter Marshall recalled that when he joined the Group:

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<sup>59</sup> The final three on this list were the Reformation/the history of Christianity; the history of medicine; more European history generally.

The issue was what sort of modern European history was to be taught and at what stage. The Provisional Report recommended a post-World War Two unit at Key Stage 4. In the abstract, I am sure this had a lot to be said for it, although that decision was taken before my time. Concentrating on the Second World War builds in stereotypes about Britain and its relations with Europe that have little relevance to the world in which young people now live. The recent German Ambassador in London used eloquently to express the reservations that many of us feel on the dead hand that certain views of the Second World War lays on our consciousness of Europe. It turned out, in my view, however, to be an impractical decision that went against, as far as we could judge, the wishes of most teachers as well as arousing the strong opposition of ex-service groups and those with a concern that the Holocaust should be taught. The latter point was certainly a consideration but not, as I remember it, the decisive one. My sense, and I suspect that of others on the Group, was that we had no alternative to going on with World War Two a bit longer, while hoping that a consensus among teachers would form round a new approach to modern Europe in due time.

(Correspondence, 22 August 2002)

On receiving her reply from Roberts, Supple wrote to other members of the HWG asking for their views on her letter from Roberts. One member of the Group replied to Supple:

The inclusion of the period 1933-45 in the core in the final Report was an acceptance that the needs of future citizens must be take [sic] into account, but could not solely be based on the long world view of the academic historian...To describe the Holocaust as 'the end of a long sad story' is not a reason for not studying it, and the story of racism has not ended...What also seems to me clear is that the approach adopted by the course you put on, which makes history teachers partners in the study of the Holocaust, with teachers of other curriculum areas, is the right one and goes far to meet the objections based on 'historical significance' alone.

(Letter to Carrie Supple from a member of the HWG, 21 June 1990.  
Underlining in the original.)

What is interesting about these comments is that they indicate that the Holocaust was an important topic for study, but not on the basis of historical criteria but rather because of the topic's role in anti-racist and Citizenship Education. Peter Marshall notes in the quotation above that it was hoped that history teachers would over time reconsider their approach to teaching modern Europe, and Guyver is quoted above,

“the omission of the Second World War was regarded as a foolish error not so much on historical grounds as for moral and ethical reasons” (Guyver, 1990, p.105). The above quotation from a member of the HWG to Supple indicates that unlike the rest of the National Curriculum for History, the period of the Second World War and the Holocaust were included not on historical grounds, but for broader educational goals. Indeed, the Holocaust was included from a religious and social perspective in the Final Report. This is important. If the Holocaust was included in the National Curriculum for History primarily for social and moral reasons, is history the place in the curriculum for this topic?

#### **Did political pressure influence the HWG’s decision?**

On April 17 1989 a member of the HWG, who would later serve on the responses panel, faxed a list of topics for consideration to the HWG secretary. Communism and Fascism; the rise and fall and rise of modern Germany; the Great War and the Second World War feature in a list of 56 non-British history options. The limited amount of time available for non-British history options may have been a further consideration in the Group’s decision to leave the period of the Second World War unnamed in the Interim Report. Following the publication of the Interim Report, in an attempt to address the concerns of the Secretary of State and increase the percentage of British history in the National Curriculum the HWG discussed the possibility of listing World War Two as a British history rather than a world or European history unit. A leading member of the Group said that “if it was considered to be a theme which linked Britain to a world experience, then it would have the same role as the ‘Reformation’ at Key Stage 3” (Minute 6.4, NC/HWG (89) 15<sup>th</sup>). One member of the HWG said that, “in fact the amount of British history did

not increase in the Final Report; it was cosmetic. As originally written the study unit on World War Two was widely conceived, as Britain's role was present but not excessive" (Interview, 24 June 2002). However, a cross party group of MPs considered World War Two and the rise and fall of the Nazis not to be presentationally British but an essential part of Britain's 'glorious' past; a crucial and traditional element of British history which must be named in the National Curriculum for History. On the same day the HWG decided to include the study unit *The Second World War, its advent, course and aftermath, 1933-1948* in their Final Report, a group of MPs wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and the HWG with a *Submission on the Teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History*. It was signed by Greville Janner, John Marshall, Robert Rhodes James<sup>60</sup> and Jeff Rooker<sup>61</sup>.

The MPs submission set out the reasons for demanding a place on the History Curriculum for World War Two and the Nazis:

The decision of the working group to omit any recommendations for the study of these subjects is all the more surprising given the well-known fascination of British people, let alone schoolchildren, for the subject of the Second World War. We remember the war as a series of cataclysmic events; as the first truly 'modern' war; as a fight against fascism and totalitarian dictatorship – and as a conflict in which Britain played a decisive role.

Even today – 45 years after the cessation of hostilities – its legacy effects hundreds of thousands of families throughout the country. Surviving relatives daily remember those who gave their lives. Freedom and democracy exist today in large part, thanks to the sacrifice of those who died in the Second World War.

(Submission on the Teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History)

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<sup>60</sup> A Conservative MP who had pressured the British Government to open their files on Austrian President Kurt Waldheim to investigate his relationship with the Nazis.

<sup>61</sup> A Labour MP who had campaigned for SS Major General Wilhelm Mohnke to be tried for the murder of British prisoners near Dunkirk in 1940.

The MPs concluded their submission:

We regard the omission of the Second World War and the rise and fall of Nazi Germany from the National Curriculum as totally unacceptable; without logic; educationally unsupportable; and offensive to all those who fought in or suffered from the Nazis or the Second World War. It is also a sad signal for the future, if our educational curriculum chooses deliberately to ignore key aspects of Britain's recent past.

(Submission on the Teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History)

The covering letter argued that the “overwhelming” press and public interest in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two was a clear indication of the need to put the subject on the History Curriculum<sup>62</sup>.

In reply to the MPs submission of 29 September MacGregor wrote that the omission was “apparent” rather than real. Alice Prochaska noted that the HWG had been concerned to be as unrestrictive as possible. There was in fact no intention to exclude World War Two and the Holocaust, but not to include this history on a list of mandatory topics (Correspondence, 12 July 2002). In a journal article detailing her experiences on the HWG Prochaska wrote:

Among other difficult choices was the question of World War Two. Although intended in our Interim Report to be covered from the British perspective in a unit on Modern Britain, it was not given separate space of its own. This much criticised omission illustrates the severe problems of space, especially at Key Stage 4 ages 14 to 16, where only five terms of history will be studied before the final exams. After a protracted debate before the Interim Report, the Group decided that a curriculum for the twenty first century did not absolutely require the inclusion of the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, as a period singled out for unique significance from a century of wars, world powers and rivalries etc. There was an opportunity for schools to choose to study the subject as a school designed theme at Key Stage 3, but the fact that it had not been specially singled out caused consternation when the interim report appeared. This big omission was contrasted especially bitterly (and for this we have our own presentation to blame entirely) with the fact that we named History study units on Sport and Society,

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<sup>62</sup> Letter from Greville Janner, John Marshall, Robert Rhodes James and Jeff Rooker, September 29 1989.

and Entertainment and Society, though these were never intended to be in any sense compared with the history of World War Two.

(Prochaska, 1990, pp. 87-8)

Indeed, there was also scope to include the period of the Nazis and the Second World War as a School Designed Theme (SDT). SDTs were intended to provide flexibility for teachers to plan and teach study units of their own choosing. However, the cross party group of MPs concerned with the teaching of this period rejected this suggestion in their submission:

Theoretically, this might seem to offer schools (and pupils) the opportunity for adequate study of the 'missing' subjects of the Second World War and the Nazi Holocaust in their History Curriculum.

However, the proposal ignores the effect upon the public examination system of the introduction of the national History Curriculum. The examination system by its very nature has to be geared to what is taught in schools.

(Submission on the teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History: September 1989)

If schools decided to teach this topic there was limited time available for teaching SDTs and at Key Stage 4 there was no provision for the teaching of a SDT. The Secretary of State wrote to Janner, Marshall, Rhodes James and Rooker suggesting that the Second World War and the Nazis would need to be included in the detailed PoS for the Key Stage 4 Study Unit *East meets West* which "includes post-1945 Europe and could not be studied without reference to Nazi Germany and the Second World War" (Letter to Greville Janner from John MacGregor, 11 October 1989). There was also room for the inclusion of this period in the Study Unit, *Japan: Shogunate to the present day*. MacGregor also noted that the Interim Report was a discussion document setting out the provisional thinking of the HWG who were currently drafting the detailed PoS to support each of the study units, and that he would send a copy of this correspondence to the Group's secretary, Jenny Worsfold.

The History Working Group were meeting at the Burlington Hotel in Great Yarmouth when Education Minister Angela Rumbold told the House of Commons during a Parliamentary exchange that the Second World War and Nazism would be in the Final Report:

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the teaching of history within the National Curriculum.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are waiting for the final report of the national curriculum history working group, which they expect to receive by the end of the year. They will then publish their proposals for the History Curriculum.

**Mr. Marshall:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the Interim Report of the working group was greeted with shock and dismay by the many who believe that the causes and history of the second world war should be part of the national curriculum? After all, 1940 was our finest hour; why is it too fine for the history mandarins?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I can assure my hon. Friend that the proposals of the interim working group have been looked at again by the History Working Group, and that the final proposals will contain full programmes of study on all the units, so that matters can be taken fully into account.

**Mr. Janner:** Will the Minister explain her previous answer? Does this mean that the national curriculum will contain the rise and fall of Nazism and the Second World War?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** As I understand it, yes.

(Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 160, Cols 171-172, 14 November 1989)

Members of the HWG recalled that a senior civil servant telephoned Commander Saunders Watson from Whitehall to apologise. The Chairperson was surprised and annoyed at this attempt to exert political pressure on the group. He telephoned the



DES and made the point that HWG was independent and would make up its own mind about including or excluding content (this was recalled in an interview with the Chairperson, 20 June 2002 as well as the HMI Observer, 11 July 2002). One member of the HWG who spoke to Phillips about this incident said:

We did resent this apparent attempt to influence what we were doing. In fact, we had already decided to include World War Two partly because we heard through the officials that the Government wanted it to be included and partly because it was left out of the original Interim Report on the basis of a very slight majority.

(Phillips, 1998, p. 80)

According to Phillips, “the significance of the statement was clear; this was apparently a direct attempt by the Government to dictate what historical content should be included in the Final Report” (Phillips, 1998, p. 79). However, as noted, individual members had doubts about the decision to exclude this period as a PoS from the Interim Report almost as soon as this decision had been made. The decision to include Nazism and the Second World War in the Final Report had been made by 14 November: this had been agreed by the HWG on 29 September, and Rumbold probably knew this through the civil servants who ‘observed’ the group and reported to their superiors on the discussions that took place; this information would in turn pass up the chain. Rumbold herself appears to endorse this explanation in her statement to Janner; “as I understand it [from the ‘observers’ keeping the Education Department informed] yes [these subjects feature in the Final Report]”. This parliamentary exchange is more revealing in terms of politicians’ interpretation of the Second World War and the Holocaust, which this chapter will go on to discuss, than the Government’s role in exerting political influence and shaping educational policy.

The discourse of John Marshall and Janner was thoroughly different from that of Roberts' who had wanted students to be encouraged to take a longer and wider view of history. He was not advocating ignoring the recent past, or arguing that this period was unimportant, but as an historian was perhaps able to detach himself from the present time in a way others were unable to do. Janner et al argued that World War Two was important from the perspective that it cast light on the division of Europe. The Berlin Wall came down 43 days after the MPs made their submission. The National Curriculum for History was being constructed at the same time as 50th anniversaries of key events in the Nazi and Second World War period and at the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin wall marked the end of this era and the beginning of a period in which Europe and Germany in particular would begin to try to come to terms with the Nazi past (Niven, 2002). The HWG did not operate in a cultural vacuum and in this sense there can be no doubt that the Group was under pressure to produce proposals acceptable to the Government and the public. It could be argued that the media attention and popular consciousness and interest in the Second World War and the Nazis meant that it was almost impossible for Roberts' call for a longer and wider view to be heard<sup>63</sup>. The HWG witnessed adverse reaction to their proposals in the press, and some members were themselves uneasy with the decision not to name the Two World Wars and the Holocaust in the Interim Report. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that the HWG began work on a study unit on the topic of the Second World War and the Nazis directly following the colloquy of historians. However, the Chairperson appeared determined that the work of the

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<sup>63</sup> One of the 'what ifs' of history is whether if Roberts had remained on the HWG the decision to include World War Two as a mandatory PoS in the Final Report would have been so easy for the Group. Members of the HWG mentioned in interview that they felt it would have been difficult to reverse the Hebden Bridge decision had Roberts' continued to sit on the group. Comments from leading group members included "there may have been some arguments if John Roberts had stayed" (Interview, 24 June 2002) and "if he had remained on the group I think we would have had a hard time getting out of that" (Interview, 11 July 2002).

