

Holocaust Remembrance as ‘Civil Religion’: The Case of the Stockholm Declaration

(2000)

Larissa Allwork

The Stockholm Declaration was the statement which summarized the main aims of the Stockholm International Forum, which was organized to promote Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research globally (hereafter, the SIF 2000; the forum was held on 26–28 January 2000). And despite the presence of non-European states such as America, Israel, Russia and Argentina, political scientist Jens Kroh (2008) has rightly stated that one of the most significant symbolic elements of the liberal representation of the Holocaust at this event was the idea that, ‘coming to terms with such a negative past has almost turned into an informal criterion for accession to the European Union’ (Kroh, 2010). Hence, the Stockholm Declaration demonstrates that the recollection of Nazi-era crimes with a central emphasis on the Holocaust has become a principal part of civic moral education in liberal Western and Westernizing nation states, particularly in Europe since 2000. These views are also echoed in sociologist Helmut Dubiel’s opinion that the SIF 2000’s representation of the Holocaust as a ‘European foundation myth’ is an attempt to ‘release the moral potential of its remembrance’ (Dubiel, 2004: 216–17), as well as in Alon Confino’s view, following and taking to extremes the ideas of Dan Diner, that the symbolism of contemporary Holocaust remembrance as moral and historical rupture has replaced the significance of the French Revolution as the ‘foundational past’ of human values in the West (Diner, 2007: 9; Confino, 2012: 5–6).

This article will specifically employ Emilio Gentile’s paradigm of civil religion to build on the work of scholars such as Lothar Probst, Daniel Levy, Natan Sznaider and Dan Stone who have addressed the importance of civil religion in understanding post-1989 Western European Holocaust memory politics (Probst, 2003: 45-58; Levy & Sznaider, 2007:

167; Stone, 2013: 221–2). In interrogating the relevance of Gentile’s paradigm of civil religion in relation to the discursive construction of the Stockholm Declaration and its impact on various nation states, this article seeks to nuance our understanding of the historical dynamics and limits of contemporary liberal forms of post-Communist sacralized politics, particularly but not exclusively in Europe. It also attempts to address the question as to whether international documents such as the Stockholm Declaration can be integrated into a canonical litany of rhetorical and symbolic motifs more often associated with the cultural, historical and sociological study of national civil religions. By exploring these themes and dynamics this article contributes towards delineating the globally metamorphosing forms of sacralized religion at the beginning of the third millennium. For as Amos Goldberg has noted in relation to major sites of Holocaust remembrance across the world such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Berlin’s Jewish Museum, Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM): ‘they mark a shift in the manner in which they relate to national territory, since they do not function merely as geographically delimited sites of a national civil religion but are also taking their place as global shrines of memory that attract pilgrims from a multitude of nations’ (Goldberg, 2016).

Civil Religion

Building on the intellectual legacies of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Emile Durkheim, the twentieth-century study of political, institutional and social forms of civil religion have become particularly synonymous with sociologist Robert Bellah’s path-breaking 1967 essay, ‘Civil Religion in America’. In recent decades studies of civil religion have been reinvigorated by scholars such as Marcela Cristi (2001) and Emilio Gentile (2006), the latter of whose definition and historical analyses of civil religion will be unpacked in relation to

contemporary forms of Holocaust remembrance. Gentile's approach which integrates both the politically constructed and organic elements of understanding and applying civil religion will be especially important in this analysis. This is because it opens up as opposed to narrowing the multiple ways in which sacralized politics can be comprehended, a flexibility which is particularly desirable when trying to understand the extent to which the paradigm of civil religion can be applied to the liberal remembrance of the Holocaust as implemented by various Western nation-states, primarily but not exclusively in Europe, and as mediated through a document such as the Stockholm Declaration.

Gentile categorizes civil religion as a sub-strand of what he calls secular religion. According to Gentile, secular religion is the by-product of processes of secularization and modernization, which nonetheless often mimic or incorporate the symbols and structures of traditional religions. For Gentile, there are two forms of secular religion, political religion and civil religion (Gentile, 2006: 138–46). Political religion is a type of sacralized politics that Gentile associates with states such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, the USSR and Maoist China and it is characterized by authoritarian, fundamentalist and exclusionary elements. While states with civil religions are not immune to forms of intolerance or bouts of communal violence towards perceived internal and external enemies, unlike states with political religions, they normally permit ideological plurality, acknowledge the institutional distinction between church and state and operate alongside traditional organized religions (Gentile, 2006: 140). Civil religions have included the nascent eighteenth-century democracies of post-revolutionary America and France.

