

IDENTITIES – PAST – REPRESSION

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This contribution takes as its starting point investigations carried out by Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich in 1967, which centered around the mental repression of the Nazist period in postwar Germany. The author tries to establish analogies to the behaviour in the post-socialist societies, but also to other cases of mental repression in the past. The role an often spurious past plays for establishing a collective identity and the importance of having an authentic picture of the past are pointed out. Disavowals and mutual efforts at putting the blame on the other side are exposed as infantile defense mechanisms, which can be abused by totalitarian regimes for mobilizing the masses. A fruitful task of a historiography not tainted by ideology is to show which opportunities have been missed in the past and to enable people to accept guilt.