Group would be its own. On balance, it would seem that the decision to include the Second World War and the Nazis was made by the Group in light of the reaction to their Interim Report.

### **WHAT DID THE LOBBYISTS PERCEIVE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY TO BE?**

John Marshall's interpretation as revealed in the Parliamentary exchange quoted on page 175 is particularly interesting. He views the period of the Second World War as Britain's "finest hour", presumably referring to the allies' defeat of fascism and the liberation of the concentration camps. However, Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* describes and explains the near total ban on Jewish refugee immigration to Britain during the war; the restrictive immigration policy in Palestine; the internment and deportation of aliens in Britain; the abortive Bermuda conference on refugees in 1943; the failure to aid Jewish resistance in Europe; and the rejection of the scheme for the bombing by the allies of Auschwitz (Wasserstein, 1979). Further, it would appear that John Marshall and Janner have different foci. Janner's focus is the rise and fall of the Nazis; he broadens the subject of study asking Rumbold whether Nazism will be taught. On 27 March and 2 April Janner asked in the House of Commons when the Final Report would be available (Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 173, 27 March 1990; Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170, Col 421, 2 April 1990)<sup>64</sup>. During the exchange with Rumbold on 14 November 1989, Janner's concern had been over whether Nazism would be included in the Final Report. However, on 4 April he asked the Secretary of State for Education what steps he

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<sup>64</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, unhappy with the content of the Final Report, Thatcher delayed its publication and insisted that the Secretary of State put the proposals out for further consultation. The Report was published on 3 April 1990.

intended to take to introduce the study of the Nazi Holocaust into state schools as a *core part* of the National Curriculum (Hansard, H. of C., Vol. 170. Col 621, 4 April 1990). Given Janner's commitment to Holocaust education it is unsurprising that the emphasis had once again shifted. From the available evidence, Janner's principle objectives for Holocaust education would appear to be, to remember the victims; and so that students understand why war criminals, despite their age, should be prosecuted.

John Fox was also clear in his commitment to Holocaust education. He had helped the cross party group of MPs to prepare their submission; and defended their position in an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 12 January 1990 following the publication of a piece by Dr Lionel Kochan, which appeared in the newspaper on 22 December 1989, arguing against the teaching of the Holocaust. Kochan began his piece:

In the past few weeks, the Secretary of State for Education received a letter from the president of the Board of Deputies [Janner] and a group of sympathetic MPs, protesting at the proposed exclusion of the post-1939 period for the new history syllabus for schools. He also received a letter from me, welcoming this exclusion.

His argument was that "disseminating a knowledge of Nazi barbarism was fraught with danger and that the Holocaust, whether taught at school or at university, was best omitted from the syllabus". Dr David Sorkin wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* in support of Kochan's view, "if we choose to focus on the Holocaust, we select that aspect of Jewish history which, to be sure, unfailingly appeals to the emotional voyeur, but in the end we sell the Jews and Judaism short, as well as giving the discipline of Judaic studies a bad name" (Sorkin, 9 February 1990). Teaching the Holocaust would not prevent a repetition of this event said Kochan, furthermore he asked "who would be a Jew if suffering and persecution were the dominating themes

of our history?” and “why should massacre and bloodshed be the dominating themes presented to schoolchildren and students?” However, Fox responded:

Ignorance and incomprehension about the significance of Holocaust education and research I expected – and received – in response to the questionnaires I sent out for the survey on teaching the Holocaust which I conducted on behalf of the Yad Vashem academic and educational sub-committee. I did not expect it from the likes of Lionel Kochan.

Fox argued that the Holocaust should not be perceived solely as *Jewish* history but rather as an event which belonged to humanity:

The subject (in its widest sense) is of concern to all, non-Jew and Jew alike. Not only must one examine its contemporary significance, one must also consider its historical importance. It is imperative, therefore, that it takes its rightful place in the school and university curriculum.

Fox stressed the importance of teaching the Holocaust in order to protect the historical and moral memory of this phase in history, questioning whether Kochan was “serious that this seminal segment of modern Jewish history should be wiped out of educational – and indeed moral – memory?”. However, Kochan did not believe the subject of the Holocaust should not be studied, but rather that it was inappropriate for study by undergraduates, “I do not argue that the Holocaust should not be *studied*. I do not subscribe to the view of those who see it as a mystery, as something so far removed from the normal experience of humanity as to have taken place in another world entirely, and thus incomprehensible. On the contrary, here is the work of human beings, and what certain human beings have done other human beings can try to make explicable. But there is a world of difference between scholarly research and teaching to the immature and unsophisticated.” Kochan highlights one of the difficulties of teaching the Holocaust; teachers need to be aware that they may inadvertently put over the view that the Jews are victims or did something to deserve their treatment. This was Kochan’s primary concern, “those who ‘teach the

Holocaust' are, in fact, doing the future of Jewry the greatest possible disservice. They are teaching a whole generation to regard us in a particularly vulnerable light" (Fox, 12 January 1990; Kochan, 22 December 1989). On 28 November 1990 the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library held a debate *Teaching the Holocaust: For or Against?* between Kochan with Sorkin and Ronnie Landau with Philip Rubenstein. The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that some Holocaust survivors made "angry comments" following Kochan's speech (7 December 1989). Several points should be noted about the intense level of debate amongst the Jewish community and scholars of Jewish history regarding the teaching of the Holocaust in school history and what this indicates: first, this is another reminder that at the time the National Curriculum was being constructed the Second World War was in living memory. It was therefore unlikely that many people would be able to take a long view and construct a History Curriculum for the twenty first century with the necessary detachment. Second, this level of debate was a clear indicator of the need for wider debate and discussion of the question, what is important about teaching the Holocaust in history?.

The construction of the National Curriculum presented an opportunity to those who were committed to Holocaust education to ensure that the Holocaust be taught in schools as part of the mainstream syllabus. The absence of the Second World War and the Nazi Holocaust from the Interim Report was of concern to those who had throughout the 1980s been working to establish the teaching of the Holocaust in schools. Landau wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle*, "it is scandalous that serious study of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust may be consigned to oblivion. For under the proposed scheme, hardly anyone below the age of 16 would ever study it in school –

a truly alarming turning back of the clock” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 25 August 1989). The introduction of the National Curriculum meant that if the topics of the Second World War and the Holocaust were included teachers would *have* to teach about them. Mindful of my own classroom experience as discussed in Chapter One, and of the pedagogical concerns raised by Kochan outlined above, I asked Dr John Fox in an interview in January 2004 how he envisaged or wanted the Holocaust to be dealt with in school history:

I have absolutely no idea is the short answer with regard to the school level. So far as universities were concerned it was much easier because what I wanted at University level was for it to be taught as a special subject to be included as part of a general history degree course and an important element of any special subject on Nazi Germany but my ideal aim, this is what I always wanted to do, was teach a special subject on ‘the Holocaust’ at University. As far as schools I had no real idea, I must admit. It was generally to promote greater awareness of it. By then I was way out of school. I taught in schools for seven years from 1962-69.

(Interview, 21 January 2004)

Once the place of the Holocaust had been secured on the History Curriculum the Chairperson of the HET turned his attention to ensuring that teachers had the necessary support to teach the Holocaust, and to that end argued *cross-curricular* short-courses be provided:

It is vital that Holocaust education in Britain includes the concepts and issues which have been developed in Jewish Holocaust education over the last 45 years and which have proved so essential.

We believe that the organisation of a series of Holocaust at Key Stage 3 cross-curricular short courses for LEA advisers, teachers and Heads of Department, might best serve its teaching.

(Letter to Ken Oldfield from Greville Janner and Merlyn Rees,  
12 November 1991)

History teachers’ objectives may well have been blurred by the cross-curricular nature of the topic of the Holocaust, which even the member of the HWG who wrote to Supple saw as being more important in terms of anti-racist education than in terms

of historical significance. But perhaps more significant than this blurring of the role of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History is the issue that apparently no consideration was given by those who campaigned for the inclusion of this topic in the National Curriculum of, as Plowright wrote in reaction to the Fox Report, “first principles such as establishing the importance of teaching the Holocaust and teaching it in a particular manner” (1991, p. 26). Rather, campaigners such as Fox, concentrated on winning the argument – the debate over whether or not this period should be taught - and securing the inclusion of the period of the Second World War and the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History. To date there has been no debate regarding “first principles” and the teaching of the Holocaust in school history at a curriculum decision making level.

## **THE HOLOCAUST IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR HISTORY**

Within the National Curriculum the topic of the Holocaust has become a study in its own right evolving from an element of a world or European study. The decisions which led to the increasingly prominent position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum are discussed below. There is no explanation in the public domain of the decisions made specifically on the topic of the Holocaust by the SCAA Advisory Group for History, or the HTG which this chapter goes on to discuss. The following paragraphs are based on interviews with individuals who served on these groups as well as newspaper articles and relevant literature.



### **The SCAA Advisory Group 1994**

The SCAA Advisory Group for History was subject to greater political control than the HWG. Whereas Commander Saunders Watson had defended the HWG's right to make decisions independently, one member of this Group told me that the Chairperson of the SCAA Advisory Group for History used language such as "I don't think that will be acceptable" or "I'm sure that would not be acceptable" in response to suggestions from the Group (Interview, 28 May 2003). It is significant that the word used was "acceptable", rather than "appropriate" for example, as it indicates that the Chairperson was talking about the need to please the Department for Education and SCAA.

There were additional pressures on the SCAA Advisory Group for History, just as there had been on the HWG. This was a high profile review which received considerable media coverage; so much so that the locations of the meetings of the SCAA Advisory Group for History were kept secret from the press. Chris Woodhead, who at the time was the chief executive of SCAA, was concerned to keep as much adverse publicity out of the press as possible. Nonetheless headlines such as "Past a joke" appeared in *The Sun* criticising the proposal from "a leaked report" that Trafalgar, Waterloo, the Battle of Hastings and the Gunpowder Plot should become optional and questioning "how can you be proud of your country if you don't know its history?" (*The Sun*, 1 March, 1994). The views of Christopher McGovern, one of the members of the SCAA Advisory Group for History, also made headlines in the *Daily Mail* (15 March 1994) and the *TES* (18 March 1994) after he wrote a five page letter to Dearing criticising the Group's work and recommendations. McGovern desired a greater amount of uniquely British history

in the curriculum and bewailed the fact that the Great Fire of London, the Gunpowder Plot and the Plague of 1665 were not compulsory. Like the period of the Second World War in the HWG's original proposals (DES, 1989), these topics were unnamed but there was scope for teachers to teach about these events if they wished. Professor Anthony O'Hear, who was also a member of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and was described like McGovern as a right wing historian, rejected McGovern's criticisms. He was quoted in the *Daily Mail*

It is true that the Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of London are not specifically mentioned, but this does not mean they cannot be taught. Nor do I think that curriculum is symptomatic of a national crisis. Can it really be pretended that the Plague and the Fire are key political events, on a level with the Civil War, the Interregnum and the Restoration, all of which are mentioned in the Stuart period?

(*Daily Mail*, 15 March 1994)

This notion that if topics were compulsory in the National Curriculum they would be taught, but if they are not named would not be taught, comes over in the article published in *The Sun* on 1 March 1994, "sorry, Nelson. Hard luck, Wellington. You could soon be history. The heritage of Britain should become optional at school says a leaked report. Children wouldn't have to learn about Trafalgar, Waterloo, the Battle of Hastings or the Gunpowder Plot". This view that if topics were compulsory they would be taught, but if they were optional teachers would not teach them, was shared by some members of SCAA Advisory Group for History; one member was particularly struck by the gulf between the position of politicians and policy makers and their own experience of the classroom, and saw their role as attempting to get over to other, non-teaching members of the group the reality of what actually happens in the classroom. Another issue highlighted by McGovern's criticisms is the difficulty in developing a curriculum upon which there is consensus;

this is demonstrated by the apparent “split in the traditionalist view” (*TES*, 18 March 1994).

