GROWING
IN THE
SHADOW
OF
ANTIFASCISM

Remembering the Holocaust in State-Socialist Eastern Europe

Edited by

KATA BOHUS · PETER HALLAMA · STEPHAN STACH

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAN, UdW: Archiwum akt nowych, Urząd do Spraw Wyznań (Archive of Modern Records, Ministry of Religious Affairs), Warsaw

ABS: Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive), Prague

AŻIH, ARG: Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, Archiwum Ringelbluma (Jewish Historical Institute, Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto)

AŽMP: Archiv Židovského muzea v Praze (Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague)

BArch: Bundesarchiv

BFG: *Bleter far Geshikhte*

BStU: Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Agency of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)

BŻIH: *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*

ITI: Institut Terezínské iniciativy (Terezín Initiative Institute), Prague

JHI: Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), Warsaw

MNL OL: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (Hungarian National Archives)

NA: Národní archiv České republiky (Czech National Archives), Prague

SBBPK: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz (State Library of Berlin–Prussian Cultural Heritage)

SOA Litoměřice, PT: Státní oblastní archiv v Litoměřicích, Litoměřice, f. Památník Terezín (State Regional Archive in Litoměřice, Litoměřice, f. Terezín Memorial)

SzM KEMKI ADK: Szépművészeti Múzeum – Közép-Európai Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet, Archívum és Dokumentációs Központ (Museum of Fine Arts—Central European Research Institute for Art History, Archive and Documentation Center), Budapest

Zentralarchiv: Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (Central Archive for the Research of Jewish History in Germany), University of Heidelberg

Acknowledgments

Kata Bohus · Peter Hallama · Stephan Stach

Introduction

The Holocaust took place primarily in Eastern Europe and the vast majority of its victims were Jews from this region. However, the historical narrative of the Holocaust—especially as it has emerged since the 1980s—has been dominated by a Western interpretation. This view has considered the period of the Cold War a kind of "black hole" in Eastern Europe where the memory of the Holocaust was suppressed by socialist states that forced the discourse about World War II into a rigid ideological framework that considered the war as a battle between fascism and antifascism. According to this interpretation, antifascist discourse did not allow for the discussion of Jewish victimhood. The present volume challenges this view, demonstrating that antifascism was neither a monolithic narrative nor did it fully erase Holocaust memory. It aims to show how during state socialism Holocaust survivors, as well as Jewish and non-Jewish activists, historians, writers, artists, and journalists, used an antifascist narrative framework to make room for the memory of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe.

On this part of the continent, both Jews and non-Jews experienced brutality, loss, and victimization under German occupation to a far greater extent than in occupied Western Europe.[1] Eastern Europe had been a center of Jewish life before World War II, but only a small part of its prewar Jewish population survived the German mass murder. The surviving Jews of Europe had experienced the war in very different ways. "Some managed to stay alive in German-occu-

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1   Zvi Gitelman, "Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union," in *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18, 30–31.

pied Europe, some in labor or death camps, some with fake 'Aryan' identities, some in hiding, and some fighting with partisan units. Others had spent the war in exile abroad, in diverse political and personal contexts."[2] After the war, many surviving Jews had to struggle with social and economic problems, and with popular antisemitism that survived the defeat of Nazi Germany and its allies. Non-Jewish societies had witnessed the Holocaust on different stages. Some participated, willingly or under pressure, in the Holocaust, and/or benefited from it. Some helped their Jewish neighbors while most did not, both for a variety of reasons. When it comes to individual biographies, these roles frequently contrast, overlap, or merge into ambivalent experiences that cannot be described using clear-cut categories like "perpetrator" or "victim." These differing experiences of Jewish survivors and non-Jewish societies had a profound influence on the way the Holocaust was later remembered.

The communist political system that took hold in most of these countries after the war also had an impact on the way the Holocaust was remembered, even though the precise way these regimes were configured differed. After the Red Army had expelled German forces from the region, local communist activists, many of whom had spent the war years in the Soviet Union, installed state-socialist governments with guidance and support from the Soviet government. These local communist movements, often weak in the interwar period, sought to gain popular support by invoking antifascism as the guiding concept of their new societies.

Antifascism

Prior to the war, antifascism was a diffuse and unstructured political movement that aimed to unite various political currents in a popular front against the rising fascist movements,[3] and it quickly became the common denominator of the anti-Axis Powers during the war. The opposition to Hitler (and to General Franco's coup in Spain) enabled antifascism to garner popular support because it was perhaps the only shared quality that united communists and socialists, as well as

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2   Atina Grossmann and Kata Bohus, "Introduction," in *Our Courage: Jews in Europe 1945–48*, ed. Kata Bohus, Atina Grossmann, Werner Hanak, and Mirjam Wenzel (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 12.

3   Hugo García, Mercedes Yusta, Xavier Tabet, and Cristina Clímaco, "Beyond Revisionism: Rethinking Antifascism in the Twenty-First Century," in *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present,* ed. Hugo García, Mercedes Yusta, Xavier Tabet, and Cristina Clímaco (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 4.

liberals and at least some conservatives. Consequently, antifascism also became the basis of the politics of "popular" or "national fronts" after the end of the war, which gradually led to the implementation of communist rule in East Central and Southeastern Europe. In the postwar communist-antifascist interpretational framework, the victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany was interpreted not only as a military success but as a moral and ideological victory over fascism and capitalism.[4]

From a Marxist point of view, fascism was not a specific or isolated phenomenon in European history; it was a logical consequence of capitalism and an expression of its crisis. Fascism was considered to be "the most reactionary and most aggressive bourgeois political movement in the period of the general crisis of capitalism,"[5] and fascism's main objective was "to maintain the capitalist social system."[6] In this reading, fascism continued to be a major threat in Europe after the war, since capitalist regimes were expected to turn to fascism in moments "when they are not able to maintain their political and economic power by means of traditional bourgeois democracy."[7]

According to this Marxist understanding of fascism, the antifascist fight during World War II and the Soviet victory clearly legitimized the establishment of socialist regimes in the postwar years. The constant threat of (neo-)fascism in Western Europe justified the ongoing antifascist struggle and, thus, the continued dominance of communism in the region. Over the postwar period, antifascism was increasingly used as a propagandistic tool to establish a clear-cut ideological dichotomy between friends ("antifascists") and enemies ("fascists"),[8] particularly in rhetorical attacks on West Germany.

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4   There was no single coherent Marxist-Leninist theory of fascism before the war. The official Comintern definition of 1933 saw fascism as a tool of "finance capital" that was aimed at creating an organized mass base. During the interwar period, a number of Marxist theories described fascism as a reactionary ideology supported by the petty bourgeoisie that was aimed at crushing the working class. The widening support of Hitler's NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) in the early 1930s was explained as the result of the manipulation by the bourgeoisie. For a detailed account of Marxist theories of fascism, see Dave Renton, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 1999) and David Beetham, ed., *Marxists in Face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Inter-war Period* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

5   Vlastislav Kroupa, ed., *Český antifašismus a odboj: Slovníková příručka* [Czech antifascism and resistance: A handbook] (Prague: Naše vojsko, 1988), 111.

6   Vladimír Krechler, ed., *Příruční slovník k dějinám KSČ* [Desk dictionary of the history of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], vol. 1: A-O (Prague: Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1964), 189.

7   Kroupa, *Český antifašismus*, 111.

8   Michael Seidman, *Transatlantic Antifascisms: From the Spanish Civil War to the End of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 233–36.

This propagandistic use of "the myth of wartime antifascist resistance"[9] by socialist regimes, together with the dominance of the heroic war narrative, reinforced the marginalization of the Jewish memory of the Holocaust. It has increased the often-cited "competition of the victims,"[10] leading several scholars to depict antifascism as a monolithic propaganda element and a doctrine that completely suppressed all memory of the Holocaust.[11]

The contributions of this book challenge this view in proposing to reconsider antifascism in its multiple and contradictory understandings and appropriations as a framework for public discourse. Antifascism framed, without any doubt, the memory of the war and the Jewish catastrophe in socialist states, at least until the system change in 1989–91. However, antifascism was not the monolithic doctrine that Western observers and historians believed it to be. Through its propagandistic use, antifascism was ritualized, and therefore gradually lost its exclusive explanatory power in interpreting the confrontation of fascism (capitalism) and antifascism (communism) as it culminated during World War II. National and nationalist interpretations of the war, for instance, gained importance from the 1950s and 1960s on.[12] Furthermore, antifascism was appropriated in very different forms. Individuals and groups living under state socialism "broke down" the antifascist narrative and used it to tell other stories. Youth groups, for instance, or circles within the churches appropriated antifascism in their own ways and proposed an "alternative antifascism."[13] Antifascism was never monolithic but meant different things in different places and different periods.[14] It could

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9   Tony Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (1992): 100.

10 Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La concurrence des victimes: Génocide, identité, reconnaissance* (Paris: Ed. la Découverte, 1997).

11 See, for instance, Dan Diner, "On the Ideology of Antifascism," *New German Critique* 67 (Winter 1996): 130; Anson Rabinbach, "Antifascism," in *Staging the Third Reich: Essays in Cultural and Intellectual History*, ed. Anson Rabinbach, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Dagmar Herzog (London: Routledge, 2020), 189–97; Antonia Grunenberg, *Antifaschismus: Ein deutscher Mythos* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt Verlag, 1993); Peter Monteath, "Holocaust Remembrance in the German Democratic Republic—and Beyond," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. John-Paul Himka and Joanna B. Michlic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 223–60; Thomas C. Fox, "The Holocaust under Communism," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 436.

12 Maciej Górny, *The Nation Should Come First: Marxism and Historiography in East Central Europe* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013).

13 Ehrhart Neubert, "Antifaschismus, alternativer," in *Lexikon Opposition und Widerstand in der SED-Diktatur*, ed. Hans-Joachim Veen, Bernd Eisenfeld, and Hans M. Kloth (Berlin: Propyläen, 2000), 48–49; Catherine Plum, *Antifascism After Hitler: East German Youth and Socialist Memory, 1949–1989* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

14 José Maria Faraldo, "An Antifascist Political Identity? On the Cult of Antifascism in the Soviet Union and post-Socialist Russia," in García et al., *Rethinking Antifascism*, 211–12.

include a broad array of experiences like the memory of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War[15] or Jewish suffering. In this context, it could be used for altogether different purposes, including maintaining and addressing Holocaust memory.

This volume examines these expressions of Holocaust memory in the shadow of antifascism, by bringing case studies from several socialist countries, namely the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and various parts of the Soviet Union. However, the editors are aware that some important areas of socialist Eastern Europe, most importantly the Balkan region, are missing from the volume and would be worthy topics of investigation for future research. The contributions deal with Holocaust research and various forms of Holocaust memory ranging from literature and art to performative, public modes of memory. They explore local, national, and transnational confrontations with the Holocaust, often focusing closely on individual agency and a bottom-up perspective from the late 1940s to the 1980s, covering different phases of state socialism.

The commonly used periodization of the state-socialist era is also present in the contributions of this volume as the events that changed the general features of the regimes usually had an impact on the formation of Holocaust memory as well, even if indirectly. During Stalin's reign as First Secretary of the Soviet Union, one-party regimes were set up across Eastern Europe and implemented a "reign of terror" in the region. Later, the de-Stalinization campaign led by Nikita Khrushchev after Stalin's death in 1953 brought a period of relative easing of Cold War tensions known as "the thaw" and also allowed for cautious reforms in Eastern Europe. However, the crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the Prague Spring in 1968 showed that there were limits to Moscow's tolerance of political deviation within its zone of influence. The late 1960s and the 1970s were characterized by a certain conservativism in Moscow's policies and economic stagnation under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. These were accompanied by some degree of inventiveness and variety of policies in Eastern Europe to alleviate growing economic tensions. The problems of socialist economy became ever more apparent during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and even Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of "glasnost" (openness) and "perestroika" (restructuring) could not save state socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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15   On Poland, see Bartłomiej Różycki, "Dąbrowszczacy i pamięć o hiszpańskiej wojnie domowej w Polsce Ludowej" [The Dabrowski battalion and the memory of the Spanish Civil War in People's Poland], *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 21 (2013): 167–212.

Besides these general political developments, certain events had a direct effect on Holocaust memory in state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe that make frequent appearance in many of the texts on the following pages. The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1960–1961 helped incorporate the perspective of victims into Holocaust discourse. Israel's Six-Day War with its Arab neighbors in 1967 led to the breaking off of diplomatic relations between state-socialist countries (except Romania) and the Jewish state, radicalizing the confrontative political discourse and antisemitism in some of the former. When, on December 7, 1970, German Chancellor Willy Brandt fell to his knees at Nathan Rapoport's Memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the Polish capital, the gesture not only marked the beginning of renewed German-Polish relations, it was also an open gesture of German atonement for Nazi crimes that opened up the possibility for the examination of the responsibility of average Germans, in West Germany and to some extent in the GDR.

