

## THE MURDER OF THE JEWS IN THE MINDS OF THE GERMANS

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This study investigates forms of accepting or rejecting guilt for the murder of the Jews in the minds of the Germans four decades after the end of National Socialism. Reactions to a TV feature about the dilapidation of the memorial on the site of the Auschwitz mass extermination camp, which had called upon individuals to make donations for its preservation, are used to single out certain types of argument which are frequently encountered, and these are adjudged to be important indicators for the public consciousness with regard to the holocaust. It is only with a minority that the pressure of guilt and feeling condemned is leading to a rejection of the facts and to attempts at exposing "Auschwitz" as a lie. But mainly people belonging to the older generations reacted, because of offended patriotic feelings, by trying to relativize what has happened or by balancing own suffering against that inflicted on others. They reject the opinion that Germans have to take the blame for the war and what they understand to be an effort at blaming the crimes of the Nazist regime on the German people as a whole. To others, trying to preserve this memorial seemed macabre. The author argues against the inflationary use of appeals to the conscience of the individual, which cause many Germans to feel annoyed and to look the other way. New forms of coming to grips with the past will have to be found.