The slimming down of the National Curriculum for History was complicated by the fact that the subject was no longer compulsory at Key Stage 4 as had been envisaged by the 1988 ERA and devised by the HWG. The SCAA Advisory Group for History were presented with the challenge of both slimming down and expanding National Curriculum content which, as one member of the group recalled, “in itself was a major issue” (Interview, 28 May 2003). In the time devoted to discussion of curriculum content<sup>65</sup> “the twentieth century problem” (Interview, 28 May 2003) was deliberated. Deliberations centred upon whether to introduce additional HSUs on the twentieth century from Key Stage 4 into Key Stage 3 or to expand the existing Key Stage 3 study unit *The Era of the Second World War* (which had, as noted in the previous chapter, been moved from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 3 by Clarke in response to criticism that if students could take either history or geography in Key Stage 4 they would miss out on learning about the twentieth century). This was a core study unit which stated “pupils should be taught about the causes, nature and immediate consequences of the Second World War. The focus should be on the developing conflict between democracies and dictatorships in Europe in the 1930s, the impact of the war on soldiers and civilians, and post war reconstruction” (DES, 1991b, p.45). This presentation of the Second World War was in line with John Marshall’s interpretation of this period. The unit encompassed developments in Europe since the 1930s; the experiences of war; and the immediate consequences of war; however on its own it could not adequately teach students about the

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<sup>65</sup> Much of the work of the SCAA Advisory Group for History was concentrated not upon curriculum content but establishing the second order concepts which became the Key Elements in the 1995 National Curriculum for History.

experience of the twentieth century. The SCAA Advisory Group for History therefore decided to expand this study unit and re-name it *The twentieth century world* (DFE, 1995, p.13). The fact that history was being truncated meant that the Group had two major considerations when deliberating curriculum content: what the ultimate ignorance would be and students could not leave school without a knowledge of, as well as tacit assumptions regarding what the public would and would not accept. A member of the SCAA Advisory Group for History explained there was an assumption among the Group that the Holocaust would have to be on the revised curriculum and would have to be named (Interview, 28 May 2003). The Holocaust was named in the 1991 Curriculum. In this more prescribed version it was listed as a topic students should be taught about under the experience of war along with the experience and impact of war in Europe, Asia and other parts of the world; the role of wartime leaders, including Hitler, Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt; the home front in Britain and the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. In the 1995 Curriculum teachers are asked to give an overview of the Second World War, including the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs; and the legacy of the Second World War for Britain and the World. The home front in Britain was moved into Key Stage 2 and the role of wartime leaders became exemplary information of one topic which could be taught in depth. In their dual aim of slimming and expanding the curriculum the SCAA Advisory Group for History enhanced the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History, but did not consider or establish “first principles”.

### **The History Task Group 1998-9**

The National Curriculum for History published in 1999 included a rationale. However, this review did not go far enough to establish and outline the theory behind the selection of curriculum content which consequently meant that teachers continued to lack a firm theoretical foundation for their work. With reference to teaching the Holocaust in history, the diversity of teachers' views and practise is, as noted in Chapter Three, less surprising given the lack of consensus over fundamental principles such as what the term 'Holocaust' encompasses. It struck one of the HTG members as extraordinary that, "no discussion of the Holocaust was had on that committee and we were informed by a civil servant that the Holocaust would be compulsory." According to this group member a civil servant from the DfES said that the Secretary of State (David Blunkett) had decided the Holocaust was to be compulsory (Interview, 7 January 2003). A leading member of the group confirmed that despite the main role of the group being to slim down the amount of prescription in the National Curriculum, there was in fact no question of removing the Holocaust (Interview, 23 January 2003). There was no discussion regarding what was important about teaching the Holocaust in history, what the term 'Holocaust' encompassed, or how the Holocaust should be taught in school history either. One member of the Group stated:

I was shocked; this had nothing to do with education. It was not agreed. It was imposed without any guidelines or discussion. I thought that there were more important things to be taught. The merits of it were never discussed. To be something separate like that in the History Curriculum is quite remarkable. I personally objected to just one area being compulsory.

(Interview, 7 January 2003)

If this decision was indeed made by the Secretary of State then the question of what he saw as being so important about the Holocaust that this topic should have such status is raised. On 10 November 2000 Blunkett was quoted in the *TES*:

It is important that our children learn about how and why the Holocaust happened and about the victims of Nazi persecution. We must ensure our children understand the value of diversity and tolerance to help achieve a society free from prejudice and racism in which all members have a sense of belonging.

(David Blunkett, quoted in the *TES*, 10 November 2000)

While Blunkett seems clear on why he thinks the Holocaust must be taught it appears he denied the HTG the opportunity to discuss and theorise the teaching of the Holocaust in history.

As noted in the previous chapter, the National Curriculum for 2000 was accompanied by non-statutory guidance from the QCA<sup>66</sup> in the form of a series of schemes of work. Unit 19 *How and why did the Holocaust happen?* (QCA, 2000) is a depth study on the topic of the Holocaust. Jerome Freeman explained that:

The Holocaust was included in the DfES/QCA scheme of work for Key Stage 3 history because it is a statutory part of the programme of study for Key Stage 3 and the aim of the scheme of work was always to show teachers how they could cover all these requirements. It was given its own unit because it was felt that to incorporate the Holocaust into a broader unit on the Second World War would not do justice to such an important and sensitive subject. In addition, *some teachers had requested guidance on how to teach this subject at Key Stage 3*. I should add that the scheme of work is in no way compulsory and teachers are free to disregard it and use their own schemes. This means that teachers are free to approach the teaching of the Holocaust, including the time they spend on it, in a way they feel is most appropriate for their pupils.

(Freeman, Correspondence, 7 March 2002. Emphasis added.)

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<sup>66</sup> SCAA was merged with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and renamed the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The QCA unit is itself but one interpretation of the Holocaust and its ‘lessons’ and how this should be taught. This guidance on teaching the Holocaust has its focus on the Jewish persecution, although the persecution of all of the victims of National Socialism should be taught as part of this unit. One of the learning outcomes in the fifth lesson of this unit is that students should “demonstrate accurate knowledge of the treatment of the Jews and of other groups”. It is expected that by the end of the unit:

Most pupils will: show knowledge of how and why the Holocaust happened including the chronology of the Holocaust and the way the persecution of Jewish people developed over time; describe some of the ideas and attitudes underpinning the Nazi persecution of the Jews and other groups; make critical and thoughtful use of a range of sources of information about the Holocaust, including ICT; select, organise and use relevant information in structured explanations of the Holocaust  
(QCA, 2000)

What is particularly interesting about the publication of the QCA guidance is that Freeman notes it was prompted in part by history teachers requesting guidance on how to teach this topic; a clear indication that teachers lack clarity of purpose in their teaching about the Holocaust.

This chapter has demonstrated that a clear rationale regarding what was important about teaching the Holocaust in school history was lacking among those who shaped the original National Curriculum for History; and the opportunity to theorise this has been denied those who have subsequently reviewed the History Curriculum. The evidence presented in this chapter also indicates that social and moral reasoning, more than historical criteria, resulted in the inclusion of the Holocaust in the HWG’s Final Report. The following chapter examines the views of history teachers: how do they consider the Holocaust to be important? Do they teach the Holocaust from a social and moral or an historical perspective? Are they clear in their objectives, or

has the lack of a clear rationale at the heart of the curriculum decision making process led to a lack of clarity in history teachers' approaches to the topic of the Holocaust?



## CHAPTER SIX

### THE VIEWS OF TEACHERS

The main problem seems to be that teachers are unclear about why they are teaching the Holocaust. Is the rationale behind it primarily historical, moral or social? Is the Holocaust to be taught as a historical event, with a view to developing students' critical historical skills, or as a tool to combat continuing prejudice and discrimination?

(Moloney, 12 September 2003)

The previous chapter has demonstrated that the rationale behind the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History was, and is, unclear. How then does this impact upon classroom practice? Throughout my research I have been struck by the lack of consensus regarding the purpose of and approaches to teaching the Holocaust in history. As noted in Chapter Three, a special edition of *Teaching History* was published in September 2003 which focused solely on teaching the Holocaust in history. This edition was evincive in its deliberate range of contrasting perspectives and views on this topic. To what extent is the lack of clarity among curriculum policy makers reflected among history teachers? Is the lack of clarity at the curriculum decision making level reflected in a lack of clarity in the history classroom? The teacher research that this chapter is based on was designed to probe this question. How clear are history teachers about their objectives? Is classroom practice as diverse as it might appear; do teachers' approaches and their objectives differ widely? It is important to note that for the purposes of this chapter and the interviews conducted with teachers, the term 'Holocaust'- unless otherwise stated - includes any teaching which provides background to the Holocaust such as the history of anti-Semitism, as well as the legalisation of prejudice and discrimination by the state from 1933 onwards. Thus Hitler's rise to power and events such as

Crystal Night<sup>67</sup> are encompassed by this term. This chapter looks at how clear the teachers interviewed were about their aims and objectives. It then moves on to comparing their approaches and objectives and examining to what extent these are historical or moral and social. It begins however by briefly describing the sample and the schools visited.

## **SAMPLE**

The data base for this part of my research, while small, has provided an indication of the views of teachers which supports my thesis and has aided my reflections on the issue of teaching the Holocaust in history. I visited eight schools and interviewed ten history teachers in the course of my research. Of these ten teachers, seven were Head of Department. There were six men and four women. All of these teachers taught in schools in South East Kent where a system of selection continues to operate: students sit a county wide examination at the age of 11. One of the schools in the sample was Roman Catholic and drew students from across the ability range; one was independent; two were single sex girls' grammar schools; one school had recently become a technology college and catered for students across the ability range; one was 'comprehensive' and catered for students across the mainstream ability range<sup>68</sup>; and two were secondary modern schools. Both of the secondary modern schools faced extremely challenging circumstances and an

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<sup>67</sup>Crystal Night took place between 9-10 November 1938. During the night 91 Jews were killed and an estimated 20,000 sent to concentration camps; 7,500 Jewish shops were destroyed and 400 synagogues were burnt down. Although presented as a spontaneous reaction to the assassination by a Jewish refugee in Paris of the German diplomat Ernst von Rath, it was in fact organised by the Nazi Party ([www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERcrystal](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERcrystal)).

<sup>68</sup>As noted, Kent is selective and therefore while this school called itself a comprehensive it could not be described as fully comprehensive.

uncertain future. I interviewed Leonard<sup>69</sup> at the Catholic school; Harold at the Independent school (it should be noted that Harold teaches the Holocaust in Year 10 and that Independent schools do not have to use the National Curriculum); Hank and Stephanie at their respective girls' grammar schools; Anne at the technology college; Marie and Mike at the comprehensive school; Barbara and Walter at one of the secondary modern schools; and Tom at the other secondary modern school. In recent years parts of south-east Kent, especially Dover, have become home to refugees. Students' (negative) reactions to refugees were noted by Barbara and Tom. As noted in Chapter Two, interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. I should also note the year in which each of the teachers interviewed qualified to teach since this may be relevant to their approach to teaching history: Leonard qualified as a history teacher in 1975; Harold in 1972; Hank in 1994; Stephanie in 1994; Anne in 2001; Marie in 2002; Mike in 1993; Barbara in 2000; Walter in 2003 and Tom in 2000.

## **ARE TEACHERS CLEAR IN THEIR OBJECTIVES?**

Despite the sample size teachers' views represented the spectrum of approaches to teaching the Holocaust in history. There was no consensus regarding whether a historical or moral and social approach should be taken. The questionnaire returns and interviews subsequently conducted with history teachers demonstrated a range of opinion regarding the purpose of teaching the Holocaust. One teacher from South London, who volunteered to complete a questionnaire as a pilot, wrote in response to question five – what is your prime objective when teaching the Holocaust? – “all of these – can't separate ‘prime’”. Based on my experience and reading, as set out in

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<sup>69</sup> All of the teachers' names have been changed to protect their anonymity. None of the teachers' genders has been changed however since future research may involve questions regarding whether gender has a bearing on approaches to teaching the Holocaust.

Chapters One and Three, I had expected teachers to find difficulty in defining a single prime objective and to indicate during interviews that the Holocaust encompassed all of the objectives listed on the questionnaire, and possibly others in addition. None of the teachers who took part in my study admitted feeling confused or unclear about their objectives. Nor did any of the teachers interviewed express a desire for greater guidance in this area. This is of interest. In the previous chapter, Jerome Freeman is quoted explaining the decision of the QCA to produce a scheme of work on the Holocaust as non-statutory guidance for teachers. I include the quotation again here; the last three sentences are of particular interest:

The Holocaust was included in the DfES/QCA scheme of work for Key Stage 3 history because it is a statutory part of the programme of study for Key Stage 3 and the aim of the scheme of work was always to show teachers how they could cover all these requirements. It was given its own unit because it was felt that to incorporate the Holocaust into a broader unit on the Second World War would not do justice to such an important and sensitive subject. In addition, some teachers had requested guidance on how to teach this subject at Key Stage 3. I should add that the scheme of work is in no way compulsory and teachers are free to disregard it and use their own schemes. This means that teachers are free to approach the teaching of the Holocaust, including the time they spend on it, in a way they feel is most appropriate for their pupils.

(Freeman, Correspondence, 7 March 2002)

Hector, in a project entitled, *The Holocaust in Secondary Classrooms; a comparison between the attitudes and choices of history teachers and religious education teachers* (2003) concluded that there was no significant difference between the approaches of history and religious education teachers to the topic of the Holocaust. In this research she highlighted the lack of guidance for teachers teaching about the Holocaust:

Teaching the Holocaust sensitively and effectively is so important, and the pitfalls which can result in inappropriate teaching so numerous, that it is surprising to me that there is so much leeway granted to teachers.