If the analytical frameworks of civil and political religions are applied to different types of polity, Gentile also observes that there are certain commonalities which are typical of both civil and political religions. Gentile thus contends that typical traits of societies that can be perceived as having civil and political religions include the consecration of a 'secular

collective entity' in moralistic terms and the construction of an 'ethical and social code of commandments' which formalizes the relationship between the individual and the 'sacralised entity' (Gentile, 2006: 138–9). There is also the perception that the adherents of a civil or political religion are part of a 'community of the elect' which is carrying out a mission for the good of humanity. These religions of politics are also reinforced and transmitted to future generations through a 'political liturgy' which can be communicated via a leadership cult or a 'sacred history' which is ritually invoked and commemorated within the community (Gentile, 2006: 139). More specifically, these features associated with forms of secular religions often include the myth that a collective can be regenerated through politics; the representation of and desire to create a 'new man'; as well as the sanctification of the lives of citizen's who have perished for the collective in inter-state conflicts (Gentile, 2006: 29).

Civil Religion and the Holocaust at the Turn of the Millennium

Drawing on this theoretical context, the application of Gentile's definition of civil religion opens up a set of revealing, constructive and challenging lines of enquiry in relation to the SIF 2000 and the way in which this international event sought to reinforce and promote national forms of the commemoration of the Holocaust through the liberal framework of the Stockholm Declaration at the turn of the millennium. It will be argued that on the cusp of the third millennium and within the context of twentieth-century liberal political victories over the political religions of Italian Fascism, Nazism and Soviet Communism, the liberal rhetoric of Holocaust remembrance invoked through documents such as the Stockholm Declaration can be perceived as exhibiting at the international inter-state level some of the representational traits often previously associated with national civil religions. For example, Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya have analysed Israel's changing forms of civil

religion since 1948 and the role of collective manifestations of Holocaust remembrance within it (1983). However, as Israel constructs itself as an overtly Jewish state that integrates Judaic practices with liberal democracy, this also means that Israel's response to the Holocaust is likely to be radically different to various European national responses. As a result, two other interpretations will be important to this analysis, which although less directly linked to the civil religion paradigm are arguably more pertinent to understanding civil religion in the European context. The first is Rebecca Clifford's exploration of the French liberal framing of the remembrance of the Holocaust within the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man' discourse, particularly after Jacques Chirac's 1995 Vel'd'Hiv speech (Clifford, 2013: 194–200). Comparisons with Clifford's findings could also be made in relation to the discursive framing of the Holocaust in liberal 'universalistic' terms according to the central tenets of American civil religion at the USHMM. The second important interpretation is Dirk Moses's proposal that the discursive construction of the 'stigma' of the Holocaust and the Nazi past in the Federal Republic of Germany often manifests itself in linguistic frameworks which embody notions of trans-generational collective guilt and are sometimes communicated in secular religious terms through biblical language and/or notions of 'inherited sin' (Moses, 2007: 25). This means that this analysis of the construction of the remembrance of the Holocaust as part of a civil religion marks an innovative intervention in the pre-existing scholarship in that a central focus of its analysis involves not applying the framework of civil religion to one national polity, but rather unpacking the liberal secular religious elements of an international discursive document, the Stockholm Declaration, which has been adopted in different ways by countries which wanted to be perceived as endorsing Western, liberal values. For as Göran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister and aspiring European politician responsible for convening the SIF 2000, commented:

I remember Prime Minister Jospin saying, both to me personally and also in his

conference speech, that it was remarkable how we had devoted the whole of the 1990s to international conferences about economics, and now it was the new millennium and the first big conference was about ideology, humanism and values. (Persson, 2000)

Viewed within the horizon line of Gentile's sacralized politics, the representational form of the Stockholm Declaration can be seen as a 'social and ethical code of commandments' (Gentile, 2006: 139), which although different to many civil religions in its plurality of application to various nation-states as opposed to just one, is typical of the political and social utility ascribed to civil religions. This is because it reinforces and promotes the transmission of liberal values to future generations through state-led forms of education and ritualized performances such as Holocaust Memorial Days. Admittedly, it might be objected that the global and 'non-binding' nature of an international political document like the Stockholm Declaration fundamentally weakens its potential to be perceived within the framework of civil religion. This is because of the relative weakness of forms of popular communal identification with global events such as the SIF 2000 as well as the Stockholm Declaration's inter-state and institutional as opposed to national, communal and grassroots origins.