The four thematic units of this volume address different areas of the public sphere where the memory of the Holocaust found expression. These areas also represent different "languages," different ways of speaking about the Holocaust, and they constitute the main structural elements of the book. Historiography, sites of memory, art, and the media were those areas of public discourse where narratives of the Jewish catastrophe were formed and thus are closely inspected by the contributors. At the same time, these areas of public discourse have on many occasions interacted with each other, and there was also cross-fertilization between the same areas of discourse in different countries within the Soviet zone of influence. The contributions of Katarzyna Person and Agnieszka Żółkiewska, Peter Hallama, and Benjamin Lapp highlight the role of individual historians in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany who were able to publish about the Holocaust for both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences, even when official narratives of the war did not favor such histories and when their work reached only a small circle of readers. Commemorative practices that were geographically confined, and were thus available for a limited audience, were also able to develop Holocaust narratives. These evolved within the Hungarian Jewish community, as Kata Bohus shows, or at a specific site of persecution in the Lithuanian SSR, as Gintarė Malinauskaitė demonstrates, or at abandoned Jewish cemeteries in rural areas of Poland, as Yechiel Weizman describes in his contribution. Artistic representations frequently became part of such commemorative practices, such as commissioned art pieces at such famed locations as Auschwitz and Mauthausen. However, as Daniel Véri demonstrates, such com-

missioned art projects were rarely able to bring in new perspectives, as opposed to non-commissioned artworks that frequently depicted the victims' perspectives, especially when using such novel techniques as abstraction and figuration. New perspectives on the Holocaust are also detectable in literary works. Richard S. Esbenshade examines the intersections of Jewish and national memories of the war in Hungarian popular literature novels, while Anja Tippner points at the cross-referencing and borrowing of elements of the officially sanctioned and established memory discourse in Anatolii Rybakov's novel, *Heavy Sand*, in the Soviet Union. Such reciprocal influence between Soviet memories of the Great War and Jewish Holocaust experiences is also traced by Miriam Schulz, whose analysis of reports about Jewish commemorations in the Yiddish-language *Sovetish Heymland* is part of the section about media and public debate. Both Alexander Walther and Stephan Stach bring examples from East German publishing to demonstrate that the inclusion of the victims' perspective was possible even in highly propagandistic and heavily censored publications.

What all the texts of this volume have in common is the questioning of still widely held theses on Eastern European Holocaust memory and historiography before the fall of communism. What were these former approaches and hypotheses concerning Holocaust memory in socialist Eastern Europe? And where can our volume bring new perspectives and arguments into the debate?

Erased Memory? Inauthentic Memory? Competing Memories?

Perhaps the most cited example of the ideological repression of the memory of the Holocaust under socialism is the fate of the so-called Black Book of Soviet Jewry (*Chernaia kniga*).[16] During the war, a group of Soviet Jewish intellectuals known as the Jewish Antifascist Committee (JAC) was working to increase Western support for the eastern front. Though organized under the Soviet Information Bureau, the JAC cooperated closely with Jewish organizations in the United States, Britain, and Palestine. In late 1942, the Committee agreed with its Western partners that a book detailing Nazi atrocities against Jews would

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16   On the Black Book and its history, see Ilya Altman, "The History and Fate of The Black Book and The Unknown Black Book," in *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-occupied Soviet territories*, ed. Joshua Rubenstein and Ilya Altman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), xix–xxxix. On the Jewish Antifascist Committee, see Frank Grüner, *Patrioten und Kosmopoliten: Juden im Sowjetstaat 1941–1953* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 55–128 and 452–88; Shimon Redlich, *War, Holocaust, and Stalinism: A Documented History of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995).

serve its purposes well. The JAC began gathering evidence about German crimes against Soviet Jews, some of which was published in its Yiddish mouthpiece *Eynikeyt* (Unity). Collected materials were sent to the US in late 1944, resulting in the publication of *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime against the Jewish People*[17] in 1946. One committee member, Ilya Ehrenburg, attempted to publish a Russian edition, but Soviet authorities hesitated, initially complaining that the manuscript had already been sent abroad and published in the West. Over time, however, the authorities became increasingly skeptical about the emphasis on a particular Jewish suffering, and unhappy that the manuscript detailed the collaboration of Soviet citizens with the Nazis in the murder of Jews.[18] Such details hardly fit the narratives of the war as an ideological battle between fascism and antifascism and the Soviet Union as a refuge of friendship between the peoples.

A revised version of the manuscript responded to those criticisms. The suffering of Soviet Jews had been more strongly placed in the context of the suffering of all Soviet peoples, and reports on the collaboration of Soviet citizens with the Nazis were severely curtailed. It was finally approved for publication in July 1947, but only a month later, after parts of the *Chernaia kniga* had already been printed, the very same authority suddenly withdrew its approval. A new internal review justified these measures by citing "serious political errors" in the manuscript.[19] In late 1948, a year after the Russian edition of the book was barred from publication once and for all, the JAC was dissolved, and many of its leading figures were arrested. During a secret trial in the summer of 1952, thirteen of them were sentenced to death and executed.[20]

The Soviet Ministry of State Security had actually been preparing the suppression of the JAC since the fall of 1946. The plan helped initiate the Soviet leadership's rejection of its former Western allies in the early postwar period, and, with some delay, of the State of Israel, whose creation it had initially supported. During the war, the JAC's ability to mobilize Jewish organizations in the West to support the Red Army and the Soviet Union made it valuable for Soviet propaganda. After the war, this strength became a threat, and its ties to Western Jewish organizations were reframed as evidence of the committee

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17 Max Radin, et al., *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime against the Jewish People* (New York: The Jewish Black Book Committee, 1946).
18 Altman, "The History and Fate," xx-xxxii.
19 Altman, "The History and Fate," xxxiii.
20 Grüner, *Patrioten und Kosmopoliten*, 121–28; Gennady Estraikh, "The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee," *East European Jewish Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2018): 144.

members' involvement in "Zionist-nationalist" activity.[21] Ultimately, it seems that this accusation was primarily responsible for the ultimate suppression of the *Chernaia kniga*, and not its revised manuscript, which followed the ideologically standard narrative of the war.

When the USSR shifted against the West, it embraced a new Soviet form of anti-Zionism that defined all forms of contact with Western Jewish organizations as Zionist activity and suppressed them. This quickly became a substantial feature of Soviet policy during late Stalinism and was accompanied by an upsurge of antisemitic actions and rhetoric in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Antisemitic policies were also applied in the other socialist countries in Eastern Europe that launched anti-Zionist campaigns and political trials. The best known of such events is the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952 and 1953.[22] Scholars—among them such prominent figures as Randolph L. Braham and Tony Judt—have concluded that together, these political shifts—that is the antisemitic campaigns and the overly dominant antifascist ideological interpretation of the war—resulted in the complete suppression of Jewish history and Holocaust memory under Stalin, effectively making these topics taboo.[23]

However, other aspects of the history of the JAC demonstrate that the Soviet leadership, even under Stalin, did not always consider the antifascist interpretation of the war and the simultaneous acknowledgement of Jewish suffering mutually exclusive.[24] Recent research highlights the attempts by JAC members Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman to negotiate the commemoration of the particular Jewish suffering during the war with the universalist Soviet ideas of antifascism.[25] Other studies on Holocaust memory in the USSR under Stalin demonstrate that Holocaust memory, while marginalized, was never completely banned from the public sphere.[26] Researchers have investigated serious initia-

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21 Grüner, *Patrioten und Kosmopoliten*, 111–13.

22 Karel Kaplan, *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 1990).

23 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 821–22; William Korey, "In History's 'Memory Hole': The Soviet Treatment of the Holocaust," in *Contemporary Views on the Holocaust*, ed. Randolf L. Braham (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983), 143–56; Randolph L. Braham, "Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust," in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2016), 261–310.

24 Already in 1996, Zvi Gitelman doubted that there was a general policy to repress Holocaust memory in the Soviet Union. Gitelman, "Politics and the Historiography," 18–27.

25 See, for instance, Yarden Avital's dissertation project, currently entitled "Soviet and Jewish: The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee between Universal Being and Particular Suffering," Department of History, Rutgers University.

26 Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, "The Holocaust in the Soviet Press," in *"Zerstörer des Schweigens": Formen künstlerischer Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa*, ed. Frank

tives to commemorate the Holocaust in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe beginning in the immediate postwar years or even during the war, and have highlighted the dynamic evolution of Holocaust memory in the first postwar decade.[27] For instance, the above-mentioned Soviet *Black Book* project was by far not the only one of its sort: similar projects were carried out in Romania and Hungary.[28] These examples suggest that it was possible to publicly reckon with the Holocaust even during the most repressive phase of postwar communist rule, like the anti-Zionist campaigns of late Stalinism.

Investigating the early postwar years, Laura Jockusch's groundbreaking study *Collect and Record* challenged the widely held belief that Holocaust historiography had begun with Raul Hilberg's 1961 book *The Destruction of the European Jews*.[29] Jockusch's study not only showed that Holocaust historiography began as early as the 1940s, but also that its roots lay in the tradition of Eastern European Jewish historiography. In the late 1940s, Jewish historical commissions and museums researched and documented the Holocaust in Łódź, Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, and other cities.[30] Testimonies and accounts

Grüner, Urs Heftrich, and Heinz-Dietrich Löwe (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 33–55; on late Stalinism, see in the same chapter 44–46 and Kiril Feferman, *Soviet Jewish Stepchild: The Holocaust in the Soviet Mindset, 1941–1964* (Saarbrücken: VDM-Verlag, 2009), 43–44.

27   See, for instance, Mordechai Altshuler, *Religion and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union 1941–1964* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2012); Peter Hallama, *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer: Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Zofia Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning: Memory of the Nazi Camps in Poland, 1944–1950* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013); Imke Hansen, *"Nie wieder Auschwitz!": Die Entstehung eines Symbols und der Alltag einer Gedenkstätte 1945–1955* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015); Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Stephan Stach, "'The Spirit of the Time Left its Stamp on These Works': Writing the History of the Shoah at the Jewish Historical Institute in Stalinist Poland," *Remembrance and Solidarity Studies in 20th-Century European History* 5 (2016): 185–211.

28   Jenő Lévai, *Fekete könyv a magyar zsidóság szenvedéseiről* [Black book on the suffering of Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest: Officina, 1946); Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră: Suferinţele evreilor din România 1940–1944* [The black book: The suffering of the Jews of Romania] (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice Socec, 1946–1948).

29   Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987).

30   Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84–120; Stephan Stach, "The Central Jewish Historical Commission and the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland," in *Crimes Uncovered: The First Generation of Holocaust Researchers*, ed. Hans-Christian Jasch and Stephan Lehnstaedt (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2019), 210–31; Natalia Aleksiun, "The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland 1944–1947," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 20 (2008): 74–97; Magda Veselská, "Early Documentation of the Shoah in the Czech Lands: The Documentation Project and the Prague Jewish Museum (1945–1947)," *Judaica Bohemiae* 52, no. 1 (2017): 47–85; Zsuzsanna Toronyi, "Egy budapesti kert történetei" [Stories of a garden in Budapest], *Korall* 11, no. 41 (2010): 97–112; see the thematic issue "Zsidó közösségek öröksége" [The heritage of Jewish communities], *MAKOR—Magyar Zsidó Levéltári Füzetek*, no. 7 (2010); Ferenc Laczó, "The Excruciating Dilemmas of Ernő Munkácsi," in Ernő Munkácsi, *How It Happened*, ed. Nina Munk, transl. Péter Balikó Lengyel (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), xxiii-lv.

from survivors, as well as the diaries of the perished, were published in various regional languages. The different expressions that were in use across Europe's remaining Jewish communities to describe the recent destruction—such as the Yiddish *Khurbn*, the Hebrew *Shoah*, the Polish *Zagłada*, the Hungarian *Vészkorszak*—all suggest that it was already named and spoken about. Beyond these research and documentation efforts, we can observe various early attempts to memorialize the Holocaust. These memorials often occurred within the premises of the Jewish communities and at Jewish cemeteries, but were sometimes also mounted in more public spaces, such as at the sites of former concentration camps. In the latter case, however, Jewish efforts to commemorate the Holocaust often had to compete with attempts to memorialize the "national" (i.e., non-Jewish) suffering and tragedy.[31]

These studies are part of the renewed scholarship on early Holocaust memory in Europe and beyond that challenges the "myth of silence" after the Holocaust.[32] Scholarship on Western Europe and the United States has successfully dismissed the idea of the silence of Holocaust survivors in those countries and has stressed the manifold ways in which individuals and groups—like Jewish communities and organizations—commemorated the Holocaust throughout the first two decades following the war.[33] However, the idea that Holocaust memory in Central and Eastern Europe was suppressed by an exclusively anti-fascist narrative of the war seems to have retained its place in historiography. Thus, most of the works dealing with early Holocaust research and memory in this region abruptly end around 1949–50, at the moment when the transformation of these countries to Stalinism had been concluded. For many scholars, the successful implementation of communist control in Central and Eastern Europe means the sudden end of this first wave of Holocaust memory. They overlook that a similar trend of decreasing expressions and manifestations of Holocaust memory can also be observed in the democratic countries in the West in

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31   See, for instance, the case studies on the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau or the Terezín ghetto: Hansen, *"Nie wieder Auschwitz!"*; Peter Hallama, "Theresienstadt—das Golgota der tschechischen Nation? Externalisierung und Marginalisierung des Holocaust in der Tschechoslowakei der unmittelbaren Nachkriegsjahre," in *Als der Holocaust noch keinen Namen hatte: Zur frühen Aufarbeitung des NS-Massenmords an Jüdinnen und Juden*, ed. Regina Fritz, Eva Kovács, and Béla Rásky (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 399–421. For the situation in Poland more broadly, see Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*.

