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My research aims to explore the way in which the memory of expulsion has informed German-Polish relations within the context of debate over the proposed *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen* (ZgV),¹ and to analyze the meaning of this debate for the negotiation of a European memory. It will question why the memory of flight and expulsion has served as a particular source of tension in the German-Polish relationship since 2000, and how the controversy over the planned Center against Expulsion can be understood. More narrowly, this study will assess the “re-appreciation of victimhood” in German public discourse since the 1990s and question the basis of the overwhelmingly negative Polish response to the proposed documentation centre. It will conclude by analyzing the implications of the debate surrounding the Center against Expulsions for the negotiation of a European memory and identity.

Thanks to the support of the Center for European Studies, I was able to travel to Germany for two weeks in September 2012. My hope was to visit the permanent “*zichtbares Zeichen*” exhibit at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. However, the exhibit had not yet opened when I visited. My trip nevertheless proved productive. Before travelling to Berlin I spent two full days in Hamburg. There, I visited two monuments to the civilian victims of the Allied bombing campaign, which was particularly destructive in Hamburg. As a monument to the victims of the fires that swept Hamburg in 1943, one of the city’s cathedrals has been left as it was following the bombing of the city. The experience of German civilians in the Allied “bombing war” forms a crucial facet of contemporary understandings of German victimhood. From my time in Hamburg it is evident that this aspect of the German war experience continues to colour memories and understandings of the past.

Although I had planned to continue onward to Poland from Berlin, I spent the remainder of my trip in the German capital. This proved beneficial as there was more than enough to see and do there. Though the “*zichtbares Zeichen*” exhibit is not yet open at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, I nevertheless spent two full days there. Of particular interest was the current representation of the expulsion of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe. In the whole museum only a single panel is devoted to the expulsions. Upon seeing this, it became immediately apparent why the opening of an entire, permanent exhibit has proven controversial in Germany and abroad, and why it will certainly do so when it finally does open.

Overall, the time I spent in Germany was very productive. I am grateful to the European Commission, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Center for European Studies for their generosity and support.

¹ Since March 2008 the name of the project is *Sichtbares Zeichen gegen Flucht und Vertreibung* (Visible Symbol). This essay proposes to consider the debate that surrounded the initial proposed documentation centre as well as that which continues to take place.