However, this does not necessarily negate the importance of viewing the representation of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes in the Stockholm Declaration as part of a 'civil religion', rather it opens up three inter-linked challenges. The first is to understand the primary region to which the Stockholm Declaration was applied and what this document was designed to mean for the simultaneously plural and collective identities of this region. For while non-European Western states such as the US and Israel were involved in the convening of the SIF 2000 and while sociologists Levy and Sznajder have seen the SIF 2000 as linked to the 'Americanization' of the Holocaust (Levy and Sznajder, 2006: 183), it was also a project that was born in Europe, in Sweden, and through its 'Liaison Projects' (these will be

explained in the following sections) was loosely linked to the Post-Communist reconstruction of Europe through the promotion of political and cultural Western, liberal democratic norms. In this way the creation, dissemination and application of the Stockholm Declaration can be seen as part of what historian Mark Mazower has described as the contested, complex, ongoing and unresolved processes of identity formations within Europe after the collapse of Communism (Mazower, 1999: xiv–xv). These identity formations for nation states within the continent of Europe, simultaneously included the sometimes clashing and conflicting aims of negotiating pre-existing national traditions of political sovereignty; mediating the impact of international and transnational social, economic, political and cultural dynamics as well as contributing to the often contentious economic and political project of integration into the European Union in the 1990s and 2000s.

The second challenge in attempting to understand if a document such as the Stockholm Declaration serves the function of promoting a form of ‘civil religion’ is to reject a slavish application of Gentile’s theories and instead to effectively delimit the extent to which a liberal sacralization of politics in relation to the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes has been encouraged since the SIF 2000. This is so that a nuanced understanding of contemporary forms and limits of ‘civil religion’ can be produced. In the case of Holocaust commemoration this civil religion manifested itself in the liberal discourse accompanying the growth of educational programmes, memorial days and other types of state-led ritualized remembrance. The third challenge is to begin to gesture towards the issues provoked by the institutional construction, reception and dissemination of sacralized forms of Holocaust memory work between the interstices of the transnational, international, national and local. It is hoped that by investigating these subjects this chapter will contribute towards delineating the changing forms of sacralized religion at the beginning of the third millennium, a period in which Gentile has argued that aside from the political religions of states such as North Korea

as well as the Republican Right's radicalization of America's post-9/11 'God's Democracy' (Gentile, 2008), 'civil and political religions appear[ed] everywhere to be receding' (Gentile, 2006: 136).

Civil Religion and the Stockholm International Forum (2000)

Against the backdrop of national concerns over far right activity and Holocaust education in Sweden, Prime Minister Göran Persson's SIF 2000 was in fact a global, if primarily Euro-centric event, with delegates from 46 nations present. The main components of the SIF 2000 consisted of opening and plenary sessions in which national politicians such as Ehud Barak (Israel), Bill Clinton (USA), Robin Cook (Britain), Vaclav Havel (Czech Republic), Lionel Jospin (France), Aleksander Kwasniewski (Poland) and Gerhard Schröder (Germany) pledged their support to the recovery and preservation of the evidence of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes. They were also expected to articulate their allegiance to fighting contemporary forms of anti-Semitism, racism, neo-fascism and genocide. The second part of the conference focused on a series of panels, workshops and seminars by Holocaust scholars and Genocide experts (such as Deborah Dwork, Ulrich Herbert, Michael Marrus, Robert Melson and James E. Young) as well as presentations by representatives of remembrance organizations such as Teresa Swiebocka (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum) and Jan Munk (Terézin Museum). A number of workshops also included speeches by Holocaust survivors such as Hédi Fried, Kitty Hart Moxon and Ben Helfgott (Fried, 2005). The presence of these survivors was arguably symbolic not only of the SIF 2000's deep respect for the victims but also of the social importance ascribed to traumatic testimonies in what Annette Wieviorka has called, 'the Era of the Witness' (Wieviorka, 2006).