32   Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2012).

33   See, for instance, Simon Perego, *Pleurons-les: Les Juifs de Paris et la commémoration de la Shoah (1944–1967)* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2020).

the early 1950s,[34] when war narratives were shaped by the effort to reconstruct and reunite countries, and to homogenize the very different wartime experiences of citizens in the name of patriotism and heroism.[35] Several scholars have shown how, in France, Jewish survivors and early Holocaust historians struggled to integrate the fate of Jews under Nazi occupation into the French war narrative by highlighting references to the *Résistance* and republicanism, and through the mimicry of national rituals and symbols.[36] Similarly, in the Netherlands there was a difficult struggle to reconcile the particularly high proportion of Jewish deaths during the Holocaust with the primary national reference to the memory of German occupation: a strong Dutch resistance.[37]

In the context of Eastern Europe, however, the decrease of the memorial work on the Jewish Holocaust during the same period has been treated as evidence for and the exclusive result of Stalinist oppression. Laura Jockusch, for instance, concludes her case study on Poland, stating that, from 1949 the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw "adhered" to an alleged reluctance of the Polish government to "see the Holocaust as a historical event worthy of special attention."[38] But contrary to this evaluation, Holocaust research and documentation did remain the focus of the institute's activity throughout its existence, including under Stalinism, as Katarzyna Person and Agnieszka Żółkiewska show in their contribution to this volume.[39] Furthermore, the activities of self-censorship carried out within the Institute were not simply there to make sure that publications conformed to official antifascism. They should also be seen as conscious steps to strengthen the Jewish community and as part of the efforts to construct a specifically Jewish Holocaust memory in postwar Poland.

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34 For the chronology, see Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

35 See, for instance, Tony Judt's text from the early 1990s: Judt, "The Past Is Another Country"; Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

36 Annette Wieviorka, *Déportation et génocide: Entre la mémoire et l'oubli* (Paris: Hachettes, 2008 [1992]); Simon Perego, "Commemorating the Holocaust during the First Postwar Decade: Jewish Initiatives and non-Jewish Actors in France," in *Before the Holocaust Had Its Name: Early Confrontations with the Nazi Mass Murder of the Jews / Als der Holocaust noch keinen Namen hatte: Zur frühen Aufarbeitung des NS-Massenmords an Jüdinnen und Juden*, ed. Regina Fritz, Éva Kovács, and Béla Rásky (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 223–39; Jockusch, *Collect and Record!*, 71–83.

37 Ido de Haan, "Paths of Normalization after the Persecution of the Jews," in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel, Dirk Schumann, Christof Mauch, and David Lazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 65–92, esp. 75–77.

38 Jockusch, *Collect and Record!*, 119.

39 See also Stach, "'The Spirit of the Time Left its Stamp on These Works.'"

Without a doubt, Stalinism drastically shifted the political, social, religious, and academic dimensions of Holocaust research and memory, as it penetrated almost all realms of the lives of people living under it. The influence of late-Stalinist anti-Westernism and anti-Zionism with its unmistakable antisemitic undertones made it even more difficult to raise such a genuinely Jewish issue. Nevertheless, neither research, nor commemoration of the Holocaust disappeared from the public. As Kata Bohus shows in her text, the Hungarian Stalinist regime's then forming antifascist narrative operated with an unclear definition of "martyrs and heroes," and focused on the importance of liberation (by the Soviet Red Army). Commemorations of the Holocaust were not banned because they frequently used the same narrative elements. Though the regime forced them into marginal, strictly Jewish religious spaces, they did continue during the Stalinist period, producing pockets of remembrance to the Jewish catastrophe and increasing community cohesion among survivors.

Commemorations across Eastern Europe were adapted to heavily ideological discourse throughout the socialist period that seemed deformed, partly hostile, or even absurd to Western observers who—increasingly from the 1980s on—considered the Holocaust the central event of World War II. Such prominent Western scholars as Lucy Dawidowicz, Jeffrey Herf, and Thomas C. Fox considered many representations of the Holocaust under socialism as "inauthentic," and portrayed them as exploitations of Holocaust memory designed to discredit the West in general and West Germany in particular, especially in the period of the late 1950s and 1960s.[40] The antifascist war narrative was thus generally suspected of falsifying the memory of the Holocaust, under instructions of the party leadership, in order to force it into the corset of a communist master narrative or to tie it strictly to the party line. Thus, scholars often considered the collective memory of World War II in socialist Eastern Europe as a battlefield between "communist" falsification of history and "authentic" but suppressed Holocaust memory. They conceptualized this, to use Michael Rothberg's expression, as competitive memory: Holocaust memory struggles with other memories, like the communist resistance, the anti-Slavic policy or the antifascist struggle, for a limited reservoir of attention. Rothberg, however, proposed an alternative to "the framework that understands collective memory as

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40 Fox, "The Holocaust under Communism," 421; Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources" encouraging scholars to instead "consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private."[41]

The contributions in this volume show that Rothberg's concept, which he applied to the parallel collective memories of the Holocaust and colonialism in democratic societies, is also relevant for understanding Holocaust memory and the memory of antifascism in Eastern Europe during state socialism. Miriam Schulz shows how the cross-referencing and borrowing between different collective memories in the Soviet Union took place. References to Soviet antifascist war narratives on monuments to Jewish victims did not, argues Schulz, necessarily serve to place Holocaust victims among the mass of Soviet victims. Rather, through narrative or performative acts, these references transformed such antifascist memory into a "Jewish conjugation" thereof. Anja Tippner draws similar conclusions in her contribution on the Soviet-Jewish writer Anatolii Rybakov and his work. In his 1979 novel *Heavy Sand*, Rybakov used common Soviet war narratives to embed the Holocaust in a Soviet-Jewish family history. Tippner reads Rybakov's book as "a commentary" *avant la lettre* to Michael Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, as it renegotiates Soviet collective memory of World War II and the Holocaust.

The possibility for the parallel development of an official antifascist narrative of the war and one that emphasized Jewish suffering is further elaborated by the bottom-up approach of the authors of this volume. The contributions highlight the agency of those individuals (and small groups) who researched the Holocaust or cultivated the memory of it, even though their scope of action was limited by political circumstances, personal decisions, and societal dynamics. Particularly in the periphery, local Jewish histories could sometimes be maintained independently from the antifascist narrative or simply adapted to its rhetoric. Yechiel Weizman's contribution highlights the former phenomenon by showing how the presence and condition of physical traces of Jews in Poland generated and mediated discussions of the wartime fate of local Jews throughout the state-socialist era. The daily interaction of Poles with abandoned Jewish cemeteries and crumbling synagogues occasionally invoked the memory of the Shoah, generating a discourse on a local level that was fairly independent from

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41   Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

the overarching antifascist narrative. Elsewhere, efforts were made to integrate the two parallel narratives. Gintarė Malinauskaitė discusses how local Jewish narratives were included in the commemorations of World War II held at the Ninth Fort Museum in Kaunas, Lithuania in the 1960s. Despite the political instrumentalization of the site and its highly ideological exhibitions that favored a narrative of resistance, Lithuanian Jews managed to voice, at least partly, their memories of traumatic experiences during the commemorative events held there. Peter Hallama analyzes the role of Czech historian Miroslav Kárný in the formation of the memory of the Holocaust of Czech Jews, even during the restrictive "normalization" of Czechoslovak communism after the revolution of 1968. He stresses in particular how Kárný integrated his research on the Holocaust into a solidly Marxist and universalist perspective of Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion policies prior to and during World War II.

We propose that politicized representations of the Holocaust should be considered within this context as a form of adaption of Holocaust memory to the structure of public discourse in the socialist states of Eastern Europe. This structure was framed, at least in the 1950s and early 1960s, above all through reference to the antifascist struggle, which was commemorated within a mixture of communist and national rituals.[42] In this reading, Holocaust memory is not necessarily competing with other memories, nor is it repressed by them. Many of the contributions to this volume show multidirectional connections between the memory of antifascism and the Holocaust, comparable to that which Rothberg found between the Holocaust and colonialism. Closely connected to this phenomenon is the oft-overlooked fact that the meaning of antifascism, as used in the ideological battles of the Cold War, changed over time and varied regionally as each country in the bloc had to adapt it to its local history and political needs.

Antifascism and Holocaust Memory

As this volume aims to show, antifascism was definitely more than a monolithic propagandistic tool of state-socialist regimes. It had multiple meanings that depended on individual appropriations and on local contexts. For instance, to many German Jews who had survived the Holocaust as emigrants, antifascism became the reason to return to the GDR, and an important part of their iden-

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42 For Poland, see Joanna Wawrzyniak, *Veterans, Victims, and Memory: The Politics of the Second World War in Communist Poland* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015).

tity as Jews, Germans, and often also as communists.[43] In the GDR, Jewish and non-Jewish writers and intellectuals alike often internalized antifascism (sometimes despite their critical views of the GDR) and rejected the view that it had been prescribed from above.[44] This might have played a role in encouraging many of them to choose the Holocaust as a topic for their literary explorations into the meanings of antifascism.[45] Alexander Walther describes such a case in his chapter on the writer and journalist Heinz Knobloch. As Walther notes, Knobloch did not just select antifascism as a framework to commemorate the Holocaust, he examined the consistency of official antifascism, raising the question of responsibility of average Germans (including those living in the "antifascist" GDR) for the Holocaust. Benjamin Lapp's contribution on Helmut Eschwege describes how this Jewish lay historian attempted to include the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule and their partaking in the antifascist resistance in the war narrative. Even though many of his attempts failed, Eschwege's insistence on engaging with and challenging the limitations of the GDR's historical perspectives on the Holocaust and Jewish history should not be ignored. Such endeavors should be acknowledged to understand why, even after 1989, many former East German dissidents defended antifascism against accusations of being instrumentalized or manipulated.[46] For them, as for other critical East German intellectuals, the official antifascist narrative posed a challenge. They felt an obligation to "rewrite and reinscribe" it,[47] but they would not reject it.

The usage of the antifascist framework to examine the question of guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust can also be found in many works of Hungarian socialist popular literature of the late 1950s and 1960s, which Richard S. Esbenshade analyzes in his chapter. According to Esbenshade, the discursive framework of antifascism made it possible to narrate the Holocaust as part of Hun-

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43 Frank Stern, "The Return to the Disowned Home—German Jews and the other Germany," *New German Critique* 67 (Winter 1996): 57–72; Dan Diner, "Zwischenzeit 1945 bis 1949: Über jüdische und andere Konstellationen," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 65, no. 16–17 (2015): 16–20.

44 Anson Rabinbach, "Introduction: Legacies of Antifascism," *New German Critique* 67 (Winter 1996): 15.

45 For a good, if incomplete, overview of East German writers who wrote about the Holocaust, see Ulrike Schneider, "Thematisierungen des Holocaust in Literaturzeitschriften der DDR am Beispiel der Zeitschrift Neue Deutsche Literatur," in *Nachkriegsliteratur als öffentliche Erinnerung: Deutsche Vergangenheit im Europäischen Kontext,* ed. Helmut Peitsch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 147–69.

46 Andrew H. Beattie, *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 169. Antifascism often also served as an inspiration for Central and East European dissidents. See Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach, eds., *Gegengeschichte: Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015).

47 David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 12.

garian history in the context of the war, thus creating a "shared space" for Jewish and Hungarian national memory. This narrative, however, differed from Western understandings of Holocaust memory and, in retrospect and from a Western perspective, appeared insufficient. To grasp the ways antifascism was inscribed with these varied meanings requires a different approach to Holocaust memory, one which does not look back only at what "was not possible, but what had become possible" during this era.[48] If we take this step, it becomes clear that antifascism was not necessarily in competition with Holocaust remembrance. On the contrary, the discursive framework of antifascism during this period actually helped make Holocaust remembrance possible.

Finally, the antifascist framework also provided a pretext to present perspectives other than the officially sanctioned one. Daniel Véri's contribution discusses how state-funded artistic projects opened up a discursive space for Holocaust memorialization in this context. The erection of a Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen (1958–1964), the art collection commissioned for the permanent Hungarian exhibition in Auschwitz (1964–1965), and the exhibition entitled *Hungarian Artists Against Fascism* organized in 1965 at the Hungarian National Gallery were all conceived within the antifascist historical narrative, but intentionally or unintentionally presented the "victims' perspective" and, eventually, a criticism of official memory politics.

