

## SUMMARIES

### A TROUBLING PAST, AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT

*Hans Henning Hahn*

Trying to come to terms with the past presumes that somebody (an individual or a society) feels troubled by certain events in the past. This is an emotion, not a rational judgement, and usually it concerns history in the sense of individual or collective recollections. History as recollection can assume traumatic qualities of several kinds (the role as perpetrator or that as victim). Trying to come to terms with the past is important both within a given society and for the relations between societies or nations. It is not about what really happened, but about recollections of what happened. This is why a direct link exists between efforts of coming to terms with the past, official legitimatory strategies, and continuity-mindedness. Certain escapist variants (externalization, universalization, mystification of the resistance) have been widespread after 1989, just as they were after 1945. A critical reappraisal of one's own history does not mean a breach of continuity, but it can entail a departure from traditions. Coming to terms with the past is not about a reappraisal of historic facts, it is about historic responsibility. Historiography can only play a subordinate, consultative part, but it cannot itself furnish definitive answers.