In line with the main components structuring the SIF 2000, a key element within the Stockholm agenda was to draw attention to the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF). Established in 1998, the ITF was a growing collective of member states and NGOs dedicated to promoting research, remembrance and education about the Holocaust and the Nazi-era past, whose members at the time of the SIF 2000 (Sweden, America, Britain, Israel, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, France and Italy) were also involved in the organization of the conference (Wallin and Newman, 2009). Important to the ITF's early years would be the facilitation of 'Liaison Projects' particularly between Holocaust NGOs in America, Israel and Western Europe and Holocaust organizations in the post-Communist states of Central, Eastern, South-Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Moreover, the summarizing statement of the SIF 2000, the Stockholm Declaration, which also became the guiding document of the ITF, can be interpreted as promoting the remembrance of the Holocaust, within the context of broader Nazi-era crimes, as part of a civil religion for the members of this inter-state network.

The authors of the Stockholm Declaration included the Israeli Holocaust historian, genocide prevention activist and critic of extreme forms of Israeli religious nationalism, Yehuda Bauer; co-founder of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre and Aegis Trust for Genocide Prevention, Stephen Smith; the distinguished British Jewish and Holocaust studies scholar, David Cesarani; as well as American embassy representative, Jonathan Cohen (Stephen Smith cited in Allwork, 2015). While these authors did not aim to construct a text with the overtones of a civil religion and primary author Bauer certainly did not think that the document would have the impact or longevity that it has in fact had (Bauer cited in Allwork, 2015), the wording of the Stockholm Declaration nonetheless shares many characteristics associated with Gentile's definition of how democratic sacralized politics are rhetorically and institutionally constituted from 'above'. However, to interpret the Stockholm Declaration as

part of a civil religion, is also quite different from Gentile's previous applications of this framework, in that it attempts to show how the Stockholm Declaration contributes to the definition of the liberal beliefs which underpin the values of a collective of Western nation states represented by the ITF rather than articulating the ideological beliefs which underlie the secular religious social and cultural practices of a single polity.

Civil Religion and the Stockholm Declaration (2000)

In its eight point form the Stockholm Declaration can be interpreted as an 'ethical and social code of commandments', which represents the Holocaust through a liberal discourse and in moralistic terms. For example, the acts of 'Righteous Gentiles' and those who fought against the Nazis become, 'touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and good' (Bauer, 2000: 136). At the political level, there is also the sense in which the Stockholm Declaration seeks to promote a shared feeling of transnational liberal mission among its national adherents which is justified as being for the good of humanity. This is evident in the way in which the Stockholm Declaration encourages its affiliates to battle Holocaust denial as well as encouraging the prevention of 'genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia' (Bauer, 2000: 136). Finally, the Declaration ends by connoting the optimistic mood that it would like to promote liberal rebirth among its adherents who primarily came from America, Israel and the countries of Europe: 'It is appropriate that this, the first major international conference of the new millennium, declares its commitment to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past' (Bauer, 2000: 137).

The Stockholm Declaration is also typical of a document which can be interpreted within the framework of civil religion in that it utilizes language associated with religion in

political terms. In contrast to Israel's civil religion and its assimilation of the Jewish religious tradition, the Stockholm Declaration can be interpreted as transforming into secular religious form language associated with the European Christian liturgy and its symbolism of stigma, sacrifice and reconciliation. In a similar vein to Moses's analysis of German commemorative practices, the Stockholm Declaration can be perceived as 'stigmatic' in its statement that the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes 'have left an indelible scar across Europe' (Bauer, 2000: 136). It can also be suggested that the document utilizes language with Christian overtones when it notes that those who battled the Nazis made, 'selfless sacrifices' and that reconciliation must be promoted by reaffirming 'humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice' (Bauer, 2000: 136). These arguably 'christianized' elements of the Stockholm Declaration can be perceived as pointing not only to its construction for a primarily European-Christian audience, but also to the potential for controversy, particularly given Isabel Wollaston's analysis of the problematic elements of remembrance processes related to the 'Christianization' of the Holocaust in Poland. She describes these as attempts to "rewrite" the history of the Holocaust by emphasising the church's role as co-victim, and/or to interpret it by reference to Christian categories of meaning', such as penance, sacrifice, reconciliation and the cross (Wollaston, 1999–2000: 3).