(Hector, 2003)

However, when I asked teachers during their interviews about the QCA scheme of work, I gained responses including:

It is quite recent isn't it, so it must have come my way. I couldn't comment on it because we haven't as a result made any changes to how we deliver it [the Holocaust] because of the cross-curricular links in Year 9... So I couldn't say it's something that has influenced the way we work.

(Stephanie)

I haven't seen it.

(Hank)

I have scanned through it... I did think about using it, but to be honest, once I had taught the Holocaust once and I saw what the pupils responded to it was easier to look at what was going to get a good reception from our students if you like, to look at what was going to benefit them. And I don't necessarily think the topics on the QCA scheme did that for our particular students.

(Barbara)

None of the teachers interviewed had used the QCA Scheme of Work in their teaching. Asked about whether they took guidance from other organisations such as the HET, the teachers interviewed gave a more mixed response. Barbara appreciated support from this organisation and felt more confident in her teaching knowing that their support was available, while Harold was dubious of this kind of support:

I tend to be a bit suspicious. I tend to throw the stuff away. The Imperial War Museum exhibition we have found is incredibly thought provoking, incredibly moving. Yet it is so well done because it isn't propagandist in any way. There is a real attempt to provide a very thoughtful background explanation and you feel you're not being preached at. The message is clear without it being pushed in a way, because the whole thing is so powerful.

(Harold)

The most interesting response however came from Leonard:

They [the HET] have sent us some really good flyers etc, and the films are there, and the resources are there. I don't need the material. With something like the Holocaust you don't need vast amounts of material because the material will swamp what you are trying to get over, you will in fact stop teaching about it and all you'll end up with is a shock horror story. It [the Holocaust] has to have an intellectual dimension. It has to have a rationale. Students have to try and understand why it happened and why it was allowed to happen and its repercussions. But of course we never have time to deal with consequences. If I deal with it this year it will in fact be an additional dimension to life inside Germany. I won't have time to and I don't think I will now actually deal with it as a huge topic in its own right.

(Leonard)

Leonard's comments call to mind a point raised in Chapter One regarding the issue of whether the volume of resources available (many of which are cross curricular and do not therefore provide a clear historical focus for the history teacher) actually help to focus lessons on the Holocaust. Leonard highlights the importance of teachers having a *rationale* rather than more resources.

All of the teachers interviewed appeared to be confident about why they taught the Holocaust. However, there was evidence, among two teachers in particular, of divergence between what they claimed were their main objectives and what they did in practice. These teachers were among three who indicated more than one objective on their questionnaire in response to question five<sup>70</sup>.

The first of these two teachers, Marie, identified three objectives on her questionnaire: to give students the skills to detect discrimination, prejudice and racism; to remember the victims; and to consider and protect the democracies

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<sup>70</sup> This was in spite of the fact the questionnaire asked for teachers' *prime* objective. The intention was to probe at interview whether teachers attempted in their teaching to cover additional objectives. The fact that three of the teachers interviewed indicated more than one objective on their questionnaire return may itself be evidence of a lack of clarity of purpose.

students live in. I asked Marie whether she found it difficult to plan lessons for the time available which achieved these three objectives:

Last year, in my last school, it was a little bit easier because I taught RE to exactly the same Year 9 group so we did quite a lot in RE about democracy and communism. I think you can tie in together objectives like protecting democracies and detecting the skills to recognise [state sponsored] prejudice and racism. I always teach the Holocaust from the victims' point of view. I literally launched straight in because I only had two lessons so we didn't go through the whole, why did it happen or the consequences. I just said 'this happened'.

*So you didn't teach about Hitler's rise to power or his policies?*

No.

*Which of the objectives you highlighted do you think is the most important?*

From a historical point of view, I'd say to remember the victims.

*So was the Holocaust taught in RE as well as history in your school last year?*

No. I did it in history but I tied in some of the themes.

(Marie)

The disparity between what Marie believed were the key objectives of teaching the Holocaust in history and what she was actually teaching in the classroom is evident. While Marie believed it was important to teach the Holocaust in order for students to consider and protect the democracies they live in, she failed within her history lessons to teach her students anything about Hitler's rise to power, his policies, and why these might have appealed to the electorate in Weimar Germany. It could be argued that students could not learn anything about democracy if Marie did not teach about how Hitler came to power and established a totalitarian regime. Marie's prime historical objective was "to remember the victims". However, to meet this objective Marie used an ahistorical activity. She stated that she taught the Holocaust from a moral rather than a historical perspective:

I want to teach the Holocaust from a moral point of view, not a historical point of view. I play the part in *Schindler's List* where people are going into the gas chambers without any volume but with Enrique Iglesias' *Hero*<sup>71</sup> playing very, very loudly. I tell pupils just to listen to the words and not to sing along and its actually quite powerful sort of stuff. I've found it works really well. It gets me every time, I have to turn away. I can't watch it.

(Marie)

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<sup>71</sup> The lyrics to this song are:

Would you dance,  
if I asked you to dance?  
Would you run,  
and never look back?  
Would you cry,  
if you saw me crying?  
And would you save my soul, tonight?  
Would you tremble,  
if I touched your lips?  
Would you laugh?  
Oh please tell me this.  
Now would you die,  
for the one you love?  
Hold me in your arms, tonight.  
I can be your hero, baby.  
I can kiss away the pain.  
I will stand by you forever.  
You can take my breath away.  
Would you swear,  
that you'll always be mine?  
Or would you lie?  
would you run and hide?  
Am I in too deep?  
Have I lost my mind?  
I don't care...  
You're here, tonight.  
I can be your hero, baby.  
I can kiss away the pain.  
I will stand by you forever.  
You can take my breath away.  
Oh, I just wanna to hold you.  
I just wanna to hold you.  
Oh yeah.  
Am I in too deep?  
Have I lost my mind?  
Well I don't care...  
You're here, tonight.  
I can be your hero, baby.  
I can kiss away the pain.  
I will stand by you forever.  
You can take my breath away.  
I can be your hero.  
I can kiss away the pain.  
And I will stand by you, forever.  
You can take my breath away.  
You can take my breath away.  
I can be your hero.

(Enrique Iglesias' *Hero* lyrics are the property and copyright of Enrique Iglesias.)



Though Marie claims to be teaching from a moral perspective it could be argued that activities such as that described here are purely emotional: this experience contains no historical, moral or social lessons for students. The objective is simply to gain an emotional reaction. This emotive approach to teaching about the Holocaust is discussed in more detail below. This extract is included here because it demonstrates that despite the fact Marie did not claim she was confused about what her objectives should be, in practice, her teaching in this area clearly lacked clarity. The introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum may have exacerbated Marie's confused approach, "last year there was also an emphasis on delivering citizenship in history and so I was thinking 'where can I get this in?' and that probably swayed my decision [to teach the Holocaust from a 'moral' perspective] a little bit as well".

The second teacher to indicate several objectives as being 'prime' in response to question five demonstrated a similar disparity between what she said were the key objectives and what she taught in the classroom. On this occasion however the objectives highlighted were largely moral, while her approach was primarily historical. Stephanie indicated on her questionnaire that her key objectives when teaching the Holocaust were: to give students the skills to detect discrimination, prejudice and racism; so that students are aware of this key event in twentieth century history; to teach students about humanity and the capacity for evil within all human beings; so that students can recognise and respond appropriately to similar events; to prompt students to consider and protect the democracies they live in. Given that all but the second of these objectives is moral and social, I asked this teacher how she would respond to Kinloch's view that history teachers should, when teaching the Holocaust, "start and end with what happened and why" (1998):

I would largely agree with that view. I think it can be very dangerous for individuals, or individual teachers, to try and impose their own moral views on pupils. I would try to encourage expression of their views. When we teach the Holocaust in Year 11 we teach it in great historical detail at a mature level. We look at the historiography. We look at the historiographical debate surrounding the 'why'. Why could it happen? Could it happen again? Why did it happen in Germany and not in England? Could it ever have happened in England? Issues like that arise. I was very pleased when we went with Year 11 to the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum last year; I remember distinctly they were themselves raising questions such as 'would I participate in this?' 'Would I be able to be a critic of the regime?' So I didn't even need to ask them this, but of course if it didn't come from them I would foster discussion without necessarily giving my opinion and trying to be careful not to impose my own view. As a result of that they quite often ask me my particular view as a German. I always make it very clear it is my own subjective viewpoint and I'm giving anecdotal evidence at that point. I talk about my family's experience, well my parents were babies at the time, but I talk about my grandparents' views. But I make it very clear that this is anecdotal because I think it's very hard actually to generalise people's experiences and therefore the sort of moral lessons which can be drawn from it.

(Stephanie)

It is interesting that having indicated the objectives she did on her questionnaire that this teacher takes such a view. It would appear from her questionnaire return and interview that she believes there are social and moral lessons to be learned from the Holocaust, but that these should be implicit and come from explicit historical inquiry. Her description of work completed with Year 9 students is evidence of this:

In Year 9 the way we teach it is that we look at the experiences of the Second World War under the heading 'Human Suffering'. Because we know that in Year 9 in RE they will have already done a whole term on it basically, we don't feel we need to teach them in any great detail about the key events. And it would never be more than the key events because it is part of so many other things that happened. But basically what we do with them; the children are in groups and each group looks separately at an issue of human suffering. So maybe this would be things like the dropping of the Atomic Bomb, the fire bombing in Dresden, Prisoner of War experiences, and the Holocaust. And what they do is they make notes, they research it from lots of different books and the internet. They each produce a piece of work on the topic they are studying. They've got a series of guideline questions to draw out the key points. They then make a presentation to the class about what they have found. But I feel because they have already learned about the

Holocaust I try to focus them in on the historical aspects, whatever group does it. I always try to give that particular topic to a higher ability group. Because I am extending them further I am quite sure I show them materials that I show to Year 11. I can't assume that they will take GCSE history; I even sometimes show them materials I would usually use with the sixth form. So they see lots of very shocking images. And I always try to pick out some mature girls to deal with that. But equally I try to steer them towards the 'why' and build them up to it. But each of the groups will have a moral dimension to their work and will in some way have to reflect on what that tells them about human nature. The treatment of Prisoners of War is obviously a very topical issue.

(Stephanie)

While this teacher perhaps does not articulate her philosophy clearly, her practice reflects Meagher's (1999) view that through the historical, students clamber into the moral. The question of whether Year 9 students are intellectually mature enough to do this is raised here. Stephanie appears to link intellectual maturity with an historical study of the Holocaust. She comments in the above quotations, "when we teach the Holocaust in Year 11 we teach it in great historical detail at a mature level" and "I always try to give that particular topic [the Holocaust] to a higher ability group [in Year 9]". Stephanie also makes reference to the fact that not all of her students will be studying history beyond Year 9.

Barbara was the third teacher to identify more than one objective on her questionnaire return. She stated that her objectives were: to give students the skills to detect discrimination, prejudice and racism and to teach students about humanity and the capacity for evil within all human beings. This social and moral approach to teaching the Holocaust fitted with her opinion regarding the purpose of school history:

Because obviously the students that we work with are classed as sink students, so we try and make history something they can be quite enthusiastic about. We focus a lot on the social side of history rather than the factual – dates and things like that – because they can relate more to the social side.

(Barbara)

While there are those, like Kinloch, who would question such an approach (this is discussed in greater detail below) Barbara has a clear rationale and she and her Department were clear about their motivations and objectives. Similarly, the rest of the teachers in the sample were clear about what they were doing and why. As can be seen from the discussion below their objectives were largely moral and social, though interestingly two teachers in particular had a different view and taught the Holocaust for historical purposes in the first instance.

## **HOW DIVERSE IS CURRENT PRACTICE?**

There is evidence of diversity within current practice. I was able to interview only two history teachers from the same Department in two schools, though I had hoped more teachers from the same schools would participate. Barbara and Walter taught in the same school, as did Marie and Mike. Barbara and Walter worked closely together and taught to their scheme of work. However, there was evidence of some lack of consensus regarding approaches to and the purpose of teaching the Holocaust among history teachers within the same Department. While Marie's approach was emotional for example, Mike believed that:

What's important about the Holocaust is the banality of it. The thought that it could, in a lot of circumstances, happen almost anywhere and still does at times. And that it's not the Germans themselves but the set of circumstances perhaps that led to what happened. But also an empathy with the victims is obviously important and, if you like, a wider view of our responsibilities today to avoid discrimination is important.

(Mike)

Mike's objectives are moral, but are rooted in history. Although Anne recently became Head of her Department, she alluded to stark differences between her own approach to this topic and the approach of her former Head of Department:

I did a degree and my specialist subject was the Nazi Third Reich and I know there are a lot of people who take a very, very sort of, 'this is the Holocaust, this is how we must teach it'. My previous Head of History was very much like that. I always wanted to kick back a little bit and say, 'well I'd rather not teach it that way', and I kind of didn't teach it that way. I think that you have to be careful who you speak to and how you say it. I thought this project would be very interesting.