Even the political use of antifascism by states (intended to discredit the West) did not have a uniform effect. It often stirred debate about the Holocaust, as it did during reporting about the Eichmann trial[49] or campaigns against West German politicians (like Hans Globke or Theodor Oberländer) for their Nazi pasts. While the ultimate goal of such campaigns was to discredit West Germany, their results were often multidirectional and encouraged the population to engage more deeply with the Holocaust. Stephan Stach demonstrates this latter effect in his contribution about several East German editions of books prepared by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. These books gained a lot of press coverage because of their usefulness for propaganda against West Germany, but Stach stresses that their significance in confronting readers, journal-

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48   Máté Zombory, András Lénárt, and Anna Lujza Szász, "Elfeledett szembenézés: Holokauszt és emlékezés Fábri Zoltán *Utószezon* c. filmjében" [Forgotten confrontation: Holocaust and memory in Zoltán Fábri's film *After-Season*], *BUKSZ* 25, no. 3 (2013): 245. The English translation is taken from Richard S. Esbenshade's article in this volume.

49   See Kata Bohus, "Not a Jewish Question? The Holocaust in Hungary in the Press and Propaganda of the Kádár Regime during the Trial of Adolf Eichmann," *Hungarian Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (2015): 737–72.

ists, artists, writers, and even musicians with the Holocaust far outweighed any short-term propaganda benefits. In socialist Eastern Europe, Jewish diaries, survivors' reports, histories, and fictional works were all considered antifascist literature and, in everything but name, were effectively literature about the Holocaust and helped maintain its memory.

Altogether, the contributions in this volume raise several important points for understanding Holocaust memory in Eastern Europe. First, they underscore the necessity to approach Holocaust memory and Holocaust historiography in this region as embedded in their particular political and social context, beyond ideological master narratives. It should be acknowledged that the agents of this memory had their own agenda, which they needed to put forward in a different discursive framework than in the West, and that this discursive framework was antifascism. Second, the contributions highlight the power of individual and local initiatives, as well as the limits of communist repression in the formation of Holocaust memory within this narrative framework. Third, they underscore the necessity to consider the official antifascist narrative of the war and Holocaust memory not as competing, but as interacting memories. This enables us to exceed the perspective that reduces Eastern European Holocaust memory to an unequal competitor of antifascism and to analyze it in its own right. Finally, the works gathered in this volume also point to the need to further explore how Cold War confrontation affected the emergence of Holocaust memory on both sides of the Iron Curtain and how it affects the way we interpret it today.

Part One

Historiography

Katarzyna Person · Agnieszka Żółkiewska

Edition of Documents from the Ringelblum Archive (the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto) in Stalinist Poland

From the moment that its existence became widely known, the Ringelblum Archive (also known as the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto) was widely regarded as a collection of unusual significance. Under the initiative of historian Emanuel Ringelblum, a group of social activists incarcerated in the Warsaw Ghetto created the archive between 1940 and 1943 with the aim to document the persecution of Jews in occupied Poland. Emulating the working principles of YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, Yiddish Scientific Institute),[1] the Warsaw group gathered and produced a total of 35,000 pages of documents in Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, and German and stowed them away secretly within the Ghetto. Among the documents were diaries, accounts from approximately 300 Jewish communities from the whole territory of occupied Poland, school essays, research works, and official German documents like posters, identification cards, and food ration cards. There were also some 70 photographs and over 300 drawings and paintings.[2]

The Archive was retrieved in parts from the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto: Part I (concealed on August 3, 1942) was found on September 18, 1946, and Part II (concealed in early February 1943) was found on December 1, 1950. The collection was housed in the Central Jewish Historical Commission (from

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1   On that, see Lucjan Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland: Work in the Historical Sciences," in *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruk (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), 495–518.

2   On the Archive, see Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). For an inventory of the Archive, see Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epsztein, eds., *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes–Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

1947 the Jewish Historical Institute, JHI),[3] and the members of the commission, which included the original surviving secretary of the Archive, Hersh Wasser, immediately began cataloguing the collection. The documents gathered in the Archive formed a source base for the first academic research articles on the Holocaust in occupied Poland, published initially in Yiddish in *Bleter far Geshikhte*: *Tsaytshrift fun Yidishn Historishn Institut in Poyln*[4] and beginning in 1950 in Polish in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*[5] (for a short time published also in Yiddish as *Yediyes*). Given the significance of these documents and the public interest they evoked, it is not surprising that they were quickly used for ideological propaganda. This began with the communist takeover in Poland and continued later under Polish Stalinism. As Ber Mark (the director of the Jewish Historical Institute from 1949) wrote in the first issue of *Biuletyn*, the key tasks of the Institute were not only to study the history of Jews in Poland but also, immeasurably more importantly, to "show the

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3   On the Central Jewish Historical Commission and the early years of the Jewish Historical Institute, see Natalia Aleksiun, "The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, 1944–1947," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 20 (2007): 74–97; Laura Jockusch, "Khurbn-Forshung," *Simon-Dubnow-Institute Yearbook* VI (2007), 441–73; Stephan Stach, "Geschichtsschreibung und politische Vereinnahmung: Das Jüdische Historische Institut in Warschau, 1947–1968," *Simon-Dubnow-Institute Yearbook* VII (2008), 401–31. On the situation under Stalinism, see Stephan Stach, "Walka klas w getcie? Badania nad Zagładą prowadzone w ŻIH w Warszawie w okresie stalinowskim" [Class struggle in the ghetto? Research on the Holocaust carried out by the JHI in Warsaw in the Stalinist period], in *Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich* [Jews and Judaism in current Polish research], vol. 5, ed. Krzysztof Pilarczyk (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2010), 273–87, Jean Charles Szurek, "Être témoin sous le stalinisme: Les premieres années de l'Institut Historique Juif de Varsovie," in *Écriture de l'histoire et identité juive: L'Europe ashkénaze, XIXe– XXe siècle,* ed. Delphine Bechtel, et al. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 51–82.

4   The most important documents are: Emanuel Ringelblum, "Notitsn fun varshever geto" [Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto], *Bleter far Geshikhte* (hereafter *BFG*) 1, no. 1 (1948): 5–54; Menakhem Linder, "A yor YISA" [A year of Jewish social self-help], *BFG* 1, no. 2 (1948): 3–13; "Ankete fun 'Oyneg Shabes'" [Oyneg Shabes questionnaire], *BFG* 1, no. 2 (1948): 111–22 and *BFG* 1, nos. 3–4 (1948): 186–201; M. Tikotsinski, "Altvarg—der eyntsiker handl bay di yidn in Varshe in der geto tsayt 1940 un 1941 yor" [Used goods—the sole business among the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto during 1940 and 1941], *BFG* 1, nos. 3–4 (1948): 203–10; Isroel Likhtenshteyn, "Un es iz geshen..." [And it happened...], *BFG* 2, nos. 1–4 (1949): 93–130; "Oyf der Vakh" [On Guard], *BFG* 4, no. 1 (1951): 3–8; "Varshe geto" [Warsaw Ghetto], *BFG* 4, no. 1 (1951): 80–84; Yehoshue Perle, "Khurbn Varshe" [The destruction of Warsaw], *BFG* 4, no. 3 (1951): 101–40; Shimon Huberband, "Mekoyrim tsu der yidisher geshikhte in di slavisher lender, bifrat in Poyln, Rusland un Lite" [Sources for Jewish history in the Slavic lands, particularly in Poland, Russia and Lithuania], *BFG* 4, no. 4 (1951): 88–91; Yehoshue Perle, "4580," *BFG* 5, no. 3 (1952): 53–62.

5   In the early 1950s these included: "Likwidacja żydowskiej Warszawy" [Liquidation of Jewish Warsaw], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (hereafter *BŻIH*) 1 (1951): 59–126; Szymon Huberband, "Przegląd źródeł do historii Żydów na ziemiach słowiańskich od średniowiecza do XVI w." [Overview of sources for Jewish history on Slavic lands from medieval times until the 16th century], *BŻIH* 2 (1951): 16–46, 59–126; "Obwieszczenie z 30.10.1942 r. o wykonaniu wyroku śmierci na Jakubie Lejkinie" [Announcement of 30.10.1942 on carrying out the death sentence on Jakub Lejkin], *BŻIH* 5 (1953): 15; "Warszawskie Getto" [Warsaw Ghetto], *BŻIH* 5 (1953): 15–16; "Zew," *BŻIH* 5 (1953): 4–8.

true face of fascism and imperialism, focusing on the danger of the war looming over the nations of the world from instigators from across the ocean."[6] The main weapon of the Institute in this fight was the Ringelblum Archive. In this chapter we will demonstrate how the editorial choices made by the Jewish Historical Institute in using the documents collected in the Warsaw Ghetto constituted de facto self-censorship and this editorial line was assimilated into the official state narrative of World War II.[7]

Those aims were, considering the political environment of Stalinist Poland, not surprising. In-house censorship carried out by publishing houses, editors, and the authors themselves, even before the book or article reached the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publishing, and Performances (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk GUKPPiW), was common in the period and has now been widely discussed.[8] Most of the time, following official state censorship guidelines was considered a price worth paying for publication, even if this was not stated explicitly. Ber Mark's own editorial changes and self-censorship in producing the Ringelblum Archive allowed for a narrative of the Holocaust to enter into the restrictive public discourse of Poland and to ensure the existence and continued publishing of the JHI at a time when the state was shutting down other Jewish institutions. This editorial work not only aimed at conforming to communist ideology and the demands of the socialist state apparatus, but also at constructing a positive image of Jews during the Holocaust—an image of Jews for the postwar Jewish community. As the Ringelblum Archive became of vital significance to the construction of Jewish Holocaust memory, so too did the JHI's self-censorship.

In this article we will focus on three published volumes of literary works preserved in the Ringelblum Archive: a collection of short stories by Peretz Opoczynski entitled *Reportazhn fun varshever getto*[9] (Reportage from the

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6   Bernard Mark, "Rola i zadania Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" [Role and tasks of the Jewish Historical Institute], *BŻIH* 1 (1950): 3.

7   On that, see Sven-Erik Rose, "The Oyneg Shabes Archive and the Cold War: The Case of Yehoshue Perle's Khurbn Varshe," *New German Critique* 38, no. 1 (2011): 181–215; Agnieszka Żółkiewska, "Emanuel Ringelblum: Biografia i dziedzictwo" [Emanuel Ringelblum: biography and heritage], *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2015): 575–86.

8   See among others Zbigniew Romek, *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944–1970* [Censorship and historical studies in Poland 1944–1970] (Warsaw: Neriton, 2010); K. Budrowska and M. Woźniak-Łabieniec, eds., *"Lancetem, a nie maczugą": cenzura wobec literatury i jej twórców w latach 1945–1965* [With a lancet and not with a club: Censorship against literature and its creators in 1945–1965] (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2012).

9   Perets Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto* [Reportages from the Warsaw Ghetto], ed. D. Sfard (Warsaw: Yidish Bukh, 1954). Opoczynski's reportages appeared at the time also in *Bleter far Geshikhte*:

Warsaw ghetto), a collection of stories by Jehuda Feld entitled *In di tsaytn fun Homen dem tsveytn*[10] (In the times of the second Haman) and a novel by Zalmen Skalov, *Der haknkrayts: Di hak on krayts*[11] (The Swastika: The axe without a cross). All three were published in 1954.[12] All of these editions were overseen by Ber Mark, both a historian and an outstanding literary critic. They were published by the Jewish Historical Institute in association with the publishing house Yidish Bukh,[13] (also spelled Idisz Buch), an independent publishing house, and after 1950 the only publisher of Yiddish books in postwar Poland, with up to thirty titles appearing every year between 1950–1955. The end of the thaw curtailed this outburst of publications, including the ambitious plan to publish further literary sources from the ghettos. The publishers' intention had probably been to carry this out over the following years as a publishing series entitled *Literarishe shafungen in di getos un lagern* (Literary works in the ghettos and camps).

Publications of documents from the Ringelblum Archive came at a price. As Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov writes, the main aim of Yidish Bukh was to commemorate the Holocaust and to promote the rebuilding of Jewish life in Poland.[14] Yet, they did not only publish Holocaust-related books at that time. Their 1950's publishing catalogue reflects the spirit of the times, as the publishing house produced numerous works, mainly in translation, which can be considered purely ideological. For instance, in 1954 these included I. Lekhter's *"Demokratye" oyfn amerikaner shtayger* ("Democracy": the American way) and *Unter der tsiyonistisher hershaft* (Under the Zionist rule).

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Perets Opotshinski, "Di shopn" [Workshops], *BFG* 7, no. 4 (1954): 86–98; Perets Opotshinski, "Di tragedie fun a hoyz-komitet" [Tragedy of a house committee], *BFG* 14, no. 1 (1961): 171–79.

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10   Jehude Feld, *In di tsaytn fun Homen dem Tsveytn* [In the times of Haman the Second], ed. L. Olitski (Warsaw: Yidish Bukh, 1954).

