




## COLD WAR VERSUS SYMBOLIC BATTLEFIELD: THE CRISIS IN GREEK-GERMAN RELATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE DISPUTE OVER COMPENSATIONS FOR WWII AND THE WAY TO OVERCOME IT: CASE STUDY

ZIMNA WOJNA A SYMBOLICZNE POLE BITWY. KRYZYS  
W STOSUNKACH GRECKO-NIEMIECKICH NA TLE SPORU  
WOKÓŁ ODSZKODOWAŃ ZA II WOJNĘ ŚWIATOWĄ  
I SPOSÓB JEGO ROZWIĄZANIA. STUDIUM PRZYPADKU

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### — ABSTRACT —

It is difficult to speak of a historical dispute in the case of Greek compensation claims for losses suffered during WWII by Nazi Germany. This is because the German side has repeatedly taken responsibility for the harm done to the Greek people. Germany is also a country that has paid over 75 billion in damages by 2016 with various categories of victims from different countries, including Greece (Barcz & Kranz, 2019, p. 155). In the discourse on Greek demands against Germany, metaphors of the Cold War (Kalpouzos, 2015) or a symbolic battlefield (Christodoulakis, 2014, p. 20) appear, suggesting primarily a significant importance of this issue for internal political decisions made at the Acropolis and the local historical awareness. Despite this, since the “outbreak” of this “Cold War” in Germany, both

### — ABSTRAKT —

Trudno mówić o historycznym sporze w sprawie greckich roszczeń odszkodowawczych za straty poniesione w czasie II wojny światowej przez nazistowskie Niemcy. Dzieje się tak dlatego, że strona niemiecka wielokrotnie brała na siebie odpowiedzialność za krzywdy wyrządzone narodowi greckiemu. Niemcy są również krajem, który do 2016 roku wypłacił ponad 75 miliardów odszkodowań różnym kategoriom ofiar z różnych krajów, w tym Grecji (Barcz & Kranz, 2019, s. 155). W dyskursie o żądaniach Grecji wobec Niemiec pojawiają się metafory „zimnej wojny” (Kalpouzos, 2015) czy „symbolicznego pola bitwy” (Christodoulakis, 2014, s. 20), co sugeruje przede wszystkim duże znaczenie tej sprawy dla wewnętrznych decyzji politycznych na Akropolu i lokalnej świadomości historycznej. Mimo to od

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on the political and expert's levels, and primarily in historical research, many efforts have been made to constructively "resolve the dispute".

In author's opinion, both terms coined during Greek-German historical controversy characterize duality of position of the contemporary states in discussion about impact of the past on current relations between nations in general. On the one hand, 'Cold War' term refers to political and economic levels (compensations demand) of the contemporary historical conflicts. On the other hand, 'symbolic battlefield' suggests moral superiority or righteousness on one side.

**Keywords:** Greek-German relations; politics of memory; compensation; Second World War

„wybuchu” tej „zimnej wojny” w Niemczech, zarówno na poziomie politycznym, jak i eksperckim, a przede wszystkim w dziedzinie badań historycznych, podjęto wiele wysiłków, aby konstruktywnie „rozwiązać spór”.

Zdaniem autora oba te terminy, wyjęte z polemiki historycznej grecko-niemieckiej, dobrze charakteryzują dwoistość pozycji współczesnych państw w dyskusji o wpływie przeszłości na bieżące relacje między narodami w ogóle. Z jednej strony termin „zimna wojna” odnosi się do poziomu polityczno-gospodarczego (żądania rekompensat) współczesnych konfliktów historycznych. Z drugiej strony „symboliczne pole bitwy” sugeruje wyższość moralną lub prawość jednej ze stron.

**Słowa kluczowe:** stosunki grecko-niemieckie; polityka pamięci; odszkodowania; II wojna światowa

*The past is never dead. It's not even past*

William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun

## INTRODUCTION

Bjørn Thomassen and Rossario Forlenza, the authors of *The Past is Never Dead: World War II Memories and the Construction of Political Legitimacy in Post-Cold War Italy*, when writing about the evolution of the historical consciousness of Italians in relation to memories from WWII, referred to the concept of linality. The concept taken from anthropology is referred by memory scientists to the moment when nations remember the past, a moment characterized by ambivalence, creativity, and anxiety. Thomassen and Forlenza related this process to the activity of the historian Renzo De Felice, who in the 1990s, rejecting Italian amnesia and victimization in the face of World War II experiences, demanded the "historization of memory" (the term is a paraphrase of German historian Martin Broszat's expression referring to "historization of III Reich"; Broszat & Friedländer, 1988). Summarizing their text, the authors indicated, on the one hand, that if historical revisionism is, for example, a denial of documented crimes, then it should be rejected. If, on the other hand, it opens up new spaces for discussion

on the complicated past, it should be treated as an important contribution to European reflection and the construction of an open, balanced memory.

