The Fritz Bauer Institute was established as a foundation under German civil law in Frankfurt am Main in 1995. It was founded by the City of Frankfurt, the State of Hessen and the Friends of the Fritz Bauer Institute Association. Since 2000, the institute has been affiliated to the Goethe-University in Frankfurt. As an independent cultural institute, it researches the history and impact of the National Socialist mass crimes, particularly the Holocaust. The institute carries the name of the former attorney general of Hessen, Fritz Bauer, the democratic reformer of the judiciary and initiator of the Frankfurt Auschwitz proceedings.

The work of the Fritz Bauer Institute is separated into four scientific departments: documentation, archive and library; culture of remembering and reception research; education science and historical-political education; contemporary history research. The institute works on interdisciplinary research projects, develops educational programs for school and non-school projects; it organizes exhibitions, specialist conventions and other events. The institute cooperates with numerous scientific research institutes, museums and memorial places in the whole world.

Intersection of theory building and cultural practice: The Fritz Bauer Institute promotes academic as well as social dialogue and communicates scientific research results to a broad public. It publishes research results, educational material, artistic reflections and historical sources.
A short survey

On January 15, 1995, fifty years after the National Socialist concentration and extermination camps were liberated, the State of Hessen, the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Friends of the Fritz Bauer Institute Association founded the first German interdisciplinary center for the study and documentation of the history and the impact of the Holocaust. The Association’s more than 1,000 members include numerous German and international celebrities as well as institutions, firms, cities, counties and communities.

Remembering the Holocaust and confronting National Socialist crimes has been and is today perhaps more than ever before a problem for German society. Generations clash in various ways over the question of how to deal with the history of National Socialist society. Consciousness of the widespread involvement in crimes continues to be suppressed and ideological causes belittled up to the present day. How difficult it is to find a generally acceptable way to commemorate those murdered! If we wish to remember their lives and commemorate their deaths, we have to take a careful and honest look at our own view of history. The Fritz Bauer Institute is trying to offer ideas and to sharpen our awareness of the way our society has developed since Auschwitz and for the ways we have confronted the consequences. Scientific reconstruction and a careful analysis of the means and limits to commemoration and representation are prerequisites to a better understanding of the significance and the effects of Auschwitz on our political culture.

The Institute cooperates with research institutes and educational institutions, with memorial sites and museums in Germany and abroad. It also maintains contacts to a number of survivors’ associations. Institute activities range from research projects and interdisciplinary exchange to developing educational pilot projects, participating in memorial event projects and counseling communities, associations and firms in their commemorative work. Exhibitions conceived and/or sponsored by the Institute regularly travel to museums, memorial sites, communal institutions and educational facilities. Publications – literary texts, exhibition catalogues, educational materials, documentary monographs, bibliographies and essays – as well as conferences, lectures and film discussions round out the Institute’s varied activities.

The Educational Center – a joint facility of the Fritz Bauer Institute and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt – offers a comprehensive overview of didactic materials for teaching about the Holocaust. In cooperation with other pedagogical institutions, classroom materials and didactic models for formal and informal education are being developed here. Counseling, in-service training and supervision belong to the Department’s tasks as well. The Center strives to encourage responsible educational work which takes the various family and collective backgrounds of children, adolescents and citizens in today’s multicultural German society into account. A critical approach to German history and a human rights oriented education are the Department’s two distinct goals.

Some of our publication series:
› Bulletin »Einsicht«
› Yearbook
› Wissenschaftliche Reihe
One of the central objectives of the Fritz Bauer Institute is the planning and realization of research projects, academic conferences and interdisciplinary work groups. This requires cooperation with universities, educational centers and memorial sites. The interdisciplinary approach offers the chance to develop new empirical perspectives while serving as a necessary corrective to the narrow-mindedness of specialization. The core of the Institute’s research on the history of the Holocaust focuses on the social and individual histories, conditions facilitating the rise of National Socialism, and on the political and social forms of action and perception during the Third Reich.

In the course of time, the interdependence between National Socialist rule and society as well as regional differences in the effects of National Socialist rule have begun to gain increasing academic attention. Today the main questions focus on German social behavior and on the involvement of ordinary citizens in the crimes, on societal acceptance of the central tenets of National Socialist rule and last but not least on anti-Semitism and actions based on racial ideologies. Studies of these issues naturally refer not only to the regime’s protagonists and the SS terror apparatus, i.e. the National Socialist »special institutions«. They concern as well the various perpetrators and groups involved at middle and lower administrative levels.

