

阅读理解精炼 (1)

It's the worst event in human being's nautical (航海的) history , six times more deadly than the Titanic . When the German cruise ship Wilhelm Gustloff was hit by torpedoes (鱼雷) fired from a Russian submarine in the final winter of World War II , more than 10,000 people – mostly women , children and old people fleeing the final Red Army push into Nazi Germany – were packed aboard .

An ice storm had turned the decks into frozen sheets that sent hundreds of families sliding into the sea as the ship tilted and began to go down . Others desperately tried to put lifeboats down . Some who succeeded fought off those in the water who had the strength to try to claw their way aboard . Most people froze immediately . “ I'll never forget the screams , ” says Christa Ntitzmann , 87 , one of the 1,200 survivors . She recalls watching the ship , brightly lit , slipping into its dark grave- and into seeming nothingness , rarely mentioned for more than half a century .

Now 's Nobel Prize-winning author Gtinter Grass has revived the memory of the 9

,000 dead , including more than 4,000 children-
with his latest novel *Crab Walk* , published last month . The b
ook ,which will be out in English next year , doesn't dwell on t
he sinking : its heroine is a pregnant young woman who survi
ves the catastrophe only to say later : “ Nobody wanted to hea
r about it , not here in the West (of Germany) and not at all in
the East . ”

The reason was obvious . As Grass put in a recent interview
with the weekly *Die Woche* : “ Because the crimes we Germa
ns are responsible for were and are so dominant , we didn't h
ave the energy left to tell of our own sufferings . ” The long sil
ence about the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* was probably u
navoidable – and necessary .

By unreservedly owning up to their country's monstrous cri
mes in the Second World War , Germans have managed to wi
n acceptance abroad , marginalize the neo-
Nazis at home and make peace with their neighbors .

Today's unified is more prosperous and stable than at any
time in its long , troubled history . For that , a half century of w
illful forgetting about painful memories like the German Titanic
was perhaps a reasonable price to pay . But even the most p
olitically correct Germans believe that they've now earned the
right to discuss the full historical record . Not to equate Germ
an suffering with that of its victims , but simply to acknowledg

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