A moment of lameness in the history of modern Greece may be the historic “Cold War” in contemporary relations with Germany. It has its roots in the past and in the present it is fueled by difficult economic situation in which the Greeks find themselves nowadays. The tension between the harsh reality and the expectations of the Greeks has caused dissatisfaction, which results in the demand for compensation for past actions, as Greek political scientist Vassilis Paipais wrote (Paipais, 2013). Greek political parties, right and left, eagerly use anti-German rhetoric to carry out reforms unpopular with the society. “The symbolic battlefield” around compensation may, paradoxically, have positive consequences, postponing victimization and amnesia in favor of the historization of memories and the formation of Greek-German dialogical memory.

The aim of the article is to present the specificity of the discourse on compensation and occupation of Greece and to trace the most important points of the discourse. The author’s aim is to describe the method of a specific “historical crisis management” around compensation, presenting to what extent the Greek model fits into the idea of building transnational dialogical memory, about which the German memory scientist Aleida Assmann wrote.

The research method that I will use is the case study. It is a comprehensive description of the studied phenomenon, concerning any scientific discipline. The case study is used especially for research topics of a descriptive nature. Then it gives an answer to the questions – what happened, where, and how it happened. With regard to exploration problems, it will allow us to answer the question of why the studied phenomenon occurred. At the same time, this method uses multiple techniques and tools for collecting and analyzing data. These can be observations, participant observations, interviews, surveys, documentation of the studied organization, press sources, the Internet, available databases, etc. Based on the collected information, the case study method allows for an in-depth analysis of the examined problem, presentation of its specificity, interaction with other elements of the organization or its surroundings.

The article consists of three parts. The first, theoretical part discusses the key issues concerning the relationship between memory and history, the formation of cultural memory and the difference between historical policy and *Geschichtspolitik*. Author presents also the concept of dialogical memory. The second relates to German occupation and Greek losses in World War II. The last part is an analysis of the Greek-German discourse and actions aimed at solving the crisis.

## HISTORY AND MEMORY

Discussing the impact of the memory of the Second World War on contemporary Greek-German relations, it is necessary to recall issues related to the relationship between memory and history, cultural memory and politics of memory.

Historical memory is a form of memory referring to the past of a social group (Stobiecki, 2018). It consists of sets of ideas about the past and the tools of commemoration. Among researchers, opinion about the relationship between memory and history can be divided into three groups.

The first of them sees memory and history as opposites. Memory is individual, subjective, emotional, difficult to verify. History, in turn, is collective, objective and is verifiable by sources. According to sociologist Barbara Szacka, history is an academic scientific discipline, and memory is a collection of images of members of community about their past, which includes a number of cultural products created within the group and serving to remember (Szacka, 2006).

The second group, represented by, among others, Jacques Le Goff, thinks that memory and history are in a relationship. The famous medievalist in his book *History and Memory* presented the development of collective memory from oral transmission to electronic memory. According to Le Goff, before writing was invented, oral communication served to preserve collective memory and thereby strengthen its identity based on myths (myth of the beginning, family prestige seen in genealogies), but also practical knowledge (Le Goff, 2007). Therefore, memory was an essential element of collective identity concluded by a French historian. According to Le Goff, the history after World War II is the story of ordinary man. The new story does not respond to the needs of nations or as a teacher of life, but becomes part of the search for identity (Le Goff, 2007). "History is a kingdom of inaccuracies and imperfections", Le Goff argued. This is because history is not exact science, it arises in dialogue and does not restore, but reconstructs life (Le Goff, 2007).

The historian can also be included in the third group. For them, historical memory is a kind of instrument of liberation from historiography, which is a form of imposing the image of the past. In this group we also include: David Lowenthal ("memory does not preserve the past, but adapts it to current conditions"; Lowenthal, 1985); Benedetto Croce ("every story is a history of the present"; after Le Goff, 2007), Marc Bloch (we understand the present through the past), and Hayden White (historiography as a literary work in which events are told and

explained by the author). History, seem to say the representatives of this group, is a process of creating it. So history may say more about today than yesterday.