The discourse structuring the Stockholm Declaration can also be seen as promoting a civil religion through its support of liberal forms of inter-generational education and social rituals and ceremonials to commemorate the collective remembrance of Nazi-era crimes, in particular the Holocaust. For example, in relation to this fundamental educational and ritualistic characteristic of civil religions, the Stockholm Declaration sought to, 'encourage the study of the Holocaust in all its dimensions' as well as to promote, 'appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance, including an annual day of Holocaust Remembrance in our countries' (Bauer, 2000). However, it was the advocacy of this type of ritualized activity,

which is such a central part of civil religions that has received some of the most scathing criticism from academics such as Dan Stone. This prominent scholar of Holocaust historiography has bemoaned Remembrance Days because ‘as performances they are almost inevitably kitsch ... they potentially re-victimise genocide victims who are excluded ... and they are inherently part of a political process that provides cheap brownie points to governments’ (Stone, 2005: 523).

Representing just one intellectual’s response to the phenomena of Remembrance Days, Stone’s comments pithily highlight some of the most problematic aspects of ritualized ceremonies of remembrance. For example, his stinging assessments can be supported by the Armenian controversy in relation to the launch of UK Holocaust Memorial Day. This began when it emerged from the UK Home Office that the Holocaust and more recent atrocities would be focused on at the 2001 national ceremony, excluding earlier genocides such as the Turkish genocide of Armenians during World War I. Reference to this atrocity was eventually integrated into the 2001 ceremony, following tough criticism from Armenian community groups and commentators such as Robert Fisk, who had argued that Armenian exclusion reflected British foreign policy interests: Turkey is a NATO ally and its government objected to and still objects to the recognition of the Armenian genocide (Fisk, 2000; Ahmed, 2001). Stone’s views also strike a chord with Mark Levene’s critique of the Western hypocrisies embedded in New Labour’s efforts to ‘ritualize’ the Holocaust as a liberal ‘sacred event’ when the national remembrance of this catastrophe coincided with the nexus of liberal interventionist discourses acting as a ‘moral alibi’ for military intervention in the Iraq War (Levene, 2006: 26). However, in counterbalance to Stone’s views, it can be contended that national remembrance days also potentially possess more diverse outcomes depending on their eclectic interpretation in different local and communal contexts within nation states. Equally, as Clifford has illustrated in relation to France and Italy (Clifford,

2013: 256–7), the public controversies that remembrance days often engender can also encourage social debates about diverse, complex and difficult narratives of national pasts. In the process these debates mitigate against Czech writer Milan Kundera's observation that, 'Before we are forgotten, we will be turned into kitsch. Kitsch is the stop-over between being and oblivion' (Kundera, 1984/1995: 270).

The Limits of the Stockholm Declaration as Civil Religion

It must also be acknowledged that there are limitations placed on the extent to which the Stockholm Declaration can be perceived as heralding a new form of liberal sacralized politics for implementation in various Western nation states, particularly in Europe. First, a non-binding international document such as the Stockholm Declaration can promote and reinforce liberal attitudes and Holocaust education and remembrance trends, but it cannot enforce them nor directly establish them, as the nation with its state bureaucracy, network of independent NGOs and plurality of local organizations often remains the primary site of civic activity. Secondly, if a function of civil religion is to promote social cohesion, a sacralized remembrance culture of the Holocaust and the Nazi past remains a challenging prospect particularly given the hugely contentious debates that have accompanied various efforts to publicly address the Third Reich's troubling legacies. Examples of these controversies are legion and have included: The Kastner Affair in 1950s Israel (Segev, 1991: 255–310); the 1980s Reagan/Kohl Bitburg scandal (Hartman, 1986); the Jan T. Gross *Neighbors* debate in Poland in the early 2000s (Gross, 2001; Polonsky and Michlic, 2004) as well as contemporary competing collective memories of oppression in relation to the Nazi and Communist pasts in post-Soviet states such as Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine (Zuroff, 2005).