*So how did your former Head of Department suggest you approached this subject?*

It was much more emotive, a much more emotive approach. She used *Schindler's List* in chunks and looked at the emotive stuff, and I wanted to do it as a more source based issue.

(Anne)

The question of whether the Holocaust should be taught from an historical, moral or social perspective is discussed in depth below. Before moving on to discuss this issue I want to highlight the issue of the amount of curriculum time spent teaching the Holocaust. Here too there was significant diversity. Brown and Davies (1998) identify the issue of too little time being devoted to the Holocaust. Salmons (2001) has also argued for a greater amount of curriculum time to be devoted to teaching the Holocaust. However, Tom had reservations about devoting more time to teaching the Holocaust:

*How many lessons do you have to teach the Holocaust in Year 9?*

I've got it down for four lessons. But I don't think I've ever done it in less than six. Lessons are 50 minutes long. I have – especially if I have shown *Schindler's List* or another film – run into eight lessons and we've done it in quite great depth.

*So, within the six lessons you have in Year 9 do you look at Hitler's rise to power?*

We do in the briefest of terms. We actually look at the rise of dictators. We look at Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and sometimes Franco as well. So we look at the rise of dictators in general. Most of that does tend to concentrate on Hitler. But I am very well aware that we do tend to over-emphasise Germany and Hitler, and although it's a six year period of history, in the scheme of things that's very small and we spend an inordinate amount of time doing World War One and World War Two, when there are, maybe, events which have touched people just as much. For instance, we don't do the Space Race, the Cuban Missile Crisis. We hardly touch the Cold War. We don't really do the Russian Revolution either, and of course that had an incredible effect on the First World War. It could be argued the First World War was two years longer because the Russians pulled out. I just think we kind of over-emphasise this bit, and again it goes back to my point of not wanting pupils to be anti-German, because we have enough of that on the football fields. There is enough of this 'well it's the old enemy, we've always got to beat Germany'. Why [have we got to beat them]?

It could be argued that in order to understand the Holocaust it is vital that students understand something about Hitler's rise to power and the history of anti-Semitism.

Anne explained that:

Although the Holocaust has to be taught in the unit at some point, I try and break it down. So when we talk about the invasion of Poland we do certain elements of genocide, so the idea is broached. And we also look at Stalin's genocide of the Poles for example, so that they've got some idea of context and some idea of development and how this is not just one man waking up one day and saying, 'right, lets kill all the Jews on planet earth'.

(Anne)

Anti-Semitism was a pan European issue connected with the Eugenics Movement whose ideas were popular in the United States of America and Britain at this time (Griffiths, 1983; King, 1999). Anne warns that if students do not have an opportunity to learn the political and social context in which the Holocaust is situated they could very well be left with the impression that Hitler was alone in his anti-Semitic philosophy and that this was a solely German issue. For Tom, oversimplification and a limited understanding of the wider picture are of concern. Barbara also identified the issue of students' negative attitudes towards refugees but – like Short (see below) – she sees the Holocaust as helpful in countering this

prejudice, while Tom was of the view that if mishandled, this topic could in fact contribute to students' prejudice:

In view of resources it is also difficult...it's very difficult finding the balance between how much we give the students so that they understand how terrible this was, and giving them too much so they are absolutely shocked and horrified and really quite traumatised by the whole thing. I would like to try and strike a balance somewhere between the two, so that they don't get blasé about the whole thing, yet they are not totally traumatised by it and we develop anti-German feeling.

(Tom)

Barbara and her department for example spent 16 hours teaching about the Holocaust, having *already* taught the rise of Hitler and looked at his policies. For Walter, a Newly Qualified Teacher, this did not appear to rest easily. He commented, part way through the scheme of work on Nazi Germany and a fortnight before Holocaust Memorial Day, "I've done Hitler to death with my lot". He went on to say that:

It really, really surprises me that no-one spends any time on Stalin... the Holocaust is a lot more publicised than what happened in Stalin's Russia. But the Holocaust isn't the only genocide that happened. No-one covers the British activities in Africa either. I actually skipped teaching the Russian Revolution altogether with Year 9 because I had three weeks to do it, but most of my degree was on Russia, I'm not going to get through it in two or three weeks.

(Walter)

Walter felt strongly that there was an over concentration on the Holocaust to the near exclusion of topics such as the Russian Revolution. Anne devoted between ten and 12 50 minute lessons to the Holocaust having already completed work on the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany. This level of concentration on Hitler, the Nazis and the Holocaust would, at first glance, seem to question the findings of those such as Supple (1992), Short (1995) and Brown and Davies (1998) who have highlighted the issue that, with some exceptions, there was too little time being devoted to the study of the Holocaust. Within the media the impression is similarly one of an over

concentration on Nazi Germany. In an article for the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES) Ian Kershaw is quoted on the response of Cambridge undergraduates to the dominance of Nazism on the school curriculum, “they’ve had enough of it by the time they get here.” He goes on, “you have good students who have a detailed knowledge of Nazism but are worryingly uninformed about their own country’s history or the aspects of German and European history that would put that knowledge of the period between 1933 and 1945 into context” (Richards, 23 January 2003). Modern World or twentieth century history is the most popular choice of syllabus at GCSE, but in Year 9 – the last opportunity for all students to learn something about the Nazi period - the approach taken in the two schools discussed above, where a good deal of time is devoted to the study of the Holocaust, is not universal. Like Supple (1992), Short (1995) and Brown and Davies (1998) my study has indicated that while some schools spent a good deal of time teaching the Holocaust, in others the time devoted to teaching this topic was not as great. Stephanie, as we have seen, teaches the Holocaust under the umbrella of ‘human suffering’ (an approach reminiscent of Roger Hennessey’s suggestion, see Chapter Four, page 166) with students writing presentations on topics including the Holocaust. Hank has three or four double lessons (one hour and ten minutes) in which to teach the Holocaust; Mike and Marie have “two or three hours maximum really. The Holocaust itself, and looking at the Jews, in total four or five hours maximum” (Mike); and Leonard does not always teach the Holocaust at all, “the important point to bear in mind is that if I haven’t got enough time to deal with it adequately, then I don’t”. The Holocaust is not an easy subject to teach and Short has noted, “it is debatable whether covering the Holocaust superficially is preferable



to not covering it at all” (Short, 1995, p. 187). This is very much Leonard’s reasoning:

I tend to introduce the notion of the Holocaust actually from past historical experiences that the kids have come into touch with. For example, outbreaks in the Middle ages during the time of the Black Death, Early Medieval persecution, the exclusion of Jews from the guilds, this sort of thing as background. It provides students with depth, in other words it gives them the idea that racism is historically inherent in European society. Also we introduce elements of our own past records of racism, slavery for example, and present day examples from popular press, popular issues that are arising. That’s the angle I would tend to go in from because to introduce the Holocaust as part of German history, or if you like European history, having created the strand I think you have to put it into the historical context in which it exists. That is as a phenomena, an acute phenomena or extreme example of racism, but rationalised for the first time by a state, it’s not ad hoc – spasmodic - like the persecution of the Jews in Russia or Poland for example. It’s inherently a theology with its own logic. And that makes it extremely difficult because if you put it in the context of the War as well I think it’s confusing, it’s too much for the students – especially Year 9. I tend to teach it as a separate study but cement it into the Second World War and also the rise of a particular German ideology which grew out of an existing racism in Austria and Germany and Poland, it was inherent in Middle Europe anyway. The real problem with it is it’s so horrific and it’s so massive and it’s so huge is actually trying to make it appear not like a horror story, *Alien* or something like this, this is the problem. So if I haven’t got time to deal with the background, because it is shocking and it is frightening, then I won’t deal with it. I will just perhaps mention it en pass , it will be part of perhaps a series, a couple of lessons within the main history of the Second World War. A sort of awful but inevitable by-product of Nazism. But I won’t deal with racism, the eugenic theories, persecution of groups, nor the way I suppose it stirred up racism in other European countries as well. That’s what’s distressing I suppose to me or to the students, the fact that ordinary people – if you look at the European dimension to it – so many people seem to have cooperated and collaborated passively or actively with the Final Solution as it evolved. The impact of that could be so frightening and terrifying to some children that I wouldn’t deal with it unless I had a lot of time to deal with it sympathetically and to steer away with it or close it down if I found they found it too distressing. So in other words you have to edit it, you have to be very careful. This is one area of history you really have to edit, I mean you can deal with sex and violence and murder and rape and all the rest of it because that’s almost daily news. But the Holocaust isn’t.

(Leonard)

Leonard highlights two key issues here; the complexity of the topic and the fact that history teachers have to teach this to Year 9 – 13 and 14 year old students – who do not necessarily possess the emotional or historical maturity to cope with such a study. Unlike teachers like Marie, Leonard teaches the Holocaust from an historical perspective - not an emotional one - and he is concerned when teaching the Holocaust to be aware of the reactions of his students to the topic:

If you want to get an emotional response all you would need to do is select a few items of evidence, a few stills from Belsen, a few war diary reports from soldiers who were there and just let the evidence speak for itself. And then you could take a rhetorical emotional line. Emotion is always involved in history I think because if you don't have some value for it then your own emotion is involved. I would never teach just to shock and get them [the students] to cry. But if the emotion gave me a reaction which helped me to cement other ideas about causation or consequences for modern events then I would use it. But I would never teach specifically to shock, it would not be an integral part. But anyway you can't avoid it in dealing with matters of conflict. It arises in every aspect of history that we teach. You could deal with the treatment of children in the factories and there is emotion there, there is an emotional dimension there because if it wasn't for emotion then there would be no Factory Acts. So I wouldn't say so much *emotion* but *value*. Fellow feeling – empathy is the awful word to avoid because twenty first century children can't empathise with 1940s ghetto children from Poland, but they can at least see that they're fellow humans – they wouldn't be able to understand the point of view or perspective but they could certainly understand it as children what it would have been like I suppose. But I think if you were to teach just for shock and horror you would have parents start complaining, you'd have nightmares. For example, I had a phone call from my own daughter, my granddaughter had come home from school crying her eyes out on Remembrance Day because she thought there was going to be another war, they had overdone Remembrance in her primary school. And being quite an imaginative little girl she actually thought her daddy was going to be sent off to fight. Somebody somewhere made a mistake and I think that's the sort of thing you have to be aware of very much. I can remember German aircraft flying over although I was very small. Our folk history is different from the folk history of your generation. I think the subject is emotional and it's going to come out anyway, but if you deliberately go for the emotion then I don't think you are teaching history because history is making sense of the past.

(Leonard)

What is interesting about Leonard is that he remembers the Second World War as a small boy. One might expect, because of his age and his memories that he would be among the most committed to finding time to teach a detailed scheme of work on the Wars and the Holocaust. But like Hobhouse – the only member of the HWG to have served in the Second World War and one of the most influential in arguing that the Second World War and the Holocaust did not need to be included as mandatory PoS in the Interim Report – Leonard understands the complexity of this history and does not want to teach about it unless he has the time to do justice to it, and is convinced that his students have the emotional and historical maturity to cope with such a study.

Although Leonard was the only teacher to voice the fact that he did not always teach the Holocaust it would seem from research conducted by Short (1995) that Leonard is not alone in this attitude. Short has written:

Fear that students could not cope intellectually or emotionally was responsible for one teacher approaching the subject superficially, another not mentioning Holocaust denial, a couple refusing to show *Schindler's List* and a fourth failing to draw parallels with contemporary racism if he taught in an 'all-white' part of the country"

(Short, 1995, p. 186)

Two other teachers interviewed also said they knew of colleagues who did not teach the Holocaust:

I know other schools where the Holocaust is hardly touched on. Although I think it is my duty to teach the Holocaust, I think it should be compulsory in PSHE or somewhere like that; although not all form tutors are historians or RS<sup>72</sup> teachers. But I think it should be compulsory<sup>73</sup>. I think it would be good to teach about Rwanda so pupils realise it's not just about the Jews. It's happened in other places at other times.

(Hank)

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<sup>72</sup> Religious Studies.

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that Hank's comments are possibly evidence of a lack of familiarity with the National Curriculum since the Holocaust is a compulsory part of the History Curriculum.

*You just said you weren't sure how much time other schools spent on the Holocaust, so were you aware that the schools you completed your teaching practice on were spending less time on the Holocaust?*

The schools that I can think of did World War Two and the Nazis. I think it was very quick, 'did this, did that, killed the Jews', then they moved on. They probably covered the Holocaust in one lesson. One was a Catholic School, and one was a school like this and I think they were nervous about pupil's reactions.

(Walter)

There are possibly a number of teachers who do not teach about the Holocaust in Year 9 who would not be represented in my sample. I wrote to teachers asking them their views about teaching the Holocaust – a mandatory topic – in history. It is unlikely that those who do not teach about the Holocaust would therefore contact me to take part in the research.