## CULTURAL MEMORY

The main theoreticians of cultural memory are Germans: Aleida and Jan Assmann, and the French: Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1969) wrote that memory develops along with the process of socialization. Collective memory arises as a result of the interaction between individual feelings and memories that come from the thinking of individual groups. Culture – as Jan Assmann wrote – creates connective structures and connects contemporary society and their ancestors throughout history, creating a “symbolic world of meanings” (area of experiences, expectations). Cultural memory is thus formulated by storing relevant experiences and memories of the past and including them in the consciousness of generations living in the present. The sense of belonging to the community of cultural memory consists of the legal order (community of rules and values) and narrative order (community of memory of the past; Assmann, 2008). Communicative memory is a memory that man shares with his contemporaries. After the passing of witnesses to history, events from the past live as cultural memory in the consciousness of societies and at the same time as the subject of the historian’s research. Certain points from the past – according to A. Assmann – are recorded and transformed into a sacred myth (Assmann, 2013). Within cultural memory there are: storage memory and functional memory. The instruments which the community selects from all the events of the past are: museums, monuments or school textbooks (called products of functional memory culture), the most important for the author (Assmann, 2013). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new ethical dimension of memory appears in the context of totalitarian victims. The order to remember (“One must not shirk the past”; Assmann, 2013), to mourn and remember not only his own victims appeared in the writings of, among others, Hanna Arendt and Karl Jaspers.

According to Aleida Assmann, the culture of remembrance does not obscure the future by focusing on the past, but is an important element of transformation through responsibility and empathy. Assmann pointed out that the shared memory of victims and perpetrators gives better results for future relations between nations than shared forgetfulness. At the same time, she expressed

concern for the asymmetry of memories in which, for example, for Germans it was Jews, not Poles, who were victims of national socialism and World War II. A similar memory asymmetry was noticed between Eastern and Western Europe when we try to compare commemorating the victims of Nazism or communism. She recognized the pursuit of Europeanization of national memories, i.e., their mutual complementation, as the goal and challenge of the present. According to Assmann, shared transnational memory should therefore have the character of a dialogic memory (Assmann, 2013).

### POLITICS OF MEMORY VERSUS GESCHICHTSPOLITIK

This concept, *Geschichtspolitik*, was to be used for the first time in 1986 by Christian Meier. The placeholder terms used as synonyms are “politics of memory” or “policy towards the past”. The term ‘*Geschichtspolitik*’ is usually critical, while the other two terms are treated as positive or neutral. *Geschichtspolitik* is usually understood as an instrumental treatment of history for achieving political goals. It is consciously supporting the memory of specific events and characters. Four groups of tools are used to implement politics of memory: management of public space in the public and material dimension (monuments, national days); activity of memory institutions (archives, libraries, museums); education, upbringing and science (central education standards); and justice (settling the past by identifying and punishing those responsible, e.g., for crimes against nation; Ruchniewicz, 2018).

According to Anna Wolff-Powęska, there are 3 levels of remembering: individual, socio-communicative (individuals among themselves), cultural and institutional (institutions of private and public culture; Wolff-Powęska, 2005). Politics of memory mechanism is also falsification of history or forgetfulness. Aleida Assmann also talked about 5 strategies of repression: consciousness, the compensation process (Hans Frank in the Nuremberg trial said that Germany suffered so much suffering during the post-resettlement that it had long repented of their war crimes), externalization (Nazis, not Germans were guilty), exclusion (deliberate repression of specific experience), or distortion (in family relationships in Germany there is more victims than perpetrators; Assmann, 2013).

## GERMAN OCCUPATION AND GREEK LOSSES IN WWII

Greece, which was drawn into WWII in the fall of 1940, was a country that had not dealt with the consequences of the previous Great War. As a result of peace treaties and the change of borders, there was an exchange of inhabitants and over a million displaced people from Turkey and Bulgaria were sent to Greece. The problem of keeping immigrants was aggravated by the Great Depression that ruined the Greek export, among others, of tobacco. The unstable socio-economic situation contributed to the overthrow of the republic and the restoration of the parliamentary monarchy. The prospect of taking power by the left wing in the country stimulated the monarchist right-wing forces, which resulted in the establishment of authoritarian rule in 1936. Prime Minister General Ioannis Metaxas, supported by King George II, proclaimed the slogan of building a “third Hellenic civilization”. Metaxas proclaimed himself the “first” farmer and worker (Clogg, 2006, p. 141), drawing on the models of the dictators of the time, thus wanting to present himself as the rebel national character of the Greeks (he was greeted with a fascist salute).