Other potentially contentious issues in relation to the SIF 2000 and the Stockholm Declaration specifically include the ongoing debates surrounding what scholars such as Stuart D. Stein have identified as the problematic potential for the hierarchization of Nazi atrocities and genocides in Bauer and the Stockholm Declaration's discourse of Holocaust 'unprecedentedness' (Stein, 2005: 182). Equally, Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Str ath have critiqued the, 'politically safe condemnation of the Holocaust in the Stockholm Declaration' (2010: 8) as well as the organizers of the SIF 2000's failure to more directly address Muslim victimization during the Srebrenica massacre, commenting: 'Solidarity becomes a zero sum game when the solidarity is with the victims of yesterday instead of the victims of today' (Pakier and Str ath, 2010: 8–9). From this perspective, there were also the hypocrisies embedded in the rhetoric of the Stockholm Declaration (2000) given the international community's failures in regards to preventing atrocities in Chechnya and the Congo at the time of the conference, as well as in countries such as Sudan in the years following the SIF 2000.

Finally, the Stockholm Declaration remains ambivalent in relation to the paradigm of civil religion because although it can be perceived as recollecting the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes within a liberal, moralistic framework, it is untypical of a civil religion in that it does not advocate a numinous experience by mystifying the Holocaust or suggesting that there are elements of it that surpass comprehension. This is not unsurprising given the nationally self-critical implications of European reflection on the history of the Holocaust and the Third Reich. It also mirrors the fact that Bauer, the primary author of the Stockholm Declaration, has distinguished himself from other scholars in rejecting interpretations of the Jewish catastrophe which suggest its ineffability. Instead, Bauer stresses that the Holocaust must be understood historically as well as in relation to other genocides and contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism and the far right (Bauer, 2002: xi). Indeed for many

of the Holocaust remembrance activists involved, the SIF 2000 and the ITF were never about providing a 'civil religion', rather they were a response to genuine problems: the need to rectify the after-effects of distortive Communist discourses of the Jewish catastrophe; the demand to commemorate unmarked sites of atrocity; the necessity of educating as to why restitution processes were necessary in relation to the Nazi past as well as acting as a historical corrective to the outrageous claims of Holocaust deniers. This means that if in its liberal and moralistic rhetoric, advocacy of inter-generational education and promotion of ritualized forms of remembrance, the Stockholm Declaration can be perceived as advocating a type of civil religion, it also remains resolutely non-mystical in its anti-numinous stance as well as in the reality of the public reception of its contentious subject matter.

Civil Religion, the Holocaust and Processes of Europeanization, Westernization and Democratization

Despite the limitations outlined above, it can still be contended that the Stockholm Declaration can be seen as part of a civil religion. This is particularly in political-institutional terms and when combined with broader transnational, international and national developments which have promoted the establishment of liberal ritualized forms of Holocaust remembrance since 2000, especially although not exclusively in Europe. The Stockholm Declaration was followed by the Council of Europe's 2002 decision to establish a 'Day of Remembrance' in member states as well as the UN General Assembly's November 2005 Resolution 60/7 which mandated 27 January as 'International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust'. The cumulative impact of these trends was that remembrance days rapidly increased from a pre-SIF 2000 total of nine in Western style democracies (Austria, France, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden,

USA) to 34 across the world by 2010. States with newly established memorial days included: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and the UK (OSCE/ODIHR, 2010). Furthermore, many of these newly established remembrance days followed the precedent of Germany and Sweden in holding their ceremonies on or near to the 27 January (Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and the UK). Even Russia reported that Moscow and 30 other urban centres marked the UN's official 'International Day of Commemoration' between 2006 and 2010, although Russia has still to establish its own official Holocaust Remembrance Day (OSCE/ODIHR, 2010: 72).