There is a further issue concerned with time: the time available for history teachers to reflect on the teaching and learning of the Holocaust. Hank admitted that while he subscribed to *Teaching History* and "looked at" the Holocaust special edition, "I've got into a habit with Year 9 because I've got material I know works I haven't really updated it. Its time really, and the priority is exam groups". *Teaching History* is an arena for history teachers to discuss and theorise their practice and keep abreast of debates and developments in school history. Below are some of the responses of teachers interviewed from the state sector to the question, do you read *Teaching History*? Do you find it useful?:

I read for historical pleasure. In other words I don't turn the history I read for pleasure into classroom use. Most of the time it's not on the curriculum anyway but obviously there are times when you can draw on your past knowledge and your unconscious of it, it creeps into your lessons sometimes. I do read historical journals, I watch historical films, I do read the magazines but I would tend to say I read more books than anything else.

(Leonard)

I wouldn't say I read every article in it every month or every time it comes out. Yes, we always draw on it; sometimes we even use it with the students. We subscribe to it in the department.

(Stephanie)

I have them. They are in the cupboard, but I haven't read them.

(Anne)

I remember using it to complete assignments during my PGCE.

(Marie)

I probably haven't looked at it for years. What I have had is the *Modern History Review* and that's quite good. But we've not subscribed, so I don't read.

(Mike)

Every now and then I flick through it and try to get some new ideas. But I don't have as much time as I'd like to read it. In schools you don't have time. You're bogged down with paperwork aren't you?

(Barbara)

Only for essays [at college last year]. But the tutors did sometimes photocopy things for us to read and put them in front of us, then I'd read it. Some of it was quite good.

(Walter)

I found it [the Holocaust special edition] very interesting. It's one of those things that I have on my list of 'I must try to include this' (laughing).

(Tom)

Barbara, Marie and Tom all lamented the fact that a lack of time meant they could not read as much or as widely as they would have liked, and Walter commented that "I don't really get that much time to read". Marie said, "I don't keep up on it [developments in history education] at all. [I read] a quality newspaper maybe once a week".

## **IS THE HOLOCAUST TAUGHT IN HISTORY LESSONS FOR PRIMARILY HISTORICAL OR SOCIAL AND MORAL OBJECTIVES?**

Kinloch (1998) notes that the Holocaust is an increasingly specialised area of historical research. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Two, Evans has pointed out that according to the latest edition of the standard bibliography on Nazism the number of works on the Nazi period stood at more than 37,000 in the year 2000 (Evans, 2003, p. xvi). But the views of the majority of teachers in my sample reflected those of the teachers Kinloch had spoken to (1998). Six out of the ten history teachers I interviewed talked about the moral lessons of the Holocaust being of *primary* importance. This disparity between what is going on in academic history and what is going on in school history calls to mind a point made by Fernandez-Armesto:

We have forgotten how to defend successfully history's privileged place in the school curriculum. We have forgotten how to keep fully in touch with history teachers in pre-university education and how to feed their work with awareness of the refreshing and enlivening effects of new research.

(Fernandez-Armesto, 2002, p.150)

While academic inquiry in this area becomes ever more specialised and detailed, my research indicates that Kinloch's description of history teachers' approach to teaching the Holocaust is accurate in the majority of cases. He writes:

History teachers don't in my experience, approach the Shoah as a historical question. They deal with it...as a moral, social or spiritual one. Implicit in much teaching of this topic is a metahistorical approach: an acceptance of the Santayana cliché about those who fail to understand the past being condemned to repeat it. This is the Shoah as a paradigm or analogy, and history in schools as a crude piece of social engineering. Sympathise with, empathise with the victims, says this approach; and students will find it impossible to become Nazis themselves.

(Kinloch, 1998, p. 45)

This “metahistorical” approach to the Holocaust was reflected in the comments of 60 percent of the sample. Marie’s view was made clear above, “I want to teach the Holocaust from a moral point of view, not a historical point of view”. As the following extracts demonstrate, she was far from alone in this point of view: Hank said “as the quote from Edmund Burke behind my desk reads, ‘The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.’ I do make the Holocaust graphic.” He went on to say that, “although it’s [the Holocaust] history, it’s also moral... I would challenge Kinloch. It’s a moral thing. I probably spend three or four lessons on the Holocaust. The first gives some background and is historical but the others are from a moral point of view”. Hank went on:

Every year I get a couple of girls who cry, and it’s not just for effect. They might be Jewish or they are affected by what we’ve looked at. I do make a big thing of these lessons. I set the scene and I’m very graphic.

(Hank)

For Hank, teaching the Holocaust is moral and emotional. During our interview he reflected on his early experience of teaching this subject:

I managed to get hold of some pictures of when Belsen was first liberated and in my first job, which was at a comprehensive, I had a bottom set and I passed the pictures around and some of the lads were laughing and I lost my rag with them. Looking back, perhaps I shouldn’t have done. I was 22, the lads were young, they were embarrassed. I show the pictures here, but in my last school I would then only show them to top sets. But I feel that I have a duty to show pupils what went on.

According to Tom, who in his answer to my first question – what, in your opinion, is the purpose of school history? – quoted Santayana:

I think if you can get that moral perspective across that may well prevent any future atrocities. And if we can get pupils to look at things from a moralistic viewpoint, that hopefully will teach them to be more holistic and more inclusive of all types of people of all faith, colour and creed.

(Tom)

Mike's argument in response to Kinloch echoes the view of Haydn (see below):

You can say that history is completely amoral if you want to, if you get up on to a higher intellectual plane. But I think one of the things we are trying to do when we are educating children is create viable, well balanced human beings and I think every subject should be trying to do that. Not just in Citizenship or English or in RPE<sup>74</sup> but everyone should be trying to place moral dilemmas in front of children, to make children think of the consequences of what happens and to try and create children that will make the world a better place.

(Mike)

According to Barbara:

I don't think you can look at what happened and why without looking at it from a moral perspective. I don't think you can address the issues of mass genocide and what happens in the world today without looking at whether it should have happened or not. I don't see how you can teach the facts without looking at the moral issues. Especially with the Government's stress on citizenship, because it is an ideal cross-over subject.

(Barbara)

And finally, Walter:

I've never taught the Holocaust before but teaching it, for me, is really going to be a kind of empathy area. So the pupils understand what it was like so that they don't go and do anything similar, or they don't go and join up with some stupid party; which a lot of people will do if they are ignorant – the promise of everything being alright if we just get rid of these people. I don't want them to go through that. So it's really just so it doesn't happen again, so they understand. It's like when they make black jokes, I want them to understand what it means. And then they can decide if they want to use those jokes knowing the background to them. I'm not going to force my ideas on them, but they have got to understand what they are saying, the background behind these things.

(Walter)

The views of the teachers quoted above are represented among educationalists and academics. In Haydn's view the Holocaust is about moral and ethical education – the sociology and psychology of history. He suggests that if the Holocaust is taught from a purely historical point of view then students could miss some of the different

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<sup>74</sup> Religious and Personal Education.



dimensions to the Holocaust. However, in a sense Haydn's position is not so far removed from that of Kinloch's since Haydn argues for the Holocaust to be taught using "the same questions which we would ask of other historical events" (Haydn, 2000, p. 137). Haydn does not hold with Marie's approach:

Instead of 'this is what happened; wasn't it terrible?' we need to ask the usual general range of questions which the discipline of history requires, while remembering that there are differences between the purposes of academic history, and the purposes of teaching history to young people. We need to get beyond approach A ['This is what happened; wasn't it terrible?'] and, and towards approach B [asking historical questions].

(Haydn, 2000, p. 137)

Haydn makes clear his view that the Holocaust is not a story about good versus evil, it is more complex. He writes that Karpf (*The Guardian*, 3 April 1999) suggests the Holocaust has been hijacked by those who want their Holocaust stories to be about the triumph of the human spirit over evil and adversity, claiming the most cited entry from Anne Frank's diary is "in spite of everything, I still believe that people are good at heart". Haydn argues that students should not be presented with simple conclusions about the Holocaust that they do not have to think about, but rather study a range of individual experiences enabling history teachers to present students with important questions about the human spirit and human nature (Haydn, 2000, p.143). Leonard similarly has problems with an emotive approach to teaching the Holocaust: it is easy to get an emotional reaction from students, but how much understanding will they have? Salmons (2001) argues that teaching the Holocaust should not be about encouraging tears but rather an emotional link with the history. His position is in fact only subtly different from that of Kinloch's: the history and historical context of the Holocaust should be emphasised, but Salmons would add that as students learn about this history there will be an emotional response. This is reminiscent of

Counsell's approach to history which she argues should be emotionally engaged but intellectually sustained (see Chapter Three, page 101).

There are others who take issue with Kinloch more fundamentally. In a journal article which appeared in *Educational Review* in November 2003 Short presented his case against the views of Kochan, Novick<sup>75</sup> and Kinloch who have questioned the social and moral 'lessons' of the Holocaust (Short, 2003b). Short emphasises the importance of commemoration and explaining what happened under the Third Reich to future generations (Short, 2003b, p.280), as well as social and moral lessons including improving understanding between Muslims and Jews<sup>76</sup>; combating Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism and racism; demonstrating that individuals can make a difference and do not have to be bystanders; prompting students to consider and protect the democracies that they live in; and considering whether war criminals should be prosecuted despite the passage of time making convictions less likely (Short, 1998, pp.12-15). Short quotes from the final report of the Advisory Group for Citizenship in his 2003 paper; indeed he stresses the role of the Holocaust in education for citizenship:

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Novick is an historian and has written *The Holocaust in American Life* in which he says he finds the idea of students learning social and moral lessons from the Holocaust "dubious" (Novick, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> Short writes that Jews and Muslims, "are equally vulnerable to the threat posed by indigenous neo-Nazi movements. The nature of that threat, as far as Muslims are concerned, can be appreciated by studying Hitler's rise to power, as it is clear that the Nazis were ideologically (though not politically) dismissive of the Arabs. Alfred Rosenberg for example, the Nazis' key racial theorist, warned the white peoples of Europe to be on their guard 'against the united hatreds of coloured races and mongrels, led in the fanatical spirit of Mohammed'" (Short, 1998, p.12). Short goes on to suggest that teaching the Holocaust "might help Jews and other ethnic minorities to make common cause in the wider struggle against racism" (Short, 1998, p.13). It would be interesting to research whether and how widely the Holocaust is discussed in schools with Jewish and Muslim students from this perspective.

If students are familiarised with the horrors of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the death camps and are helped to see these horrors as the ultimate expression of racist ideology, some of them – those open to rational persuasion – may become sensitive to, and concerned about, levels of racism they would otherwise have overlooked as trivial. The lesson they learn, in other words, is to treat any manifestation of racism with concern...Students familiar with the Holocaust can hardly fail to realise the perils of turning a blind eye to evil. Conversely, when they learn about the exploits of rescuers, they will find it hard not to appreciate the value of assisting those in need.

(Short, 2003, p. 285)

Short's position is in direct contrast to that of Kinloch. In his report on Holocaust education for the Council of Europe Short includes the Santayana "cliché" Kinloch makes reference to above and states clearly what he believes the aim of Holocaust education to be:

If handled intelligently and with sensitivity, it [the Holocaust] may help *some* students to understand and abhor racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular, but it is unlikely to have this effect on all students...The aim of Holocaust education, then, is not to eradicate anti-Semitism and every other manifestation of racism...The function of Holocaust education is rather to inoculate the mass of the people against racist and anti-Semitic propaganda and thereby restrict its appeal to the lunatic fringe. Hitler may never have come to power, and the Holocaust never have happened, had the majority of German people had any real understanding of the racist core of Nazi ideology and where it was likely to lead.

(Short, 1998, pp. 15-16. Emphasis in the original.)

Kinloch questions whether it is the role of teachers to produce 'good' citizens and doubts that Holocaust education can achieve genocide prevention (2001):

Many teachers are clear that there are good reasons to teach young people about the Shoah. In this they are supported by the British Government, which has been resolute in including its study in successive versions of England's National Curriculum for History. Indeed, initial versions of the revised Orders for History for September 2000 included the Shoah as virtually the only prescribed content. The topic also featured extensively in initial proposals for the introduction of Citizenship in secondary schools...however, not everyone is agreed that it is the business of schools to turn out 'good citizens' whatever that may be supposed to mean. Nor is there a consensus that the study of the Shoah is necessarily beneficial.

Kinloch goes on:

It is claimed that the study of the Shoah will itself help to make any repetition of the Nazi genocide less likely...What reason, if any, is there to believe this to be true? The authors [of one text book which makes this claim] themselves cite the examples of 1970s Cambodia (Kampuchea), and Rwanda in 1994, as examples of post-Shoah genocides. That these took place at all suggests that the study of one example of mass-murder does not itself prevent another.