On October 28, 1940, at 3:00 a.m., Italian ambassador Emanuele Grazzi awoke Metaxas to hand him an ultimatum. The Greeks had to choose: either accept the occupation or expect an Italian attack. Mussolini, striving to expand the Italian sphere of influence, categorically rejected the arguments of the generals who argued that the army was not ready to fight (“I will resign as an Italian if anyone makes it difficult for me to fight the Greeks”, said Duce to the Italian chief of diplomacy and his son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano; Ciano, 1949, p. 264). General Metaxas flatly rejected the Italian demands. The Greeks celebrate their “second” national day called “Ochi Day” precisely on that day to commemorate this event. The refusal led to Italian aggression from Albania, which had been occupied since 1939. The Greeks successfully defended themselves from the attack and even went on a counter-offensive. In December, Mussolini considered asking for a ceasefire through the Third Reich (Ciano, 1949, p. 296). An ally from the Pact of Three – Adolf Hitler – had to help Italy. At the turn of April and May 1941, the combined forces of the Third Reich, Italy and Bulgaria occupied all of Greece (Mazower, 1993). Greece was occupied by the three victorious countries for most of the war. The Germans initially controlled a smaller area, but comprised of key parts such as Athens, Thessalonica, and Crete. In the historical consciousness of the Greeks, a synonym of occupation is hunger. Food requisitions, which were part of the reality of the occupation, were to lead to the death of 300,000

Greek people from malnutrition (Nessou, 2009). The situation was worsened by the economic blockade on the part of the Allies and the ineffectiveness of the administrative authorities, which were unable to organize the harvest and transport of food. The first winter of the occupation (1941/1942) is called “starvation” (Hionidou, 2006). Raging inflation made a loaf of bread cost two million drachmas, and olive oil became the main currency (Mazower, 1993). In an interview with Ciano in October 1941, Mussolini said that “the Germans took everything from the Greeks, down to the shoelaces and shoes, and now want to pass the responsibility for the economic condition to us” (Ciano, 1949, p. 25). In turn, the Italian diplomat in Greece, Pellegrino Ghigi, warned that the lack of bread could lead to “desperate acts by the population”. The increase in hunger the following year made the English declare themselves the easing of the economic blockade of Greece and the delivery of 15 tons of grain per month (Ciano, 1949, p. 25). The economic difficulties were also intensified by the introduction of: occupation costs, occupation money and the export of Greek production to the occupation states. The occupation costs imposed on the Greeks were introduced in August 1941 and were set at 1.5 billion. The following month, this amount was increased to 4.2 billion drachmas (Rodogno, 2006, pp. 233–235). The costs grew every month. The Italian demand to lower the costs imposed on the Greeks was rejected with the argument that the money was spent on building fortifications, not just maintaining the occupying army. German troops in Crete alone counted at various times from 10 to 75 thousand soldiers (Beever, 2011, p. 286). In late 1942, 53 billion a month was demanded from the Greeks to cover occupation expenses, and the circulation of the drachma was 160 billion (9 billion before the war; Ciano, 1949, Vol. 2, p. 160). From May 1941, occupation money was also in circulation, paid by Italian and German soldiers for Greek goods (they were exchanged for drachma in a 1:1 ratio).

Greece was to be an important resource base for the German arms industry. In 1940, under the leadership of the Reich Minister of Economy Walter Funk and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim Ribbentrop, Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft in Vienna were established, which together with Südosteuropa Zentrum in Munich acted as the organization coordinating the construction of the informal German empire in this part of the world (Fleischer, 2013). The organizations were to provide the intellectual base for the economic and cultural penetration of south-eastern Europe. In economic relations between Germany and Greece, a clearing exchange was launched, which was called the “hidden plunder” system. As a result, 90% of Greek production were sent to Germany (Greece’s economic



exploitation was a source of considerable tensions between Italy and Germany). Greek mines were to supply: chromium, molybdenum, and nickel. Krupp, the German arms concern, obtained more chromium here in 1942 than before the war (Fleischer, 2013). The Germans had to mobilize forces to work in mines and industry. In addition, 35,000 people from Greece went to work in Germany (of which 23 thousand went there voluntarily, and 12 thousand after 1943 under pressure; Spoerer, 2015, pp. 78–80).