While the international recognition of 27 January suggests a degree of uniformity, the official titling of these memorial days both conforms and departs from the Holocaust centred tone of the Stockholm Declaration, and instead reflects different national particularities, as well as showcasing slightly different emphases in terms of the victim groups commemorated. For example, while some states told the OSCE that the titles of their remembrance days reflect the fact that the main focus of their commemorative activities are primarily but not always exclusively the victims of the Holocaust (Canada, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and the USA); other states such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Monaco, Switzerland and Spain, remember those who suffered during the Holocaust, while dedicating their days more generally to preventing 'Crimes against Humanity' (OSCE/ODIHR, 2010: 8–9).

Although a historian such as Tony Kushner (1994) might see this latter trend as reflecting a degree of liberal ambivalence towards remembering the Jewish catastrophe

specifically; the undisputed growth in national commemoration days in the first decade after 2000 can be interpreted as attesting to the extent to which liberal forms of state-led remembrance of the Holocaust, often within the context of broader Nazi-era atrocities and/or other human rights transgressions, can be perceived as part of an institutionalized civil religion. States that ascribe to this civil religion are normally located on the European continent and are or aspire to be part of or allied to the EU, OSCE or NATO's sphere of influence. However, these developments are not without a certain irony given the EU's relatively small direct role in the Holocaust restitution campaigns of the 1990s as well as its minimal direct institutional involvement in the convening of the SIF 2000 (Eizenstat, 2004: 27; Allwork, 2015).

It is also an important observation that the increase in Holocaust memorial days corresponds with the rapid growth of the ITF or the international body that was supposed to implement what can be interpreted as the Stockholm Declaration's Holocaust centred civil religion of promoting research, remembrance and education about the Jewish catastrophe and Nazi-era crimes across the globe. In line with this, by 2008 its plenary comprised 26 member states. This meant that following a period of time as 'Liaison Partners' to already established ITF member states such as America, Britain, Germany, Israel, Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland, France and Italy; the countries of Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Switzerland had been made full members of the ITF by 2008 (Wallin and Newman, 2009: 24). Since 2008, Canada (2009), Finland (2010), Ireland (2011), Serbia (2011) and Slovenia (2011) have also joined. The 'Liaison' process, which was particularly important during the ITF's early years, has been described as involving the completion of a number of joint Holocaust research, remembrance and education initiatives followed by assessment of these projects by an international expert

group within the Task Force (Wallin and Newman, 2009: 76).

Moreover, while Donald Bloxham (2002) has noted the potential asymmetries in cultural power inherent in these ITF 'Liaison Projects', the Task Force has undoubtedly had some important successes in promoting research, remembrance and education about the Holocaust and Nazi era crimes across Europe and the wider world. This is particularly notable in relation to its co-operation with the USHMM in order to open the Bad Arolsen archives and preserve materials from the Jasenovac concentration camp. As evidenced by the press releases section of the ITF, and now the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's website, the body has also spoken out against the Holocaust denial of Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the continued discrimination faced by Europe's Roma and Sinti.

It should also be noted that the remembrance of the Jewish catastrophe specifically continues to be invoked by national members of the ITF within the framework of promoting liberal, secular values and religious tolerance. One of the most recent examples of this was French President, Francois Hollande's 22 July 2012 speech to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv Round up. Hollande's address acknowledged the crime, 'committed in France, by France' and occurred in the wake of fears over resurgent anti-Semitism raised by the Toulouse shootings (March 2012) perpetrated by Islamist extremist, Mohamed Merah. Although Hollande's speech was rooted in the specific experience of tragic events in France, the tone of his address nonetheless shared some similarities with the desire to promote tolerance and democracy which accompanied not only Chirac's path-breaking 1995 address but also the creation of Göran Persson's original project, *Forum för levande historia* (the Living History Forum, LHF). LHF preceded the founding of the ITF and was established in Sweden in 1997, before being institutionalized in 2003 as a 'nationally financed public educational authority' (Levine, 2005: 78). LHF was founded in response to the growth in activism by Sweden's hard right minority as well as in reaction to the

publication of a Stockholm University Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations (CEIFO) report (May 1997), the results of which seemed to suggest that approximately one-third of Swedish youths were unsure that the Holocaust had happened, while a minority were prepared to engage in Holocaust denial (Levine, 2005: 92). Thus, in a similar way to Persson, Hollande viewed the education of the next generation about the Holocaust as crucial to constructing, promoting and sustaining a democratic and tolerant polity: 'Ignorance is the source of many abuses. We cannot tolerate the fact that two out of three young French people do not know what the Vel d'Hiv roundup was' (Hollande, 2012).

