

An Exhibition on the Crimes of the Wehrmacht Splits the German Public (Retrospective account, 2015)

Abstract

In 1995, the traveling exhibition “Vernichtungskrieg. Crimes of the Wehrmacht from 1941-1944”, organized by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, opened in Hamburg in 1995. Between April 1995 and October 1997, the exhibition was shown in 33 German and Austrian cities and aroused great interest among both the public and the media, but this soon turned into polemics and polarization. There were fierce protests against the exhibition, particularly in Munich, and in 1999 a bomb attack was carried out against the exhibition in Saarbrücken. The central aim of the exhibition was to expose the common narrative of the “clean Wehrmacht” as untrue and instead to document the extent to which Wehrmacht soldiers were involved in the murder of the Russian civilian population and Soviet prisoners of war. Historical photos in particular served as evidence. It soon became clear that even in the late 1990s, there was still no social consensus on how extensively the Nazi past should be dealt with. The debate became more complicated after historians proved that some of the photos had been misattributed or mislabeled. In 2001, the newly revised exhibition entitled “Crimes of the Wehrmacht. Dimensions of the War of Extermination 1941-1944” opened in Berlin in 2001. It was subsequently shown in various cities in Germany, Austria and Luxembourg and is now part of the collection of the German Historical Museum (DHM) in Berlin.

In this retrospective account from 2015, historian Hannes Heer, who was responsible for the first exhibition, describes the reactions to the exhibition.

Source

Source: Das Ende vom Mythos der „sauberen Wehrmacht“ - Hannes Heer über die erste Wehrmachtausstellung. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Saar, December 26, 2015.

<https://youtu.be/lwGGETsKbU8?si=06ePal-S13niyDZR>

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Recommended Citation: An Exhibition on the Crimes of the Wehrmacht Splits the German Public (Retrospective account, 2015), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/a-new-germany-1990-2023/ghdi:video-5089>> [May 09, 2024].