The German occupation was characterized by the influence of the Philo-Hellenic attitude, which was weakening as the war approached the end. The fascination with the heritage of the ancient Hellenic culture was evident in the intellectual attitude – typical for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German elite – of support for the Greek national uprising. The classic of German romanticism Hölderlin wrote about Germans as “Greeks of the North” who perform “godly toil in quiet workshops” (Hölderlin, 1998, p. 73). From 1874, the German Archaeological Institute had its office in Athens, and its employees took part in the most important excavations (Federal Foreign Office, 2020). The anti-communist attitude of parts of the Greek society and the success of their army in fighting Italy in 1940 also influenced the positive attitude of the Germans. Hitler ordered the release of Greek prisoners after the war campaign in recognition of their military merits. For comparison, 300,000 Polish prisoners of war, in violation of the Geneva Conventions, were transferred to the status of civilian workers who were used in agricultural work (Spoerer, 2015, p. 50). Retaliatory executions against the civilian population did not have the subtext of a fight against a lower race and significantly resulted in a smaller number of victims. During the entire occupation, as a result of retaliation, 70,000 people were shot. For comparison, the number of casualties during the active defense of Greece in 1940–1941 was 72,000 soldiers (Tompkins & Richardson, 1961, p. 9; initially 10 Greeks were shot for killing 1 German soldier, then 50, and finally 100). The first public execution in Greece took place in June 1941. By 1944, in Crete alone, between 2–3,000 Greeks were shot, and 1,600 towns and villages were burned down (Beavor, 2011, p. 204). The conditions of the occupation led to the development of the resistance movement and the killing of civilian prisoners in retaliation against the armed actions of the Greek Underground. British historian Antony Beevor emphasized the readiness of the Greeks to take immediate resistance. This may be resulted by the large German losses during the campaign (on the first day of the airborne operation over Crete, the Wehrmacht lost 1856 paratroopers) and repressive regulations were issued (women caught with a knife in their hand were to be killed like men).

In 1943, after Italy's surrender to the Allied forces, Germany took over their zone of occupation in Greece. This led to the intensification of clashes between the Wehrmacht and the Greek guerrillas. Earlier, the Greeks, among others, trying to stop the supply of weapons and resources to Rommel's army in Africa in 1942 attacked the railroad and destroyed the means of transport. Most of the crimes mentioned in the discourse on German compensations for Greece took place at the turn of 1943 and 1944. The most famous places of execution were: Kalavrita, Distomo in the Peloponnese and Kleisoura in Macedonia. In Kleisoura, the occupation forces shot 223 old men, women and children (50 children did not have 10 years, and 38 were under the age of 5) in retaliation for killing two German motorcyclists (Tompkins & Richardson, 1961, p. 69). One of the last massacres of civilians was the one carried out in June 1944 on the inhabitants of Distomo. Among 218 victims there were also women and children included. Over 60,000 Greek Jews were also victims of the German occupation. In July 1942, 2.5 million drachmas were demanded from the community for exemption from "forced labor". Despite the payment, most of the Jews ended up in the death camp in Auschwitz Birkenau. In 1943, in order to spare "expensive German blood", the occupiers agreed to establish an armed security force composed of Greeks with an anti-communist stance. This formation was to serve 20,000 Greeks (University of Athens, 2017). It was an important factor that polarized Greek society internally and translated into the later domestic conflict between the right-wing and left-wing forces in 1946–1949 (Clogg, 2006). Similar dividing lines ran among the partisans, which were divided into left-wing and right-wing. The left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM) and its armed arm, the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), competed against the National Republican Hellenic League (EDES).

#### THE PROBLEM OF COMPENSATION: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, MORAL, AND HISTORICAL LEVEL

According to Greek post-war statistics, 80% of the railway rolling stock, 73% of the merchant fleet, 200,000 residential houses have been destroyed (Fleischer, 1998). Diseases have affected  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the Greek population (infections such as malaria and typhus), in some regions 60–70% of the population, especially children (Fleischer, 1991). The inhabitants of Crete, giving an outlet to their hatred for the occupant, spontaneously destroyed agricultural machines: trac-

tors and steam rollers as products made in German (Beevor, 2011, p. 285). War destruction was one of the reasons for the outbreak of the bloody civil war of 1946–1949 (Clogg, 2006; Brończyk, 1948).

Half a century after the end of the war, the Greeks, honoring their victims of the war, introduced the concept of “martyr cities”. Pursuant to presidential decrees from the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a special committee was established within the Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration, which decided to award the above-mentioned name. The criteria here were: complete destruction of buildings as a result of war, for example, bombing; loss of 10% of the population due to execution; destruction of 80% of residential buildings, and loss of 10% of residents. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this list included about 80 cities – Presidential Decrees no. 2130 (1993), 399 (1998), 99 (2000), 40 (2004), and 140 (2005). In 1945, Greece’s losses during the 3.5-year German occupation were assessed by the Paris Reparation Conference at 7 billion pre-war dollars. Shortly after the war, Greece was supported by the Inter-Allied Reparation Agency with property worth between 25 and 80 million. The Greeks were also supported with funds from the Marshall Plan. The 1953 Allied Conference in London agreed that repairs would be postponed pending reunification. In the late 1950s, Germany paid voluntary compensation of 115 million marks, which according to the Greek side, served to satisfy the demands of Jewish victims of the occupation. Until 2016, Germany paid 75 billion euros to the citizens of a dozen countries persecuted because of their race, faith, or political belief. These were voluntary flat-rate agreements in which states distributed funds among their citizens. In the aforementioned agreement between the government in Athens and West Germany, the Greeks concluded the right to individual claims of citizens (Barcz & Kranz, 2019). The 1990 “2 plus 4 treaty” that led to the reunification of Germany served as a peace treaty, but was not so named. This was due to Germany’s concerns about compensation and reparation claims. In 1995, the Greek government through diplomatic channels requested to return to the talks on this matter, which were rejected by German diplomats. The Germans emphasized that the issue of claims was settled early, and any possible claims should be reported when the Moscow Treaty was signed. Likewise, the individual claims of Greek victims were rejected by German courts on the grounds of immunity from jurisdictional sovereignty. In 2012, a judgment of the International Court of Justice upheld this law of the German courts (International Court of Justice, 2012).