11   Zalmen Skalov, *Der hakenkrayts* [The swastika], ed. L. Olitski (Warsaw: Yidish Bukh, 1954). Fragments of Skalov's novel were published that same year in a Jewish literary journal *Yidishe Shriftn*: Z. Skalov, "Jefrayter Nikkel," *Yidishe Shriftn* 4 (1954): 2.

12   Yidish Bukh published one more book of literary works assembled from the Ringelblum Archive, a volume of stories by various authors: *Tsvishn lebn un toyt* [Between life and death] (Warsaw: Yidish Bukh, 1955). The volume underwent similar censorship as the works analyzed in this article.

13   On Ber Mark, see Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, "Trzy kolory: Szary; Szkic do portretu Bernarda Marka" [Three colors: grey; An outline of a portrait of Bernard Mark], *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008): 263–84.

14   Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, "The Last Yiddish Books Printed in Poland: Outline of the Activities of Yidish Bukh Publishing House," in *Under the Red Banner: Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Postwar Era*, ed. Elvira Grözinger and Magdalena Ruta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 111.

Political Censorship

The books discussed in this article did not extensively discuss politics or the armed ghetto underground. With some exceptions, they did not focus on "class warfare in the ghetto."[15] Unlike the ghetto diaries of Emanuel Ringelblum, published at the same time, they devoted little interest to the situation outside the ghetto walls. They rather focused more extensively on what was happening in the ghetto. Moreover, as research on Polish and Yiddish editions of Ringelblum's "Notes" clearly demonstrate, works published in Yiddish were aimed at the Yiddish-reading public in and outside of Poland and were of much less interest to the state censors than Polish publications of documents relating to the Holocaust.[16] Yet, even for Yiddish-language publications, their editors had to make sure that their content did not conflict with the prevailing historiography and the Stalinist vision of Polish-Jewish history.

Jehuda Feld's *In di tsaytn fun Homen dem tsveytn* was one of the first book publications of materials from the Ringelblum Archive. Its author, Jehuda Feld (Feldwurm) (1906–1942), was a prewar member of the Communist Party and an activist in TOZ (Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej, or The Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jewish Population). He was also an aspiring writer, though his debut novel *Mekhl Kuliks lebn* (Mekhl Kulik's life) gained him no recognition. In the Warsaw Ghetto he was a collaborator with Oneg Shabat and a cultural and political activist in the underground. Feld was one of the co-founders of the Antifascist Block, an underground organization of Jewish parties, and also an organizer and editor of the underground communist press, the clandestine periodical *Morgen Fray* (The free tomorrow), later under the name *Morgen-Frayheyt* (The dawn of freedom). In the early spring of 1943, he was arrested and murdered by the Gestapo at Aleja Szucha in Warsaw.

The publishing of Feld's work seemed to be a natural choice in the newly socialist Poland. As Ber Mark wrote in the introduction to his work "we believe that the idea of freedom-fighting humanism, which is the cornerstone of Jehuda Feld's work, will be a building block in the great edifice of peace and

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15   "Undzer Tsil" [Our goal], *Yedies fun Jidisher Historisher Institute*, no. 1 (November 1949): 1.

16   On differences between censorship of Polish and Yiddish publications, see Katarzyna Person, "The Initial Reception and First Publications of Materials from the Ringelblum Archive in Poland, 1946–1952," *Gal-Ed: On the History and Culture of Polish Jewry* 23 (2012): 59–76. There are now many works on the role of Yiddish in postwar Poland. See for instance Eleonora Bergman, "Yiddish in Poland after 1945," in *Yiddish and the Left: Papers of the Third Mendel Friedman International Conference on Yiddish*, ed. G. Estraikh and M. Krutikov (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), 167–76.

socialism."[17] Yet, Feld's political affiliation and martyrdom did not safeguard his ghetto works from significant cuts and alterations. The editors of the volume, Ber Mark and Leyb Olitski,[18] did not hide the fact that they introduced some changes, explaining that the author himself was still planning to refine his manuscript. They based this claim on a note by Feld that read "to be re-written," which was left attached to one of the stories (they did not however question the note's authorship nor when it was written). As they explained: "As many other writers in the ghetto, Feld was writing in a constant hurry and did not have time to reflect on editing, polishing, or re-writing his texts. Fulfilling the wish of the deceased author, the editors found it necessary to partly polish his work, without intruding into the essence, concept, or construction of his writings."[19] The fact that such an indication is present in the introduction is important; we can assume that the editors wanted the reader to know that such changes took place. We can also assume that at this stage, the readers were already attuned to such remarks and could easily read into their true meaning.[20]

The "polishing" of Feld's work was not surprisingly much more concerned with the content of his work than with its style. Despite the editor's declaration, the changes they introduced clearly affected the integrity of the book's message. They formulated new claims, while erasing others.

Among the most interesting changes introduced in accordance with the main features of Stalinist propaganda were those, which were aimed at safeguarding the image of members of the Communist Party. Such is the case of a story entitled *Sorele Grober*. The story's protagonist is a Jewish communist. Sorele (Sara) has all the qualities of an ideal party activist—education, intelligence, and beauty—but she also has one considerable fault: she stutters and is thus unable to speak persuasively at party gatherings. This information has been removed from the 1954 edition as the editors decided to present the reader with a communist devoid of any blemishes.

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17 Ber Mark, "Jehude Feld: Der revolutsyoner un shrayber" [Jehude Feld: revolutionary and writer], in *In di tsaytn fun Homen dem tsveytn*, 10.

18 Leyb Olitski (1894–1975) was a Yiddish-language writer and translator. Before the war he published poetry and worked as a teacher. He survived the Holocaust in the USSR. After the war he was an activist in Jewish organizations in postwar Poland and an editor for Yidish Bukh. He emigrated to Israel in 1959. On Olitski, see Magdalena Sitarz, "The Image of Postwar Poland in the Works of Leyb Olitski," in *Under the Red Banner*, 185–202.

19 Mark, "Jehude Feld," 10.

20 See Bogusław Sułkowski, "'Ten przeklęty język ezopowy': O społecznych mechanizmach komunikacji cenzurowanej" ["That cursed esopian language": on social mechanisms of censored communication], in *Piśmiennictwo—systemy kontroli—obiegi alternatywne* [Writings: systems of controls—alternative circulations], vol. 2, ed. J. Kostecki and A. Brodzka (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1992), 266–84.

Original version:

She did not speak well, on the contrary she often stuttered and it made him very concerned. It might have been caused by the fact that he always liked her speeches and because he had friendly feelings towards her—he wanted her words to be falling smoothly and fluently. . .[21]

Edited version:

She did not speak well, on the contrary, he often felt differently about it, and it made him very concerned. It might have been caused by the fact that he always liked her speeches and because he had friendly feelings towards her—he wanted her words to be falling smoothly and fluently. . .[22]

Similarly, the editors removed a passage in which Sorele Grober speaks in German to a Wehrmacht soldier. It was, we can assume, considered inappropriate that a Jew, moreover a communist, should speak in the language of the enemy. Further on, censorship removed the soldier's warm reaction towards Sorele, and thus precluded any connection which was being established between them.

Original version:

Sara smiled to the soldiers with her big, shining eyes and answered in the soldier's language, in German:
– Es macht nichts aus. Es wird wahrscheinlich gut sein. . .
When she spoke, it was as if the soldier's face began to smile. The sun lit it with its rays, and from his lips came warm sounds, with a heartfelt intonation, he asked: Are you Jewish?[23]

Edited version:

Sara smiled to the soldiers with her big, shining eyes and answered that it will probably be all right. . . . Suddenly, when she spoke, the soldier's face changed:
– Are you Jewish?[24]

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21 Jewish Historical Institute, Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, Archiwum Ringelbluma, hereafter AŻIH, ARG) I 1215, 50.
22 Feld, *In di tsaytn fun Homen,* 20.
23 AŻIH, ARG I 1215, 4.
24 Feld, *In di tsaytn fun Homen,* 23–24.

In the next paragraph, editors carefully cut out reference to a "previously unknown, delicate feeling which took over his [soldier's] heart"[25] when in conversation with Sorele.

The second topic, which underwent serious changes on political grounds, is that of Polish-Jewish relations. This was particularly the case with various aspects of Polish complicity in the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust. While these changes can be traced in all of the above-mentioned works, they are particularly visible in a collection of stories by Peretz Opoczynski (1892–1943), edited by Ber Mark and David Sfard.[26] A prewar journalist and Zionist activist from Łódź, Opoczynski was one of the key members of the Oneg Shabat. It was probably thanks to support from his colleagues in the Underground Archive that he managed to obtain a highly coveted job of ghetto postman. His encounters with the poorest of ghetto inhabitants, taking place when delivering letters and parcels, formed the basis for masterful literary reportages which he prepared for the Archive.[27] However, the editors of the 1954 edition of his work, clearly questioning their literary merit, wrote: "Since the author tends to repeat himself, the editors found it necessary to shorten the text here and there, where it has no particular meaning."[28] Here again, the reader could ascribe his or her own meaning to those words.

Probably the greatest number of changed passages appears in Opoczynski's reportage entitled *Megiles "Paruvke"* (The book of "Paruvke"). The story describes Poles participating in "Paruvke," the disinfection steaming of belongings of inhabitants of ghetto buildings with suspected outbreaks of typhus. In Opoczynski's stories, "Paruvke" usually resulted in the looting or destruction of disinfected belongings, which he compared to the torture taking place in the con-

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25 AŻIH, ARG I 1215, 4.

26 David Sfard (1905–1981) was a Yiddish writer and prewar member of the Communist Party. He survived the war in the Soviet Union and, after returning to Poland in 1946, Sfard became a central figure in Polish Jewish social and cultural life. He served as a literary editor for Yidish Bukh. He emigrated to Israel in 1969. On David Sfard, see Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu: Rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce* [Citizen of Yiddishland: The case of Jewish communists in Poland] (Warsaw: Neriton, 2009). A selection of Opoczynski's stories was published in English in *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, ed. Samuel Kassow, transl. David Suchoff and Samuel Kassow (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

27 On this, see David G. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 381.

28 Ber Mark, "Perets Opotshinski," in *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 8. Writing Polish blackmailers out of the Holocaust narrative also meant writing out those Poles who behaved heroically. This is the fate of Waclav, who appears in Skalov's novel. Waclav is executed by the Germans (we assume for openly criticizing Poles blackmailing Jews), but as his story deals mainly with the criticism of other Poles' behavior it had to be removed. See AŻIH, ARG I 67.

centration camps. In his description, Polish men and women participating in "Paruvke" did not differ in their cruelty and greediness from Germans who oversee the work. In the original document they are described using words with clearly negative, or even derogatory, connotations, such as: "Polish cad," "goy" (non-Jew), "shiksa" (non-Jewish girl or young woman), and "sheygets" (plural: shkotsim) (non-Jewish boy or young man). In the 1954 edition these were replaced by more neutral words, which did not allow for clear national or ethnic identification, such as "hooligans" or "young hooligans."[29]

Such is the case in the following passages describing the work of disinfection squads:

Original:
These are shkotsim and shiksas, wearing airmen uniforms, a type of yellow khaki. Their step is steady, as if they were going to war, they look around with commanding eyes, they do not speak to anyone, severe like the angels of destruction.[30]

In the edited version, "shkotsim and shiksas"—which Opoczynski clearly used to describe non-Jewish Poles—are replaced by "young hooligans."[31]

Original:
They like a shot-glass, they like a bribe . . . and they hate a Jew. There is no lesson that a Polish cad, an average sheygets, learned quicker and better than a German's teaching that one should not be ashamed of anything in front of a Jew, that there are no obstructions, no laws and considerations, on the contrary—the more cruel, the more disgustingly and despicably one treats him, the more just it is.[32]

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29 There is one exception to this rule, which is difficult to account for. In one passage, the editors left unaltered the following sentence: "Also Polish spritzers, bath-attendants, policemen, and janitors craved antisemitism like air, wishing for it to justify in their eyes their despicable actions." Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 47. Skalov's novel contains a similar passage that speaks of Poles profiting from the closure of the ghetto. He is referring to tax collectors described as "leeches feeding of Jewish bodies" and "Polish policemen who remained on duty and on every step served occupational activities in the anti-Jewish undertakings." Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 118.

30 Peretz Opoczynski, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta* [Reportages from the Warsaw Ghetto], ed. and transl. Monika Polit (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, ŻIH, 2009), 68. This edition will be our basis for comparison with the 1953 publication.

31 Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 33.