(Kinloch, 2001, p. 9)

Kochan takes a similar viewpoint:

If the Holocaust does have a lesson it is this: not that the knowledge of its horrors will deter any future perpetrator, but that any such perpetrator will learn a precedent has been set; that a threshold has been crossed which will serve as a source of encouragement.

(Kochan, 1989, p. 25)

Short takes issue with this view; he is firm in his opinion that teaching and learning about genocide prevents future genocides from occurring:

What also has to be borne in mind is that mandatory Holocaust education is a comparatively recent phenomenon and one restricted to a handful of countries. It can thus be argued, quite plausibly and contrary to the critics, that the genocides which have occurred over the past 50 years are the result of there having been too little teaching of the Holocaust.

(Short, 2003, p. 280)

The debate concerning whether the Holocaust should be taught from an historical or moral perspective is echoed in the classroom. While a moral and social approach was popular among the history teachers interviewed, with a majority being of a similar opinion to Short, this was not universally agreed. Two teachers in particular were vehement in their opposition to this approach. Both of these teachers were prompted to take part in the research because of their concern that otherwise my experience would reflect that of Kinloch's (1998), and present a picture of school history where lessons on the Holocaust were informed by the "metahistorical"

approach Kinloch alludes to. When asked during his interview why he had chosen to take part in this research, Harold responded that he “felt it was quite important that I did say it should be taught in the context of history and history teaching, and in the context of Nazi Germany. And it shouldn’t be taught in some sort of way where it’s put on a pedestal for almost propagandist purposes”. He had written at the end of his questionnaire:

I feel strongly that History should be taught as an academic enquiry and not in the first instance as a tool in pursuit of other goals. However, it must remain that its teaching is about ‘collective memory’ and many of the skills learned are transferable into other walks of life. To teach history for political reasons will surely lead to horrors just like the Holocaust, even if those purposes at first sight might seem benign.

(Harold)

Both Harold and Anne felt strongly that the Holocaust should be taught from an historical point of view allowing students to draw moral and social lessons for themselves. Indeed, in the preface to *The Coming of the Third Reich* Evans appears to advocate this approach to history. He writes:

The story of how Germany, a stable and modern country, in less than a single lifetime led Europe into moral, physical and cultural ruin and despair is a story that has sobering lessons for us all; lessons again, which it is for the reader to take from this book, not for the writer to give.

(Evans, 2003, p. xxi)

Harold argues, “I would start from the purist point of view – that history is an intellectual academic inquiry – but say that some practical consequences flowed from it”. The debate surrounding whether it is the role of the history teacher to address these practical consequences and highlight contemporary developments was discussed in Chapter Three. Anne is very much of the same opinion as Harold on this issue – the history should come first. In answer to the question - Nicolas Kinloch has stated that “when teaching the Holocaust in history we should start and

end with what happened and why”. How do you respond to this view? – Anne stated:

Absolutely. Spot on. If you try to remove the morality issue then you are going to get a proper study of history. The morality can come in later when you have all the information in front of you and you’ve discussed the sources and you have a personal opinion. But to *cloud* the judgement of students, who should be fairly open to that, is very dangerous. We don’t teach history in that way for any other topic. And we shouldn’t be teaching it that way for the topic of the Holocaust.

(Anne)

Anne was the *only* teacher to discuss the work of an academic in relation to her classroom practice<sup>77</sup>:

I keep in contact with Dr Fox...He taught me when I was at University, so I keep my finger on his articles and things because he did broaden my mind. So whenever his stuff comes out I try and get hold of that from the periodicals. His approach made me think because he asked us ‘how was the Holocaust equally difficult or demanding on a ‘normal’ German citizen as it was on a Jew?’ A lot of the things he taught me I have carried into the classroom.

(Anne)

Indeed, Fox’s reservations regarding the term ‘Holocaust’ (see Chapter Three, page 104) are reflected in Anne’s comments:

I don’t like the word ‘Holocaust’. I haven’t liked the word ever since I studied it at university. It is a study of genocide. And the Holocaust is part of that genocide...And I much prefer to talk about genocide. I do make a point, when we first start studying the topic, of explaining to kids why I will be saying genocide, and using ‘Holocaust’ as a term in certain cases as opposed to all the time.

*So how would you define the term Holocaust?*

I would take that as meaning the execution of the Jews.

*And then genocide?*

As a broader issue encompassing all groups. And I would always try to make it clear to the students that the Jewish issue is genocide as well. And I always try to link it to, for example, Somalia and more recent conflicts and try and show them how ethnic cleansing is not just about picking one group of people throughout the whole of history, but about the development of conflict with different groups of people. When

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<sup>77</sup> Some teachers mentioned the work of historians in response to question 9c which asked teachers about what they read.

teaching Nazi Germany I always try and get the issue of Aryan Race through. I try and feed the two lines together. It's not about what's not acceptable, it's more about what is perfect or should be protected. What I refuse to do is spoon feed them what is traditionally a party line to some degree. I'd much rather pupils saw it for themselves and drew their own conclusions. And most of them are more than capable of that if you give them the raw sources. And they'll pull it to pieces because they are not under pressure to be politically correct in that classroom.

(Anne)

Again, Anne was the only teacher who raised the issue of terminology and stressed the importance of this. Anne is clear and confident in her approach. What we see in her comments is an out and out rejection of an explicitly emotional presentation of the Holocaust in school history. Anne's confidence appears to come from the fact that she has studied Nazi Germany at degree level. Her confidence contrasts Barbara's experience:

*You mentioned feeling uptight about teaching the Holocaust initially; I remember feeling more aware about teaching the Holocaust than other topics. Why do you think that is?*

I think perhaps it's because of the enormity of it. When we teach about other topics they don't seem so huge. It is also because the Holocaust still affects people's lives today. We are trying to get a Holocaust survivor from the Holocaust Educational Trust down to do a talk. And I don't know the religion of all my students, but there is a chance there are Jewish students in the class who could have relatives who were affected. And I'm always very aware of that. And also in our school we have got refugee issues. And of course some of the experiences that we talk about could be similar to experiences they have had in their home countries.

(Barbara)

Barbara's comparative lack of confidence was also reflected in response to a later question:

*How did you find out about the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust?*

Through their newsletter at my last school. We receive their newsletters. We have asked for an outside educator and a survivor this year. They've been really helpful.

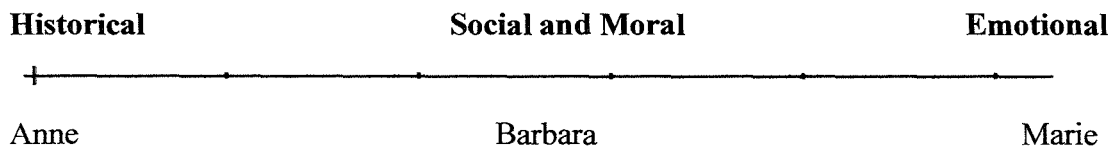
*Do you feel you need that support, or do you think there are enough resources?*

I think it's quite nice to have an expert to go to because sometimes the children do come up with questions, and its nice to think, 'I don't know, but I can find out for you'. When I did my first Holocaust Memorial Day I showed some images and one of the Heads of Year said, 'they'll all be having nightmares now'. And I thought 'have I done something wrong?', so it was nice to be told by the Holocaust Educational Trust, 'no. Students need to know this. Children need to know this'. So it's quite nice to have a bit of back up and someone to advise you.

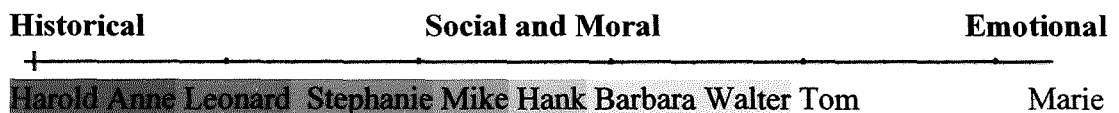
(Barbara)

What Marie, Anne and Barbara represent are three key points on the spectrum of approaches to teaching the Holocaust in history:

**Figure 6.1**



All of the teachers interviewed fit somewhere between these positions:



This illustration demonstrates visually the variety of practice among the teachers interviewed. Kinloch has written in an unpublished review of Glantz's *Holocaust Handbook for Teachers: Materials and Strategies for Grades 5-12* (2001) that in a section of Glantz's book entitled *Never forget why you are a teacher* the author puts forward his view that the Holocaust should be studied in order "to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable people". Indeed, it would appear that the majority of history teachers share this view. However, Kinloch suggests that teachers of history might want to teach their students to do more than care. They



might want their students to evaluate source material rigorously; to develop and demonstrate a clear understanding of concepts such as causation; to be able to detect bias and propaganda. Anne would appear to be in agreement with Kinloch's view. She rejects a social and moral approach to the Holocaust which takes the Jewish experience as the focus, "I try and get them [the students] to understand this concept that just as much as the Jews are being singled out, just as much as other minorities are being singled out, it is also the rights of the good German citizen that are being removed as well... I don't particularly wish to join a line and preach. That's not learning". Asked whether she felt more emotional when she taught the Holocaust than when she taught any other history, Anne replied, "no, but I do know a lot of teachers who are and I do know a lot of teachers who will put *Schindler's List* on and cry at the back of the room". In a quotation above Anne raised an important issue (which was highlighted in Chapter One) regarding whether history teachers who make explicit links between the Holocaust and issues such as prejudice, discrimination and racism, also make links to moral and social issues when teaching topics such as the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. As Anne has been quoted above, "we don't teach history in that way [from a moral point of view] for any other topic. And we shouldn't be teaching it that way for the topic of the Holocaust". Marie responded to the question, do you find that you tend to teach any other topics in history from a moral point of view?:

I don't actually, no. Whenever I do the wars I try and keep it down the middle. It's only the Holocaust that I find that with. Although last year there was also an emphasis on delivering citizenship in history and so I was thinking 'where can I get this in?' and that probably swayed my decision a little bit as well.

(Marie)

Like Marie, the views of Hank, Tom, Mike, Barbara and Walter similarly reflected a citizenship focus. This put me in mind of a comment made by Ann Low-Beer, who in response to a request for an interview noted that the Holocaust was an interesting but difficult issue because it “has become overlaid with non-historical issues. Or it can be seen in layers, the past entangled with the present” (Correspondence, 14 June 2002). Research conducted by Husbands et al between 1999 and 2001 indicated that topics such as the Holocaust and slavery were being singled out by history teachers as being important in terms of values education and, as such, taught from a moral perspective. During their research a lesson on the topic of the Holocaust was observed. The authors set their discussion of this lesson and a lesson on the Black peoples of the Americas apart from their main analysis and discussion of the history lessons they observed because, “in each case the teacher specifically identified the goal of the lesson as something other than historical understanding”. For the teacher teaching about the Holocaust, this lesson was, “more a citizenship lesson than a history lesson” designed to “get the pupils to understand what man can do to man and so what their role in the future is in terms of being vigilant”. This teacher wanted to encourage “a personal response which involved some thinking”. This is reminiscent of the approaches adopted by Hank, Walter and Tom in particular. Indeed, the Holocaust may make greater sense as part of Citizenship Education: David Lambert, Chief Executive of the Geography Association, has recently argued that subject boundaries need to be broken through if school students are not to be denied an understanding of what it is to be human. Lambert argues that citizenship should be at the centre of humanities teachers’ work (Lambert, 2004). He writes “the Holocaust, in particular, puts in front of social science’s constituent disciplines particularly difficult questions because of the enormity of the event”

(Lambert, 2004, p.42). While, “conventionally, the Holocaust is perceived as history’s property” (Lambert, 2004, p.43) Lambert uses the example of the Holocaust to argue that all subject specialists in the humanities and social sciences should “think flexibly and boldly about what their disciplines bring to serving students’ educational entitlement” rather than defending “‘subjects’ in a series of never-ending turf wars” (Lambert, 2004, p.48). Indeed, Maitles and Cowan have written a paper advocating teaching the Holocaust to pupils in Scotland aged between nine and 11 (Maitles & Cowan, 1999) citing one of their reasons for arguing this is that primary school teachers are more likely than secondary school teachers to adopt a cross-curricular, multi-disciplinary approach and thus are better able to respond to their pupils concerns immediately and with flexibility.

The overall picture reflects that which is presented at the start of this chapter by Moloney. There is a lack of clarity regarding the central aim of teaching the Holocaust in history. However, this is not experienced on an individual basis as was my own experience and expectation. Rather, there is a general lack of clarity among the profession where teachers hold differing views as regards the purposes of and their approach to teaching the Holocaust in history. It appears there is a tendency to teach the Holocaust from a social and moral perspective and not as history; the majority view is distinctly non-historical. However, this practice is not universal; there is no question that practice is widely varied.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Only by analysing the debates over the teaching of the subject in the past can we really understand what history teaching is, as well as understanding how the subject is taught most effectively.