Occasional publications such as the *Black Book of the Occupation*, published in 2006 in Greek and German, reminded of Germany’s responsibility (Antaios

et al., 2006). The introduction to this book was written by one of the heroes of the Greek resistance, Manolis Glezos, the President of the “National Council to promote German War debts”. Glezos pointed out that the prosperity of a united democratic Germany is the result of countless victims, including the work of hundreds of thousands of Greeks. The issue of compensation has been linked here with the category of solidarity of nations and remembrance towards victims (Antaios et al., 2006, p. 6). The publication suggested that the Moscow “2 plus 4 treaty” gave the right to compensation claims against reunified Germany. The refusal of German diplomats in 1995 was considered a clear violation of this provision.

The Greek debt crisis has elevated the compensation discussions to a higher level of excitement. Articles in the German press encouraging the sale of the Greek islands as an antidote to solving the crisis were probably like oil poured into the fire (*Die Griechenland-Pleite*, 2010; *Verkauft doch eure Inseln, ihr Pleite-Griechen...*, 2010). In 2008–2012, 40 groups were created on the Greek Facebook, calling for a boycott of German goods (Greek customers also received tips on how to recognize German goods by the barcode). The Achaia and Viotia Prefectures, where the Germans committed numerous crimes during the war, were strongly represented among Facebook boycott groups members (Voth & Fouka, 2016). In February 2010, the Greek Consumers Association called for a boycott of the cars, as a symbol of the German economy (Voth & Fouka, 2016, p. 10). The impact of the boycotts, as in other actions of this type, turned out to be very short and insignificant.

The catalyst that brought the dispute over compensation for the war to the political level was the negotiations on aid packages for the indebted country. Aid loans from the EU and the IMF were to be made subject to a strict austerity programme. During the negotiations, the Greek side was most affected by the other side’s inflexibility and the lack of consideration of the Greek situation. Economist James Galbraith, who closely watched the Warufakis–Schäuble conversation in 2015, postulated the ideas of European solidarity and building a new model of the welfare state (Galbraith, 2016). The poisoned atmosphere of the talks between politicians and diplomats initiated the Greek-German “Cold War”, with the past in the background. The main issue was the amount of compensation for Greece. In 2013, the Greek parliament, using the German archives, calculated the debt at EUR 162 billion (54 included the return of the loan; Kalpouzou, 2015). In 2014, Nicos Christodoulakis’ *Germany’s War Debt to Greece: A Burden Unsettled* was published (Christodoulakis, 2014). The author, referring to Aristotle’s

Nicomachean Ethics, stated that the payment of damages by Germany would be an example of the implementation of “restorative justice” (as formulated by the great Greek philosopher). The Greek left-wing government of SYRIZA in 2015 re-assessed demands for war repairs for population loss and material damage. The amount of EUR 279 billion was to include: war reparations, restitution of exported goods, repayment of a loan forced from the Bank of Greece during the war. The Third Reich forced the Greek Central Bank to loan 476 million Deutsche marks. The current valuation of a forced loan also looks different on both sides. The report commissioned by the lower house of the Bundestag says the amount is 8.25 billion, in Greece the loan is valued at 11 billion euro (*WWII Reparations...*, 2015). The forced loan issue became a “symbolic battlefield” during the negotiations of a rescue loan for Greece. Efforts were made that the EU and the IMF, under pressure from Germany, limit the pressure on austerity policy as compensation for unpaid war debt. A moral argument to remedy this injustice is that the author’s father received imprisonment compensation of one dollar a day. The conflict perpetuated negative stereotypes in which the Greeks were portrayed as tax fraudsters and Germany as an economic invader whose strength is perceived as the “Fourth Reich” that dictates conditions to less influential EU partners. German politicians such as Chancellor Angela Merkel and Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble were presented in the Greek press in Nazi uniforms or with a mustache à la Adolf Hitler. After the victorious elections, Prime Minister Tsipras laid flowers on a monument commemorating the execution of the left-wing by the German occupation forces in 1944. On this occasion, he spoke of the “unfulfilled right” to reparation of those who bleed and paid heavily during the occupation. Public opinion polls in Greece unanimously confirmed support for compensation efforts (nearly 90 respondents; *Eight in 10 Greeks...*, 2013). Another diplomatic note demanding reparations was submitted by the Greeks in 2019 (*Greek Parliament...*, 2019; Smith, 2019). A parliamentary commission chaired by Sia Anagnostopoulou presented the demands of 300 billion. Committee members argued that the Dutch, who suffered one-hundredth of the Greek losses, received more support. Referring to the negative position of Germany, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece Markos Bolaris said that the issue of compensations is still open and should be resolved. According to the Greeks, the “verbal note” was to start a dialogue with the Germans on this subject. In October 2019, claims of EUR 300 billion in reparations were rejected again.