32 Opoczynski, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta*, 70.

In the edited version, the "Polish cad" is, again, replaced by "a hooligan."[33] These are only two examples of several similar changes.[34]

These seemingly small interventions altered the meaning of both the passages and of Opoczynski's reportage in its entirety. They very clearly disguised the Polish nationality of perpetrators, putting the blame mainly on the Germans. Probably for the same reason, the most controversial reportage, *Goyim in getto* (Goyim in the ghetto), focusing on the greediness of Poles who conducted illegal trade with Jews in the ghetto, was left out of the anthology. The editors explained that their decision not to publish this and some other pieces by Opoczynski was based on artistic merit, which was not fulfilled by works of a strictly journalistic character. Their explanations however are (probably on purpose) hardly convincing, as they admitted that as an exception, they also included those pieces of work, which fitted into the "non-artistic" category.[35]

Editors were even prepared to safeguard the image of Poles by compromising Jewish victims. Such was a case in Zalmen Skalov's novel *Der haknkrayts* (discussed below), where a passage describing participation of Poles in ghetto disinfection actions was changed from: "Disinfectors (Polish) were stealing. Doctors (Polish) were stuffing their pockets with bribes"[36] into: "Disinfectors (Polish and Jewish) were stealing. Doctors were stuffing their pockets with bribes."[37]

Editorial Changes as Internal Censorship?

Not all changes carried out in the aforementioned books can be defined as enforced by state censorship. The editors and publishers almost certainly made changes on their own personal initiative as well. Their aim was to portray the Holocaust in the way they saw fit, both for the sake of commemorating the victims as well as providing a sound structure for the rebuilding of Jewish life in Poland. This type of editorial changes dealt mainly with the conflicts within the Jewish community during the Holocaust.

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33 Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 35.
34 Other examples are a "barber" replacing "a sheygets" and shkotsim, shiksas, and goyim replaced by "hooligans." Opoczynski, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta*, 76, 80; Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 40, 44.
35 Mark, "Perets Opotshinski," 7.
36 AŻIH, ARG I 1233, 80.
37 Skalov, *Der haknkrayts,* 124.

This was the case with the novel *Der haknkrayts* by Zalmen Skalov (real name Leyb Truskalovski, 1908–1942). The publication of Skalov's novel was from the beginning problematic. In an article on literature in the ghettos published in *Biuletyn* two years before the novel came out, Ber Mark criticized it for having a "too harsh and unwarranted pathological-erotic element."[38] In his 1954 study *Di umgekumene shrayber fun di getos un lagern un zeyere verk* (The murdered writers from ghettos and camps and their work) Mark again rebuked Skalov's work for "naturalistic imaginary with overblown eroticism."[39] What he found particularly appalling was that the book depicted a romantic relationship between an ethnic German from Poland (*Volksdeutscher*), Mazur, and a Jewish woman, Estusia Wolf.[40] While Mark had no particular opinion on Mazur, he believed Estusia, a Jew (and thus someone who should hold higher moral ground for Mark) to be particularly repulsive: a capitalist, an enemy of the USSR, and a representative of the demoralized bourgeoisie. He wrote disdainfully: "Once difficult times arose, the degradation of the profiteer family intensified. Estusia is ready to give herself to the Polish lumpenbourgeois Mazur just to reach a business deal."[41]

It is not clear why Mark finally decided to publish *Der haknkrayts*. The book was significantly reduced, even by the standards of socialist censorship. The second part, where the cuts were particularly severe, was reduced from 13 to 10 chapters, with some passages ordered differently. In many passages that could not be fully excised, individual words and sentences were removed or altered. In the introduction to the novel, written by Mark himself, there is no mention of his past criticism of Skalov. Harsh criticism was replaced by unequivocal praise. As he put it: "Skalov's works from the ghetto period are not only a strong indictment [against imperialism] but also a hymn to the moral strength of simple ghetto inhabitants, who showed stamina, true humanity, national solidarity, and internationalist feelings in the most tragic times of our history."[42]

Not all of the deletions of the novel reflected socialist censorship. For instance, also missing from Skalov's work, undoubtedly removed under Mark's initiative, were references to bourgeois Jewish collaborators, who state censors

38 Bernard Mark, "O twórczości literackiej w gettach: Rysy ogólne" [About literary works in the ghettos: General outlines], *BŻIH* 5, no. 2 (1952): 192.

39 Ber Mark, *Di umgekumene shrayber fun di getos un lagern un zeyere verk* [The murdered writers from the ghettos and camps and their work] (Warsaw: Yidish Bukh, 1954), 79.

40 Mark, *Di umgekumene shrayber fun di getos un lagern un zeyere verk*, 80.

41 Mark, *Di umgekumene shrayber fun di getos un lagern un zeyere verk*, 80.

42 Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 8.

would probably have no problem mentioning. Thus, Jewish "collaboration" was also a postwar taboo topic, but less a communist than a Jewish one. This taboo included anything that would allege Jewish complicity in the Holocaust, such as the Jewish police and the Jewish Councils. In Skalov's novel such references were simply removed, even if they appeared in a neutral context. The reader would not be aware that one of the protagonists, Nekhemia Fusnagel, had a fake work certificate from the Judenrat, while another, Moshe Davidovitz, worked in the Jewish Order Service (the Jewish Police). While it could be claimed that the editors cut out those passages to avoid having to interpret them in line with the strict Stalinist interpretation of class struggle in the ghetto, their self-censorship here was in line with the silence on these topics in works published by other Jewish publishing houses around the world.

The editors applied a similar level of censorship to the erotic details of Skalov's novel, having carefully removed all of them from the 1954 edition. It is difficult to ascertain whether this was done to comply with the guidelines of socialist realism,[43] or in order to preserve the virtue of the victims of the Holocaust. Safeguarding the victims' dignity in the 1950's included also removing mentions of sexual violence against Jewish women.[44] Thus, readers of Skalov's novel did not learn of the experiences of one of the novel's protagonists, Eda Berman. Eda, together with other Jewish women, was caught by the Germans during the street round up in Litzmannstadt (the Nazi name of Łódź), then imprisoned and repeatedly raped. The novel provides a very graphic and shocking description of her ordeal, one unique for texts written during the Holocaust.[45] While Skalov writes that such events were common knowledge among Litzmannstadt inhabitants and happened repeatedly, they proved unpublishable for the postwar editors. Editorial changes in this book also led to omitting the topic of sexual violence against Polish women. This was the case for Wanda, a Polish housemaid in the novel, who out of good will and empathy towards prosecuted Jews decides to stay in the ghetto with her Jewish employers. Skalov

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43   On Socialist realism in Yiddish literature, see Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, "Czy socrealizm miał odmianę żydowską? Kilka uwag o twórczości pisarzy jidysz w powojennej Polsce" [Did socrealism have a Jewish variant? A few words about the works of Yiddish writers in prewar Poland], in *Socrealizm: Fabuły-komunikaty-ikony* [Socrealism: plotlines-messages-icons], ed. Krzysztof Stępnik and Magdalena Piechota (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006), 171–77.

44   On sexual violence against Jewish women in the Ringelblum Archive, see Katarzyna Person, "Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: The Case of Forced Prostitution in the Warsaw Ghetto," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 32, no. 2 (2014): 102–20.

45   Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 47–48.

portrays Wanda, in addition to her positive characteristics, as sensual and sexually promiscuous, a common way of describing non-Jewish women in popular prewar sensationalist Jewish novels. While the censors cut out passages referring to her sensuality, they also decided to remove mentions of the sexual violence which she is subjected to. At one point in the novel Wanda is deported to a "great unknown city with cloisters and chimneys, with speeding trains and trams. . . . Somewhere there, to a small establishment located in a narrow lane came officers from torpedo boats and submarines, they gathered there during their leave to carry out orgies with young Poles, who have to give them their bodies on demand."[46] Attempting to cover up the truth about sending young Poles to German brothels in the Reich, the editors transformed a brothel in Hamburg into a German forced labor camp.[47]

A significant part of editorial changes dealt with the rebuilding of Jewish life in Poland in the shape envisaged by the editors. This included the revival of Yiddish culture in the new political environment. Printing novels in their original Yiddish was part of this effort,[48] as was removing information about the use of Polish in the ghetto, and the decline of Yiddish. Such changes seem to clearly be an internal initiative as there were no requirements regarding this topic from state censorship.

Interventions of this kind often took place in the works of Opoczynski as well, a keen observer of social changes taking place in the ghetto who discussed social inequality and progressing assimilation in his essays. All longer passages discussing the marginalization of Yiddish in the ghetto were cut out in their entirety by the editors, irrespective of the message they carried. Such was the case with a longer passage in which Opoczynski blames the prevalence of Polish-speakers among caretakers for children in the ghetto for the failures in caring for impoverished children, who should have been spoken to in Yiddish, the language they identified with.[49]

In a similar vein, the editors dealt with issues relating to conflicts within the ghetto, which ran contrary to the preferred vision of Jewish unity in the face of destruction. Opoczynski's opinions, in particular when they referred to the

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46   AŻIH, ARG I 1233, 83.

47   Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 128; see *Ghetto: Berichte*, 114.

48   As Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov notes, the Yidish Bukh milieu maneuvered between internationalism and a genuine attachment to the Yiddish language and culture. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Czy socrealizm miał odmianę żydowską?*, 174.

49   Opoczynski, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta*, 173–74, 193–94.

poorest members of the ghetto, to the so-called "Jewish masses," proved to be unacceptable. Editors resolved this by changing internal conflicts in the ghetto into de facto class conflicts. Such changes can be seen in the short story entitled "Der yidisher brivtreger" (the Jewish postman) in which Opoczynski describes his daily interactions with ghetto inhabitants. In part of the story, which discusses how the ghetto's medical doctors dislike Yiddish, those who stood against it were changed from the original "working intelligentsia" to "bourgeois intelligentsia" and their attitude towards Yiddish from "almost hateful" to "truly hateful". Hence the sentence "Working intelligentsia, in particular medical doctors, treated the mailmen almost hatefully,"[50] was changed to "Bourgeois intelligentsia, in particular doctors, treated the mailman truly hatefully."[51]

Such editorial changes altered other novels as well. In Skalov's novel, for example, when the national identification of Poles could not be removed, the editor changed their class affiliations. Describing one of the summer resorts popular among inhabitants of Warsaw, Skalov wrote:

> *Original version:*
> Here the air is "judenrein," and the guesthouses and villas are inhabited only by decent Christians who came here for the summer.[52]

> *Edited version:*
> Here the air is "judenrein," and the guesthouses and villas are inhabited only by Christian magnates.[53]

Editorial adaptations in postwar Polish editions of documents from the Ringelblum Archive had implications extending beyond the country's small surviving Jewish community. While the most notorious case is undoubtedly that of the ghetto notebook of Emanuel Ringelblum, with the vast majority of existing translations based on the heavily censored Polish edition in Yiddish, the editions discussed above were also translated into other languages. These translations show very clearly that the editorial changes in the Polish edition were not as extreme as elsewhere in the Bloc.

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50   Opoczynski, *Reportaże z warszawskiego getta*, 166.
51   Opotshinski, *Reportazhn fun varshever geto*, 78.
52   Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 4.
53   Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 11.

An East German translation of the literary works from the Underground Archive was published in 1966 under the title: *Ghetto: Berichte aus dem Warschauer Ghetto 1939–1945*.[54] The German edition was based on documents which appeared in the 1954 publication, yet the word "re-written" rather than "translated" seems to be more appropriate in this case. Many passages were transformed drastically. In most cases, ideological footnotes added by editors to the Yiddish versions printed in Poland were incorporated into the text of the document itself. Such was the case with Skalov's novel. In 1954 Ber Mark annotated one passage of the novel, in which the author describes escapes to the east from Warsaw, with the footnote: "The Soviet Union was the only country which opened its borders to suffering Jews, who were escaping the fascist hell."[55] The German version not only kept the "censored" passages, it also integrated the footnotes into the text, so that the reader could not clearly separate original passages from the editors' comments and annotations.[56]

Censorship of documents from the Ringelblum Archive continued through the socialist period, appearing even in editions published by such esteemed scholars of the Warsaw Ghetto as Ruta Sakowska.[57] The changes were most commonly explained by a lack of document legibility, but in one case, a famous essay on the deportation from the Warsaw Ghetto in the summer of 1942 entitled *Ostatnim etapem przesiedlenia jest śmierć* (The last stage of the resettlement is death), ascribed to writer Gustawa Jarecka, Sakowska omitted a passage of the document relating to the crimes committed by the Jewish police. She wrote openly in a footnote: "31 words of the document have been omitted due to their offensive character towards the whole of the ghetto community."[58] In another document published in *Biuletyn*, where Sakowska censored fragments of a newspaper published by children from one of the ghetto's orphanages, she declared that "the boys' judgement and assessment regarding particular people as well as

54   J. Bernstein et al., *Ghetto: Berichte aus dem Warschauer Ghetto 1939–1945* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1966).

55   Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 47.

56   See Skalov, *Der haknkrayts*, 41; Bernstein, *Ghetto*, 52.

57   These are discussed by Aleksandra Bańkowska and Tadeusz Epsztein. See Aleksandra Bańkowska and Tadeusz Epsztein, "Wstęp," in *Ludzie i prace "Oneg Szabat,"* ed. Aleksandra Bańkowska and Tadeusz Epsztein (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2013), lxv–lxvii, 273. These appear in two of Sakowska's volumes *Archiwum Ringelbluma Getto Warszawskie lipiec 1942-styczeń 1943* [Ringelblum Archive: Warsaw Ghetto July 1942–January 1943] (Warsaw: PWN, 1980); and *Dwa etapy: Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w oczach ofiar; Szkic historyczny i dokumenty* [Two stages: Hitlerite politics of the extermination of Jews in the eyes of the victims; Historical outline and documents] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986).