Research on the impact of the Holocaust will consider how German postwar society has dealt with the topic, whether in the form of public commemorative events or in the form of private remembrance or political and social action.

The Institute strives to establish a place where historiography, political culture and the many aesthetic forms of representation can be reviewed critically. It hopes to offer a forum for discussing the interaction between reconstruction, interpretation and symbolization. It aims at a comparative analysis of the ways in which various groups and nations try to integrate (or reject) Auschwitz into (or from) the »traditional elements« of their symbolical orders and their cultural memory.

Participation in this kind of comparative historical and cultural research requires more than just a general willingness to take a look at varying scientific methods and objects. Taking part in this kind of research implies self-reflection, critical readings and hermeneutic analysis of one’s own images, narratives and interpretations.
The challenge the educational work is facing, lies in the fact that today, this is a society in which more and more people of different cultural and historical backgrounds have come to live. This presents many opportunities and difficulties in seeking educational ways to confront the history and the impact of the Holocaust in and on German society. Accordingly, research and materials developed in the Department focus on finding methodologically appropriate approaches to teaching about the Holocaust in intercultural educational settings. This implies looking for ways to impart historical knowledge using methods more often employed to help young people learn socially responsible answers to ethical conflicts. While developing classroom materials, the Department emphasizes in-service training for teachers and others involved in pedagogical work as the central forum for counseling and concept discussion.

Fritz Bauer

Fritz Bauer was born 1903 in Stuttgart. He emigrated from Germany to Scandinavia in 1936 after having been forced to resign from his work as a jurist and interned in a concentration camp. In 1949, he returned to Germany to participate in building a democratic society. He was a pioneer in reforming penal law and the prisons system. He strove to enable young criminals to be resocialized, and he constantly reminded the judicial administration of its social responsibilities.

In 1952, as district attorney in Brunswick, Bauer defended the right of resistance against National Socialism. 1956 he became Hessian State Attorney General. In 1959 Bauer had an essential part in the capture of Adolf Eichmann by handing the information of Eichmann’s whereabouts to the Mossad. As Hessian Attorney General Fritz Bauer set the stage for the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, which took place 1963–1965. These trials evoked for the first time in Germany a wide public response and a readiness previously lacking to confront recent German history. Bauer understood the significance of the processes as self-enlightenment of German society in the paths of the law.

In 1968, in the midst of preparations for a further trial of the desk murderers among the National Socialist judicial administration, the bureaucrat perpetrators responsible for euthanasia crimes, Fritz Bauer died. The trial never took place.

The Fritz Bauer Institute is committed to the memory of Fritz Bauer, the democratic German legal reformer who initiated the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963–1965). Fritz Bauer considered the Auschwitz Trial a way for German society to use the legal system as an opportunity for self-reflection, to »put ourselves on trial and to learn about the dangerous factors in our history«.
Websites

Fritz Bauer Institute
*History and Impact of the Holocaust*
www.fritz-bauer-institut.de

Pädagogisches Zentrum Frankfurt
*Educational Center of the Fritz Bauer Institute and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt*
The Education Centre combines the topics of German-Jewish history and Jewish presence in the European context with the history of the Holocaust and its impact on the contemporary society. For this purpose, it offers trainings, workshops and study days as well as teaching materials and advice.
www.pz-ffm.de

Norbert Wollheim Memorial
*Place of remembrance and information about the victims of Buna/Monowitz*
Norbert Wollheim (1913–1998) was a survivor of the Buna/Monowitz concentration camp. He had to perform forced labor for the I.G. Farben Industries at their construction site in Auschwitz. In 1951 he filed a suit against the conglomerate in a test case seeking compensation. The Wollheim Memorial combines commemoration of the victims of Buna/Monowitz with information about the history of their persecution and compensation.
The memorial site is in the park in front of the IG Farben Building, which now houses the humanities and cultural studies departments of the Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main.
www.wollheim-memorial.de

Before the Holocaust
*Internet portal – Photos of Hessian Jews in their everyday lives*
www.vor-dem-holocaust.de

Cinematography of the Holocaust
*Online Database – Documentation and record of moving image materials*
www.cine-holocaust.de

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