The Greek claim for compensation was perceived in Germany, as historian Prof. Heinz A. Richter puts it, a “distortion of history and pure populism”, which

is an effect of the political and economic problems of Athens (Spyropoulou et al., 2019). Public opinion polls from 2019 showed that 68% of Germans believe, like politicians, that the matter is politically and legally closed. Only 11% of the respondents were ready to negotiate on this topic (*Große Mehrheit...*, 2019). Earlier, the need for talks between the Germans and the Greek government about compensation was argued, among others, by economist Prof. Albrecht Ritschl from the London School of Economics who accused the Germans of paying off their debts the worst (*Studio Guest of the Week: Albrecht Ritschl*, 2011). Thomas Piketty, a French economist, accused the Germans of amnesia, which made them forget to forgive more than half of their debts at the London Conference in 1953 (Stern, 2015).

On the political level, Germany made many efforts to move from being emotional about the past to a substantive discussion and cooperation over historical divisions. Representatives of the German government have repeatedly recognized their historical responsibility for the suffering that the Germans brought with them to Greece during the Nazi era. During his visit to Greece in 2014, President Joachim Gauck asked publicly on behalf of Germany for forgiveness from representatives of the victims' families. In 2018, during his visit to Greece, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke of "moral and political blame for the acts committed". At the same time, it was stated that the issues of claims and damages had already been settled in the past (*In Greece...*, 2018). German politicians rightly tried to make permanent cooperation a solution to the existing problems in bilateral relations. Merkel-Tsipras dialogue on migration issues, Balkan security and the rescue loan led to an improvement in sentiment and cooperation. In September 2014, the German-Greek Fund for the Future was established with an annual budget of EUR 1 million to support projects promoting reconciliation between Greeks and Germans. The fund is intended to finance resources to establish a common culture of remembrance and reconciliation with the villages where the crimes were committed and the Jewish community of that country. The German-Greek Youth Office was to be responsible for building reconciliation through youth exchange organizations. Two years later, the German-Greek Action Plan for Bilateral Cooperation was launched, which was supposed to be a platform for intensive cooperation in the political field as well as business, academic, cultural and civil society (*Joint Statement...*, 2016). The German side emphasizes the benefits of mutual economic exchange between the two countries (food, machinery, chemical products) and investments by German

companies (in infrastructure and renewable energy) in Greece, which provide jobs for 30,000 people.

On the expert level, the Greek-German dispute brought a lot of good in terms of expanding historical knowledge. The National University of Athens and the Center for Digital Systems at the Free University of Berlin have launched a project aimed at creating a digital archive containing, inter alia, video interviews with witnesses of the occupation of Greece by Nazi Germany. The coordinator of this project is Hagen Fleischer, a German historian and the author of books on the occupation of Greece during WWII. It was Fleischer who said in an interview with *Herald* in 2015 that Germany should pay for *Besatzungsanleihe*, i.e., monthly loans from Greek banks. The money collected in 1942–1944 served to support the occupation forces in Greece and even finance the *Afrika Korps* operations in North Africa. According to the calculations of German officials, in 1945, German debt to Greece amounted to 476 million marks (which today is around 10 billion euros). According to Fleischer, this debt, deprived of moral baggage, should be repaid, e.g., in the form of a future fund that would finance a symbolic infrastructure project (Fleischer, 2015). The historian strongly rejected the passage of time as an argument against paying compensation, pointing out that after 1990, reunified Germany refused to talk about compensation for World War II, while at the same time paying out the money to victims of World War I.

Since 2019, a project entitled “The National History of the Greek Research Foundation” has been running. It is a database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece in the years 1941–1944/45. The research project is funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German-Greek Future Fund, and its completion is scheduled for December 2021. The project aims to determine the size and evolution of German forces in occupied Greece, define their participation in war crimes and relations with the Greek population (National Hellenic Research Foundation..., 2019).