Conclusion

Before decisively assessing the extent to which events such as the SIF 2000 and organizations like the ITF have contributed to the remembrance of the Holocaust becoming part of a civil religion, there clearly needs to be more research completed on the national and local impact of political-institutional policies such as the promotion of memorial days and the implementation of 'Liaison Projects'. Research on the impact of memorial days including their varying degrees and forms of national ritualization after 2000 has been begun by Clifford in relation to France and Italy and Andy Pearce in relation to the UK. Equally, my primary research conducted into the British/Lithuanian 'Liaison Project' (2000–2003) has suggested that this initiative contributed to British dialogues and activities with the Lithuanian government and Lithuanian Holocaust organizations such as the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. These activities included Suzanne Bardgett's (Curator, Holocaust exhibition, Imperial War Museum, London) visit to the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and the London Jewish Cultural Centre's inter-cultural teaching initiatives with Lithuanian and Polish educators (Allwork, 2013).

That said, the policies that the Task Force advocates can also provoke resentment in relation to the collective remembrance of Communism in some post-Soviet countries, including Lithuania, as well as populist backlash against what is sometimes perceived as international interests meddling in national affairs. For example, following US critiques of Estonia's failures to prosecute former Nazi war criminals, an opinion poll commissioned by the nation's popular newspaper, *Eesti Päevaleht* revealed that 93 per cent of Estonians opposed the 2002 creation for 2003 inauguration of a 'Day of the Holocaust' to commemorate the Jewish catastrophe, genocides and other 'Crimes against Humanity' (Ellick, 2004). Moreover, framing the remembrance of the Holocaust within the context of liberal, democratic values is not without its problems, providing as it does a highly visible multicultural icon for material or online desecration by anti-Semitic political and/or religious radicals (Prowe, 1998: 319). From a different perspective and in relation to the liberal agenda of LHF, anxieties have also been articulated as to the overly bureaucratic character of the organization as well as questions asked as to whether this public body has effectively battled Swedish anti-Semitism (Levine, 2005: 95). For example, despite LHF's efforts, in 2012 a representative of the Obama administration, Hannah Rosenthal (US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, 2009–2012) drew attention to and criticized continuing anti-Semitism in Sweden, particularly in Malmö (Rosenthal, 2012). Kristin Wagrell (2012) has also expressed concerns as to the extent to which LHF truly encourages a self-critical confrontation with Sweden's past (cf. Wagrell's article in this volume). Additionally, Tanja Schult has highlighted how the drawings of Swedish artist Patrick Nilsson in *Sensmoral or Death* (2001) can be read as an attempt to provoke a sustained critical, 'reflection on the standardised and regulated remembrance of the Holocaust' promoted by the Swedish government since the late 1990s (see Schult's article in this volume).

However, with the aftershocks of the Eurozone crisis, slashes to public spending and

resurgent forms of far right and Islamist extremism, it is perhaps the multiple social, political and bureaucratic-economic challenges posed by the austerity era which pose the biggest challenges to what can be perceived as the current multi-faceted civil religion of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes. This has been powerfully addressed by scholar of the collective memory of World War II and the Holocaust in Greece, Anna Maria Droumpouki (2013). Against the backdrop of the nation's economic crisis, Droumpouki has pointed to the desecration of a Jewish monument in Thessaloniki with swastikas (17 June 2011) and the recent re-emergence of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories among political extremists. Thus, whatever the shortcomings of the Stockholm Declaration's representation of the Holocaust as part of a civil religion for European and Westernizing states, the liberal values and issues of public history with which the ITF engages continues to be both important and controversial. This is because the world is now confronting post-9/11 and recession era challenges in relation to excavating and exhibiting the traumatic and turbulent Nazi past. Working as part of these changing times, the ITF moved from the temporary status suggested by the name Task Force to a title which reflects a more permanent body, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in December 2012. Consisting of 31 states globally with Bulgaria, Portugal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Uruguay as 'Observer Countries' (IHRA, 2015), it will be interesting to see if this name change signifies wider shifts in the Alliance's membership and remit.

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