58   Sakowska, *Dwa etapy*, 273. This information was provided by Dr. Eleonora Bergman.

'Centos' [The National Society for the Care of Orphans] . . . were not always just."[59] In other documents controversial passages were cut out from the text without any indication.[60]

As late as 1988, historian Artur Eisenbach described direct pressure from state censorship to alter part of Emanuel Ringelblum's *Polish-Jewish Relations* (written after Ringelblum's escape from the ghetto). He was allowed to publish it only after long and humiliating (in his own words) conversations in the Central Bureau of KPPiW and removal of over a dozen pages from the introduction and one footnote.[61] Eisenbach considered this to be a price worth paying to ensure publication of Ringelblum's essay.

Conclusion

Current research regarding the mechanisms of censorship shows that the burden of responsibility for carrying out socialist censorship guidelines was placed mainly on publishing houses.[62] It was employees (here, editors of sources) who were expected to carry out self-censorship according to the ideological expectations of the time. In exchange for that they received certain (limited) freedoms.[63] The Jewish Historical Institute was no exception. As Stephan Stach writes, it was probably only thanks to Ber Marks' ideological involvement that the Jewish Historical Institute survived the attack on independent Jewish communal life that took place under Stalinism.[64]

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59 See "Głos Domu Chłopców" [Voice of the Boys' Home], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, no. 1 (1979): 77.

60 This happened for example to the following passage from Leyb Goldin's *Chronicle of One Night*: "A burly prostitute hands out sweets to her girlfriends. The light brings out their ghostly, calcified faces, skin and bones painted with lipstick, dark contour of their eyebrows." AŻIH, ARG I 1219, 7. Compare with Lejb Goldin, "Kronika jednej doby" [Chronicle of one day], in *Dwa etapy*, 84–96.

61 Nalewajko-Kulikov, "Dzieje publikacji 'Kroniki getta warszawskiego' w Polsce: Rekonesans badawczy" [The story of publication of the Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland: Preliminary research], in *Lesestunde/ Lekcja czytania*, ed. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, Grzegorz Krzywiec (Warsaw: Neriton), 392.

62 See Nalewajko-Kulikov, "The Last Yiddish Books Printed in Poland."

63 This is discussed in Zbigniew Romek, "Wstęp" [Introduction], in *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944–1970*, 10. Zbigniew Romek argues against the long standing perception of state censorship having a dominating role in controlling publications.

64 Stach, "Walka klas w getcie?," 276. Mark's attitude can be witnessed in his 1954 letter to the Press Department of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Describing documents that he had sent to former inhabitants of Hrubieshov in Israel, Mark wrote: "We found only a limited number of such materials relating to the time of the occupation. But since the majority of this material has a more or less anti-Polish attitude, we found only two documents which we could with full responsibility send to the above-mentioned association. These are two descriptions of martyrology of the Jewish population of Hrubieshov located in the Ringel-

There is no doubt that Mark carried out the political censorship of documents from the Ringelblum Archive very thoroughly. As Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov indicated, the Main Office of the Press Publishing and Performances did not have particular problems with Yidish Bukh.[65] Yet, the requirements of state censorship cannot explain all cuts introduced in their publications. What the documents above show is that some part of internal censorship was initiated by the editors for ideological or personal reasons. They thus removed passages which they found "controversial," "shameful," or ideologically unsound. The fact that they were carried out in Yiddish-language publications indicate that these changes were not done only to safeguard the image of Jews in the eyes of the surrounding Polish society. They were done also for the sake of the Jewish community. They should also be seen as a conscious step taken to strengthen the collective, through what those considering themselves to be leaders of this community saw as its "appropriate" image, based in particular on what was seen as "acceptable" experience of the Holocaust. Hence, this editorial line—or self-censorship—has to be seen as part of the construction of a Jewish Holocaust memory in postwar Poland.

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blum Archive (the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto). I enclose copies of those documents. We can attest for the documents both in terms of their content and political [message]." AŻIH/310/336AR, Korespondencja poufna przychodząca i wychodząca 1947–1954, List B. Marka do Departamentu Prasy i Informacji Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych z dn. 17 grudnia 1954 r.

65   Nalewajko-Kulikov, "The Last Yiddish Books Printed in Poland," 116–17.

Peter Hallama

"A Great Civic and Scientific Duty of Our Historiography"
Czech Historians and the Holocaust in the 1970s and 1980s[*]

Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia was known for its repressive political atmosphere that did not allow for the expression of Holocaust memory. There had been an explicit break with the political and cultural liberalization of the 1960s, which had produced a variety of representations of the Holocaust in the media, in cinema, in literature, and in historiography.[1] After the suppression of the Prague Spring in August 1968, the more liberal policies of the 1960s were defamed; publications on the history of the Holocaust had to be stopped. The historian Václav Král argued that this policy of reversal was a legitimate reaction to the fact that the "Israeli propaganda misuses the persecution of the Jews during World War II to morally justify Israeli aggression against the neighboring Arab peoples."[2]

1   For a general discussion of Holocaust memory in Czechoslovakia, see Peter Hallama, *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer: Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Tomas Sniegon, *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); Michal Frankl, "The Sheep of Lidice: The Holocaust and the Construction of Czech National History," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 166–94.

2   Václav Král, "Lektorský posudek na práci Světélka v noci" [Review of the work Little lights in the night], January 26, 1973, reproduced in Marie Rút Křížková, Kurt Jiří Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest, *Je mojí vlastí hradba ghett?* [We are children just the same] (Samizdat, 1978), 372, and in *Svědectví* 14, no. 55 (1978): 415.

Thus, the official anti-Zionist stance of communist Czechoslovakia after the Six-Day War in 1967, and especially after the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, had a direct and massive impact upon Holocaust memory in the country. The Czechoslovak communist stance equated expression of Holocaust memory with support for the political and military goals of post-1967 Israel and, thus, further delegitimized efforts to reckon with the Holocaust.

Foreign observers as well as dissident intellectuals throughout Czechoslovakia's "normalization" period criticized the state's official disregard of the country's Jewish history and of the Holocaust. Czech Jewish Holocaust survivor and historian Erich Kulka denounced this neglect of the Holocaust and omittance of Jewish victims of the war from the historical record as the "'Aryanization' of the dead Jews."[3] One of the most famous critiques made of this policy was a document issued in April 1989 by the human rights movement Charta 77 entitled the "Tragedy of the Jews in the Czechoslovak postwar situation."[4]

The spokesmen of Charta 77, Tomáš Hradílek, Dana Němcová, and Saša Vondra, condemned the lack of historical research and the lack of knowledge about the Holocaust in Czech and Slovak society in the 1970s and 1980s. Others identified the general ignorance of Jewish history and the history of the Holocaust in the country as an equally pressing problem. Among them was Tomáš Pěkný, a dissident author who in the 1980s published the first synthesis of the history of Jews in the Czech lands.[5] However, these critiques not only blamed the communist state for suppressing the study of Jewish history and the Holocaust, they also reproached the majority society for its reluctance to recognize the Jewish past in the Czech lands and in Slovakia. The dissident philosopher Milan Šimečka, for instance, called on the Czechs and Slovaks to "come to terms" with the history of the Holocaust (introducing the German concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).[6] Similarly, the dissident historian Jan Křen explained that Czech nationalism and widespread antisemitism in Czech society

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3   Erich Kulka, "'Arizace' mrtvých Židů" ['Aryanization' of the dead Jews], *Svědectví* 11, no. 42 (1971): 189–90.

4   "Tragédie Židů v čs. poválečné skutečnosti" [The tragedy of Jews in Czechoslovak postwar reality], April 5, 1989, in *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989* [Charta 77: Documents 1977–1989], Vol. 2 *1984–1989*, ed. Blanka Císařovská and Vilém Prečan (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2007), 1103–6. Published in an English translation as Peter Brod, "Czechoslovakia: Jewish Legacy and Jewish Present," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 20, no. 1 (1990): 57–68.

5   fw [Tomáš Pěkný], "Poznámka na okraj prvního čísla Review" [Marginal comment on the first issue of *Review*], *Střední Evropa* 12 (January 1989): 173–81.

6   Milan Šimečka, "Původ nejistoty" [The origin of uncertainty], *Obsah* (April 1989): 25–33. Šimečka's text was reprinted as the introduction to the volume *Osud Židů v protektorátu 1939–1945* [The fate of Jews in the Protectorate 1939–1945] (Prague: Trizonia, 1991), 7–16.

led to a general indifference towards Jews and, consequently, the omission of Jews in Czech historiography.[7] In 1981, Křen described research on the "Jewish question" and on Czech antisemitism to be a "great civic and scientific duty of our [Czechoslovak] historiography."[8] Indeed, Czechoslovak history school-books alone make the marginalization of the Holocaust obvious. Jaroslav Pátek's textbook, which was used in classrooms from the middle of the 1970s through the early 1990s has been hailed as one of the first textbooks to devote space to the history of anti-Jewish persecution during World War II: on one sole page—out of about 70 that dealt with the history of the war, the Czech and Slovak resistance movement, and the liberation of the country by the Red Army—pupils encountered some rudimentary facts concerning the Holocaust.[9]

Considering all this, was there a "taboo" regarding the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia during the so-called normalization era of the 1970s and 1980s? Is Yeshayahu A. Jelinek correct in his assessment that "the treatment of topics related to Jews became a sign of dissent, and *samizdat* became the 'spokesman' of the Jewish past and present in Czechoslovakia"?[10] Was everyone who showed some interest in the history of Czech and Slovak Jews truly a dissident?

My paper will not question the significant contributions that samizdat literature made to Holocaust memory and historiography.[11] However, by examining the official historiography of the period, I aim to complicate this conventional narrative and challenge the idea that the Holocaust was a "taboo" in "normalized" Czechoslovakia.[12]

7 Jan Křen, *Bílá místa v našich dějinách?* [Blank spots in our history?] (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1990), 82–83.

8 Jan Křen, "O Kafkovi, židovské otázce a antisemitismu, také českém" [On Kafka, the Jewish question, and antisemitism, also the Czech one], *Svědectví* 18, no. 69 (1983): 137–42, quotation 142; published first in the Samizdat journal *Historické studie* 8 (1981).

9 Jaroslav Pátek, *Československé dějiny (1939–1948)* [Czechoslovak history (1939–1948)] (Prague: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelství, 1976 [1974]), 32–33. See also Michal Frankl, "Die 'Endlösung der Judenfrage' und die Narrative der tschechischen Geschichte 1945–1989," in *Geschichtsschreibung zu den böhmischen Ländern im 20. Jahrhundert: Wissenschaftstraditionen—Institutionen—Diskurse* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 270. For other examples, see Zdeněk Jirásek, "Die Darstellung des Holocaust in tschechischen Geschichtsbüchern," in *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust: Historisch-politisches Lernen in der Lehrerbildung*, ed. Hanns-Fred Rathenow and Norbert H. Weber (Hamburg: Krämer, 2005), 257–69.

10 Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, "Capturing the Public's Imagination: Publications on Jewish Themes in Slovakia and the Czech Lands, 1989–1995," *East European Jewish Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1997): 108–19, quotation 110 (italics original).

11 See Peter Hallama, "'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' auf Tschechisch: Der Holocaust im tschechischen Samizdat," in *Gegengeschichte: Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens*, ed. Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015), 237–60.

12 As a reaction to Jelinek's above-mentioned article, Peter Brod had already argued for complicating the black-and-white picture of oppositional "official" and "independent" spheres. Peter Brod, "Letter to the Editor," *East European Jewish Affairs* 28, no. 1 (1998): 127–28.

I concentrate on the research of Holocaust survivor, communist journalist, and historian Miroslav Kárný in the 1970s and 1980s. He left behind not only a considerable amount of publications but also a large correspondence with Holocaust survivors and historians from Czechoslovakia and abroad.[13] Throughout this period, Kárný collaborated with institutions such as the Terezín Memorial, the Union of Antifascist Fighters (the united organization of former resistance fighters, concentration camp inmates, and Jewish survivors of the Holocaust), the Jewish Museum in Prague, and the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. His monograph dealing with the Holocaust of Czech Jews, though published in 1991, was in fact prepared before the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989. Up to this day, it is the only major history of anti-Jewish persecution in the Czech lands during World War II and thus Miroslav Kárný is considered a significant figure in the establishment of Holocaust studies in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.[14] Through a detailed analysis of Kárný's activities and his journalistic and academic writings, I will show that this important and state-sanctioned historian did indeed explore the topic of the Holocaust in different ways, but remained at the same time within the official narrative framework of contemporary Czechoslovak historiography.