## SUMMARY

The aim of the article was to present the specificity of the discourse on compensation and occupation of Greece and to trace the most important points of this discourse, exposing to what extent the Greek model fits into the idea of building transnational dialogical memory, about which the German memory scientist Aleida Assmann wrote.

In the case of the Greek-German compensation dispute, it is difficult to speak of a historical dispute. This is because Germany assumed full responsibility for the crimes committed during World War II. Both sides equally recognized the existence of a far-reaching asymmetry in the level of knowledge about the German occupation in Greece. Historian Hagen Fleischer recalled the need to preserve memory so that it would not be lost (Fleischer, 2014).

Paradoxically, the Greek-German “Cold War”, in which the issue of compensation is the “symbolic battlefield”, may lead to the formation of a common dialogical memory. Actions taken by the German and Greek sides serve to close the difficult separation of relations between the two countries by creating a shared memory. It is visible on the moral, political, legal, and historical level of the compensation discourse.

The need to pay off a certain moral debt to the victims of the occupation was raised by the Greek side in many ways. Prime Minister Tsipras spoke of the unfulfilled right to repair, Nicos Christodoulakis, a politician and professor of economics, wrote about “restorative justice”, and the Greek underground hero Manolis Glezos suggested the need for Germans to share wealth in the name of “solidarity of nations”. The need to compensate the victim and their relatives was at the center of the highly emotional narrative. The response of the German side was the acceptance by the German side of full moral responsibility, which was expressed by the visit of presidents Gauck in 2014 and Steinmeier in 2018. The speech of the German head of state paying tribute to the victims and expressions of regret towards their families were the fullest manifestation of this responsibility: “Mit Scham und mit Schmerz bitte ich im Namen Deutschlands die Familien der Ermordeten um Verzeihung. Ich verneige mich vor den Opfern der ungeheuren Verbrechen, die hier und an vielen anderen Orten zu beklagen sind. [...] Achtet und sucht die Wahrheit. Sie ist eine Schwester der Versöhnung” [“With shame and pain, I am asking the families of the murdered for forgiveness on behalf of Germany. I bow to the victims of the enormous crimes that have been lamented here and in many other places. [...] Pay attention and seek the truth. She is a sister of reconciliation”] (Gauck, 2014).

On the legal and political level, according to the German side, everything is already done. Greece’s losses after the war were to be repaid by the Inter-Allied Reparation Agency (USD 25 to 80 million) and by Germany in the late 1950s (DM 115 million). The London conference cancelled more than half of Germany’s debts, and any claims were postponed until the peace conference. The Moscow “2 plus 4 treaty”, which led to the reunification of Germany, de



facto played the role of such a conference, although this term was not used at the time. The compensation issue raised by the Greek government in 1995 started a new phase of procedures. The Greek government and parliament made efforts to estimate the scale of the reparations, for example: in 2013, 2015, and 2019. All attempts to start negotiations were rejected by Germany. The individual claims of Greek victims and their families were likewise rejected by the German courts on the grounds of immunity from jurisdiction. The International Court of Justice confirmed this law in 2012. A partial response to Greek demands was the launch of two large projects in 2014–2016: the German-Greek Future Fund and the German-Greek Action Plan for Bilateral Cooperation. Both are intended to build reconciliation through: youth exchange, educational and cultural projects, economic cooperation, etc.

Under the German-Greek Fund for the Future, historical projects are carried out to research, consolidate and disseminate knowledge about the occupation of Greece. The Platform Memory of the Occupation of Greece assumes the creation of a digital archive, including interviews with witnesses of history. The scope of interests here concerns not only the balance of losses, the Holocaust and the resistance movement, but also the victims of hunger and collaboration (due to the imminent outbreak of the civil war in 1946–1949, and then the building of national unity, 20,000 Greek collaborators did not suffer any consequences after the war). As part of the National Historical Research Institute of the Hellenic Research Foundation, research is conducted to create a database of German military and paramilitary units in Greece in the years 1941–1944/45 and to determine their participation in war crimes and relations with the Greek population.

Aleida Assmann wrote that history is an important element in the transition to the future, especially for nations with a difficult past. She pointed out that working through past problems together is better than shared amnesia. Looking at history from the perspective of the other side with empathy and in dialogue is to be the means of building a common culture of memory called dialogical memory. The steps taken by the Greeks and the Germans to stave off the historic “Cold War” fit in with the Assmann model. Actions taken under the Future Fund allow us to reject victimization and historical amnesia and replace it with historization of the past to build a better future. In turn, the Greek-German Action Plan is able to place this cooperation in the context of current political, economic and cultural challenges.

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