(R. Phillips, 2002, p.15)

This thesis took as its starting point Kinloch's (1998) review of Burleigh's *Ethics and Extermination* in which Kinloch asserted that history teachers will not teach the Holocaust effectively until their objectives are clarified. In an attempt to explain how we got to where we are and clarify the objectives of teaching the Holocaust in school history, this thesis has traced the evolution of the topic of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum for History. This study has not resolved the issue of what history teachers' objectives should be; however, it has revealed a lack of clarity regarding the objectives of teaching the Holocaust in school history at both curriculum policy and classroom level and highlights the need for discussion (and some consensus) of the question; what is important about teaching the Holocaust in school history? In this concluding chapter the central themes of this thesis are reflected upon.

In examining the position of the Holocaust in the History Curriculum two key debates have been considered: the purpose of school history and the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Kinloch's view, encapsulated in his comment that when teaching the Holocaust in history teachers should, "start and end with what happened and why" (Kinloch, 1998, p.46) is that school history should be taught for intrinsic purposes. Haydn, on the other hand, contends that school history is subtly different from academic history and provides a basis from which wider social lessons can be taught,

“if we cannot do justice to a topic such as the Holocaust, what is the point of inflicting history on young people?” (Haydn, 2000, p.136). As set out in Chapter Three, the debate is about the historical versus moral purpose of school history; the ‘great tradition’ versus the ‘alternative’ tradition; the polemic argument between Carr and Elton. Rather than resolving this debate and providing a clear rationale for school history, the National Curriculum for History “was based around a policy of compromise which appeared to hold the two traditions in creative tension” (Husbands et al., 2003, p.13). As was noted in Chapter Three, subsequent reviews of the National Curriculum conducted in 1994 and 1999 have done little to clarify the situation. The 1995 Curriculum contained no rationale; the current Curriculum remains a compromise between the two traditions of history teaching, with a possible leaning towards the ‘alternative’ tradition prompted by the introduction of the Citizenship Curriculum in September 2002. This has further fuelled the debate over the purpose of school history: some history teachers view citizenship as damaging because it is about values education and overt positions on values can be used to distort rigorous objective history teaching. Others, such as Riley (2000; 2003), believe that objective historical rigour is not the final product but circuitously it takes teachers and students into values.

For history teachers teaching the topic of the Holocaust the lack of a clear rationale for school history is compounded by the lack of consensus regarding the basic assumptions which underpin the teaching of this topic; such as what the term ‘Holocaust’ encompasses. It has been established in Chapter Three that the related issues of terminology and uniqueness have been well debated in academia; though on the evidence of Chapter Six this is not necessarily the case for history teachers.

As also discussed in Chapter Three, the desire to attribute unique status to the Holocaust appears to be concerned with ensuring its memory and, to that end, ensuring the position of the Holocaust on the school curriculum. As my exploration of this debate showed, the view that if the Holocaust is perceived as unique its status in the National Curriculum for History is assured and unquestionable is itself questionable. As was shown, Brown and Davies believe that the Holocaust must be perceived as unique by teachers in order to ensure it is taught in schools. However, this position is problematic. In addition to highlighting Short's warning that "if teachers believe the subject to be devoid of useful lessons, they might, quite reasonably, demand that it be given a more restricted role in students' education" (Short, 2003b, p.277), Chapter Three reflected on the impossibility of teaching the unique and learning something from this, "the unique event is a freak and a frustration; if it is really unique – can never recur in meaning or implication – it lacks every measurable dimension and cannot be assessed" (Elton, 1967, p.11).

The issue of teaching the Holocaust in Year 9 and the possible over-concentration on the Nazi period in school history, issues raised in Chapter One, may have been averted had the National Curriculum as envisaged by Baker in 1988 not been abandoned. As was shown in Chapter Four, throughout the development, revision, and slimming down of the National Curriculum for History the Holocaust has gained prominence, ceasing to be an aspect of World War Two to be taught to Year 10 and 11 students (as it appeared in the Final Report of the HWG) and emerging as an area of study, for Year 9 students, in its own right. It is interesting that a topic currently of such prominence in the National Curriculum for History did not feature in the HWG's Interim Report. My interviews with members of the HWG revealed that

Roberts had argued that the Holocaust was important because it changed the demography of Eastern Europe and had a catalyst effect on the appearance of Israel; as such it was important in explaining the Middle East situation. In essence, Roberts believed that a History Curriculum for the twenty first century should take the long view and incorporate the events and areas of the world that were of such importance that students of secondary age needed an introduction to. The result was that the Two World Wars and the Holocaust were not suggested as compulsory topics for study in the HWG's Interim Report. This decision was reversed, however, Chapter Five has revealed that there was a lack of clarity regarding why the Holocaust was an important topic for study among those who shaped the National Curriculum for History. Roberts' rationale had been historical; however, it would appear that the Two World Wars and the Holocaust were included in the HWG's Final Report for social and moral reasoning and because these events were part of the public consciousness and the omission of these events as named topics of study would consequently be too difficult to explain. The debate regarding the Holocaust at the time the National Curriculum was being constructed was about whether or not the topic should be included in the History Curriculum rather than discussion of what was important about the Holocaust; what the term 'Holocaust' encompassed; and how it should be taught in school history. During the two subsequent reviews of the National Curriculum in 1994 and 1999 there was no opportunity to debate and discuss the topic of the Holocaust and how it should be taught in school history. One member of the 1999 HTG voiced their amazement at this:

No discussion of the Holocaust was had on that committee and we were informed by a civil servant that the Holocaust would be compulsory... I was shocked; this had nothing to do with education. It was not agreed. It was imposed without any guidelines or discussion... The merits of it were never discussed.

(Interview, 7 January 2003)

Insofar as teachers are concerned, the importance of theorising their own practice has not been emphasised: support from Government bodies such as the QCA has been practical rather than theoretical. Indeed, Ball has suggested that the 1988 ERA was the product of a “profound distrust of teachers” and that one of the aims of the National Curriculum was to reduce teachers to agents of policy which were designed elsewhere (Ball, 1990, p.171). The lack of a rationale for teaching the Holocaust in school history raised questions in my mind regarding the impact of this on classroom practice. The introduction of the National Curriculum meant that history teachers *had* to teach the Holocaust. The question of why history teachers *should* teach the Holocaust, a question which Clive Lawton had identified as being of primary importance in his 1985 lecture (ILEA, 1985), appears to have been sidelined. However, in Chapter Six it was highlighted that despite being a compulsory topic in the National Curriculum for History the Holocaust is not taught to all school students: teachers need to be convinced of the importance of teaching the Holocaust. The questions of what is important about the Holocaust and why it was included in the National Curriculum for History are of continued relevance and have implications for teaching and learning. We need to come to some understanding of what is important about the Holocaust and where on the school curriculum it belongs. The research presented in Chapter Six, albeit small scale, has established that a clear and coherent approach to teaching the Holocaust across the history teaching profession is lacking: history teachers’ motivations for teaching the Holocaust are varied as is the amount of time spent teaching the Holocaust. Debates about the purpose of school history and the uniqueness of the Holocaust are likely to continue; what is important is that ordinary history teachers have ownership of these debates and the opportunity to theorise their practise. It is difficult to establish a



direct link between a lack of clarity regarding the rationale behind the inclusion of the Holocaust among those who have shaped the National Curriculum for History, and the variety of motives that surround the teaching of the topic in the Key Stage 3 history classroom. Yet it is clear that the debate surrounding how the Holocaust should be understood and presented in history lessons is complex, and it seems the lack of a rationale contributes to the wide variety of ways in which the topic of the Holocaust is approached by history teachers.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

The following documents have been used in the Thesis:

1. Letter to Martin Paisner from Greville Janner, 12 May 1987
2. Letter to Elie Wiesel from Greville Janner, 9 November 1987
3. Letter to Elie Wiesel from Greville Janner, 30 November 1987
4. Letter to Dawn Waterman (at the Holocaust Educational Trust) from Dr John Fox, 25 February 1988
5. The Holocaust Educational Trust list of Aims and Major Activities
6. The History Working Group Minutes, 1989-1990
7. National Curriculum History Working Group Terms of Reference, January 1989
8. Supplementary Guidance to the Chairman [sic] of the History Working Group, January 1989
9. List of background reading for members of the History Working Group, January 1989
10. Content "Overload" in Key Stage 4, a paper prepared by a member of the assessment panel, 12 June 1989
11. Submission on the Teaching of the Second World War and the Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany in the National Curriculum for History, submitted by Greville Janner; John Marshall; Robert Rhodes James; Jeff Rooker, September 1989
12. Letter to John MacGregor from Greville Janner; John Marshall; Robert Rhodes James; Jeff Rooker, 29 September 1989
13. Letter to Greville Janner from John MacGregor, 11 October 1989
14. Letter to Carrie Supple from John Roberts, 12 October 1989
15. The Holocaust Educational Trust Bulletin, April-June 1990, Issue No. 1
16. Letter to Carrie Supple from a member of the History Working Group, 21 June 1990
17. Letter to Ken Oldfield HMI from Greville Janner, 12 November 1991
18. The Holocaust Educational Trust Schools Newsletter, Issue 1, Summer 2001

19. Unpublished review of Glantz's *Holocaust Handbook for Teachers: Materials and Strategies for Grades 5-12* by Nicolas Kinloch, May 2002

together with:

Hansard

Interviews have been conducted with:

Rosie Boston, Head of Education, The Holocaust Educational Trust,  
21 November 2001

Shirley Murgraff, 8 February 2002

Paul Salmons, Coordinator of Holocaust Education, The Imperial War Museum,  
12 September 2002.

Dr John Fox, 21 January 2004

Members of the History Working Group

Teachers of History

Members of the SCAA Advisory Group for History and the History Task Group

## Correspondence

### Letters have been received from:

Lord Janner, 7 February 2002  
Dr John Roberts, 14 May 2002  
Dr Alice Prochaska, 12 July 2002  
Professor Peter Marshall, 22 August 2002  
Shirley Murgraff, July 22 2003

### Email correspondence has been received from:

Jerome Freeman , 7 March 2002  
Tim Lomas, 30 April 2002, 26 May 2002  
Ann Low-Beer, 23 July 2002  
Nicolas Kinloch, 4 May 2002, 25 June 2002  
Professor Robert Phillips, 13 November 2002  
Christine Counsell, 13 November 2002, 10 June 2003  
Rachel Burns (proceeded Rosie Boston as Head of Education at the HET),  
4 December 2002, 14 January 2003  
Steve Illingworth, 7 March 2003  
Giovanni Bruggi, QCA Subject Officer for History, 14 May 2004  
Paul Salmons, 25 June 2004

### Telephone Conversations have been conducted with:

Terry Haydn, 18 June 2003

Appendix 2: Copy of the Questionnaire sent to history teachers

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HISTORY TEACHERS

### About yourself

1. Which age bracket do you fall into?

21-25 [ ] 26-30 [ ] 31-35 [ ] 36-40 [ ] 41-45 [ ] 46-50 [ ] 51-60 [ ] 61-70 [ ]

2. Are you male [ ] female [ ]?

### Teaching History

3. In what year did you qualify as a history teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following best describes your main motivation for becoming a history teacher?

- a) [ ] I was prompted by an interest in and love for the subject
- b) [ ] I wanted to make a difference and instil moral values in young people
- c) [ ] I believe that history is important in developing a sense of identity
- d) [ ] History teaches students valuable skills for life and the workplace
- e) [ ] Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your prime objective when teaching about the Holocaust?

- a) [ ] To help students understand and contextualise World War Two
- b) [ ] To give students the skills to detect discrimination, prejudice and racism
- c) [ ] So that students are aware of this key event in twentieth century history
- d) [ ] To remember the victims
- e) [ ] To teach students about humanity and the capacity for evil within all human beings
- f) [ ] So that students can understand why war criminals, despite their age, should be prosecuted
- g) [ ] So that students can recognise and respond appropriately to similar events
- h) [ ] To help students understand the current situation in the Middle East
- i) [ ] To prompt students to consider and protect the democracies they live in
- j) [ ] Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. When planning your lessons about the Holocaust do you use any of the following?**

- a)  The QCA Scheme of Work on the Holocaust (Unit 19)
- b)  The special edition of *Teaching History* on the topic of the Holocaust (Edition 104, published September 2001)
- c)  Work produced by historians such as Ian Kershaw's *Hitler 1936-45: Nemesis*; Michael Burleigh's *The Third Reich: a New History*; or Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*

Is there another publication you have found stimulating? \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Have you used any of the following materials with your students?**

- a)  The teaching pack *Reflections* produced by the Imperial War Museum
- b)  Educational materials produced by the Holocaust Educational Trust
- c)  Educational materials produced by the Spiro Institute
- d)  A Holocaust survivor to come in to school and talk to students
- e)  Written survivor testimony
- f)  Anne Frank's diary

Is there other material you have found useful?

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Is the Holocaust also taught in other departments in school?**

Yes/No

If yes, please note which department \_\_\_\_\_

**Many thanks for your time and help**

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