Miroslav Kárný

Miroslav Kárný was born on September 9, 1919, in Prague and grew up in an assimilated Czech-Jewish family of shopkeepers there.[15] Kárný and his siblings did not receive any Jewish religious education, although Jewish traditions were upheld in the family. He was the third of four children, the two oldest of whom were from his father's first marriage to a non-Jewish woman. As such, Kárný's

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13   Most of his personal papers are accessible in the Czech National Archives (Národní archiv České republiky, Prague [hereafter, NA], f. Kárných). However, one part of his personal papers (mainly correspondence from the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s) was not handed over to the Czech National Archives but remained unsorted at the Institut Terezínské iniciativy in Prague (Terezín Initiative Institute, hereafter, ITI), which he co-founded in the 1990s. I am most grateful to Tereza Štěpková and the Institut Terezínské iniciativy for providing me access to this material and for having funded a research stay in Prague in the spring of 2019.

14   Anna Hájková, "Die Holocaustforschung in Tschechien nach 1989," *Gedenkstättenrundbrief* 126 (2005): 26–33; Jaroslava Milotová, "Miroslav Kárný (1919–2001)," *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 9 (2002): 25–32.

15   For his biography, see in particular Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563; Milotová, "Miroslav Kárný (1919–2001)"; Raimund Kemper, "Miroslav Kárný (1919–2001)," *sozial.geschichte.extra*, 2001; Jiří Kotouč, "Miroslav Kárný o našem čase" [Miroslav Kárný about our time], *Terezínská iniciativa* 20 (November 2001): 6–7.

older brother and sister survived the Holocaust as "*Mischlinge.*" Kárný's younger brother Zdeněk was deported to Theresienstadt and then to Auschwitz, where he was killed in 1944. Kárný's parents were also killed in Auschwitz.

Prior to the Holocaust, Kárný had studied Czech language and history at Charles University for one year until the Germans closed all Czech universities in the "Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia" in November 1939. Previously in 1937, he had joined the Communist Party and was engaged in the communist students' movement. In November 1941, Kárný was among the first Jewish prisoners from the Protectorate to be deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. There he participated in the communist resistance movement and in the publication of the illegal journal *Přehled* (Overview). He was transferred to Auschwitz in the autumn of 1944. In early 1945, he survived a death march to Kaufering, one of the satellite camps of Dachau, where he was liberated at the end of the war. His wife, Margita Kárná (née Krausová), whom he met and married in Theresienstadt, survived the Holocaust as well.

After the end of the war, Kárný worked as a journalist and later as deputy chief editor of the central organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party *Rudé právo* (Red right). In the early 1950s he was discharged and expelled from the Communist Party as the antisemitic show trials were beginning in which his half-brother Jiří would be sentenced to imprisonment. However, Kárný was able to continue working as a journalist in the company journal of the united steelworks in Kladno. There, together with his colleagues, he also prepared his first historical publication: a study on the history of the iron and steel industry in the town.[16]

By the late 1950s he was able to again occupy a more important position. He was employed as a journalist and later as the chief-editor of *Svoboda* (Liberty), the communist weekly for the Central Bohemian region. After being fully rehabilitated in the early 1960s, Kárný managed to work his way up within the party ranks. After 1967, he worked in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where he was in charge of mass media.[17] In 1968, during the Prague Spring, Kárný collaborated with the reformers within the party leadership and

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16   Miroslav Kárný, Alois Pěnička, Jan Zd. Josif, and Ivo Kruliš, *Sto let kladenských železáren: Příspěvek k dějinám českého železářství a k dějinám dělnického hnutí na Kladensku v letech 1854–1957* [One hundred years of steelworks in the Kladno region: Contribution to the history of the Czech iron and steel industry and to the history of the labor movement in the Kladno region, 1854–1957] (Prague: Práce, 1959).

17   Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563, tape 5.

condemned the military intervention in August 1968 that brought the reform movement to a violent end.[18] Because of his role in the Prague Spring, he had to leave the Party apparatus in 1969 and was expelled from the Communist Party a second time. This time he was also banned from "propagandistic activities," which meant that he was no longer allowed to publish in the mass media.[19] He was sidelined and had to work in the administration of a scientific institute that was mainly concerned with economics. In 1974, at the age of 55, he was able to retire early due to his status as a former resistance fighter and political prisoner.[20]

Holocaust Witness and Scholar

In the 1960s, before his expulsion from the party, Miroslav Kárný started to openly deal with the history of the Holocaust. His first historiographic contributions were two small articles about the Communist Party organization in the Theresienstadt ghetto.[21] The publication of these articles in two specialist journals was possible because of the beginning liberalization of the 1960s, in which more and more personal accounts about the Holocaust were published, and more ideological explanations of the Holocaust (mainly that it had been a class struggle) moved to the background. Contrary to this trend, in his articles Kárný emphasized once more the importance of the communist resistance movement during the war, specifically that of the communist Jewish resistance. He insisted on the fact that resistance was not "an individual act," but "an act of the Party, which formed and led them [i.e., Jewish communists]."[22] Furthermore, in the discussion of the ghetto's so-called "Jewish self-administration," Kárný applied a Marxist approach, attributing the differences in political strategies and goals within this "Jewish self-administration" to the class and political affiliations of

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18   Interview with Miroslav Kárný, 00:05:50. For his activity as a journalist and during the Prague Spring, see his memoirs "K mé novinářské (a historické) biografii" [About my journalistic (and historic) biography], July 1, 2000, and "21. srpna 1968 v budově sekretariátu ÚV KSČ" [August 21, 1968, in the building of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], November 14, 1990, NA, f. Kárných, box 1.

19   See also Miroslav Kárný to Lena Makarova, February 18, 2000, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder M-R (unsorted).

20   See his memoirs about these last years before retirement: Miroslav Kárný, "Přestavba řízení v reprografickém středisku Institutu poradenství" [Management reorganization in the reprographic center of the Institute of consulting], NA, f. Kárných, box 1.

21   Miroslav Kárný, "Pravda, ale ne celá (Dopis čtenáře)" [The truth, but not the whole (Letter to the editor)] *Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ* 2, no. 2 (1962): 285–89; Miroslav Kárný, "Časopis jediný svého druhu" [A journal, unique in its kind], *Novinářský sborník* 8, nos. 2–3 (1963): 180–82.

22   Kárný, "Pravda, ale ne celá (Dopis čtenáře)."

its members. In both articles, Kárný acted more as a witness than a historian. However, two aspects of these early short texts by Kárný remained central to his understanding of the Holocaust as his historical work continued: an emphasis on resistance to fascism in general and on the Jewish communist resistance in particular; and a Marxist interpretation of World War II and the Holocaust as a class struggle. Both aspects demonstrate Kárný's Marxist convictions, but equally his attempt to widen the antifascist narrative in order to include the history of Czech Jews, the Holocaust, and Jewish reactions to it.

Kárný found more time to devote to his research after the end of his formal political career in 1968 and during his new, less arduous employment. He began to dedicate himself more fully to documenting the history and memory of the Holocaust.[23] In his own view, a major impetus for his work was the then growing idea of creating a Ghetto Museum in the city of Terezín, a plan backed up by a governmental resolution of late 1968 on the renovation of the Terezín Memorial.[24] Kárný indeed played an important role in the development of the Terezín Memorial, which in the second half of the 1960s little by little integrated the history of the former ghetto into its agenda. In the first two postwar decades, the curators of the memorial had focused almost exclusively on the history of the "Small Fortress," the former Gestapo prison equally located in Terezín, where 32,000 persons, mainly Czech resistant fighters, had been imprisoned between 1940 and 1945, of whom about 2,600 were killed.[25] In order to modernize the Terezín Memorial, an architectural renovation was launched in 1968. The memory and the musealization of the former ghetto occupied a prominent place within this change. For instance, the curators intended to establish a Ghetto Museum in the heart of the city of Terezín, in the former ghetto. The plan to establish a Ghetto Museum had been brought forward by Holocaust survivors and representatives of the Czechoslovak Jewish community already in the immediate postwar years. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it became more and more concrete.[26]

Together with employees of the Terezín Memorial and the State Jewish Museum in Prague, Miroslav Kárný participated in a team that prepared an exhibi-

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23   Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563, tape 5, 00:07:00.
24   Interview with Miroslav Kárný, 00:07:10.
25   On the memorialization of "Terezín" (both the former ghetto and the "Small Fortress"), see Hallama, *Nationale Helden*, 63–141.
26   Hallama, *Nationale Helden*, 127–35.

tion concept for the future Ghetto Museum in the early 1970s.[27] Kárný was consulted primarily on issues concerning the illegal communist party organization and the resistance movement in the ghetto.[28] In 1973, the team presented a first version of the exhibition script and collected items for the exhibition.[29] They believed that the Ghetto Museum would be ready to open in 1975.[30]

Admittedly, the concept for the exhibition reproduced several traditional, communist interpretations of the recent history. For instance, the depiction of Czech antisemitism during the so-called Second Czechoslovak Republic (1938–1939) was merely a matter of the "bourgeois" politicians and the concept presented an idealized picture of the solidarity between the Czech people and their Jewish fellow citizens. Nevertheless, the exhibition was clearly innovative in that it presented German antisemitism (rather than imperialism or class struggle) as the driving force behind the persecution and murder of the Jews. Indeed, in the first part of the exhibition concept, devoted to the ideological and historical preconditions of the ghetto's history, the authors intended to cover the ideological and legal bases of anti-Jewish persecutions in Nazi Germany, the first phase of the persecutions from 1933 to 1939, Czech antisemitism and fascism prior to World War II, and the application of racist laws in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. No mention was made here of capitalism, imperialism, communism, or the class struggle.[31] The authors' focus on antisemitism was so strong that even the director of the State Jewish Museum recommended the in-

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27 "Plán činnosti badatelsko-historického odboru na rok 1971" [Action plan of the historical research department for the year 1971], n.d. [late 1970 or early 1971], Státní oblastní archiv v Litoměřicích, Litoměřice, f. Památník Terezín (hereafter, SOA Litoměřice, PT), box 13; Václav Novák, "Zpráva o plnění vládního usnesení č. 446/68 k 31.5.1972" [Report about the execution of the government resolution no. 446/68, May 31, 1972], May 31, 1972, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14; "Porada o práci na scénáři muzea ghetta" [Meeting about the Ghetto Museum's concept], December 6, 1972, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14. In an oral history interview, Kárný recalls his work on the exhibition script: Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563, tape 5, 00:07:20.

28 "Návrh na osnovu libreta k expozici dějin tzv. ghetta v Terezíně" [Draft concept of the exhibition on the history of the so-called Terezín ghetto], n.d. [1972], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

29 "Kontrola plnění vládního usnesení 446/68" [Supervision of the execution of the government resolution no. 446/68], n.d. [February 1973], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 1; "Návrh na osnovu libreta k expozici dějin tzv. ghetta v Terezíně" [Draft concept of the exhibition on the history of the so-called Terezín ghetto], n.d. [1972], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

30 "Zpráva o plnění vládního usnesení 446/68 na úseku stavebně-technickém k 30.9.1972" [Report about the execution of the government resolution no. 446/68 in the field of construction and engineering], n.d. [ca. October 1972], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14; "Porada o práci na scénáři muzea ghetta" [Meeting about the Ghetto Museum's concept], December 6, 1972, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

31 "Návrh na osnovu libreta k expozici dějin tzv. ghetta v Terezíně" [Draft concept of the exhibition on the history of the so-called Terezín ghetto], n.d. [1972], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

troduction to be broader, for the Nazi politics were "not only antisemitism, but were directed also against other 'inferior' nations."[32]

At that time, Miroslav Kárný started to fully engage with the study of the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto. According to a letter he wrote to the director of the Terezín Memorial Václav Novák in 1973, he already had a clear objective as a historian: to write "a truly scientific history" of the Theresienstadt ghetto.[33] Therefore, he studied in different archives, read domestic and foreign literature (including German, American, and Israeli publications), and—as I will discuss later—collected interviews with Theresienstadt survivors and other documents from Theresienstadt.

Kárný sought institutional and financial support for his research. As, in his own words, the "only historian in Czechoslovakia" working on the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto, he hoped to be supported by the Terezín Memorial in 1973.[34] However, the close cooperation that had existed between Kárný and the Memorial in the early 1970s soon came to an abrupt end. In a letter from late 1973, the Memorial's director already expressed his worry that in some issues "we will certainly have problems."[35] He was most likely referring to the politics of "normalization" in the early 1970s that brought about personal changes in the Terezín Memorial's history department as well. Karel Lagus, a Jewish survivor of the Theresienstadt ghetto who had been the head of that department since 1969, had to be dismissed already in late 1971.[36] Lagus' dismissal signaled that the narrative of specifically Jewish suffering in the Theresienstadt ghetto would not be in the forefront of the Terezín Memorial's agenda. This might have been also the reason why an article that Kárný proposed in 1973 for the Memorial's journal *Terezínské listy* (Terezín papers) was not accepted for publication (the reasons for the refusal remain unknown). Thus, apart from an edition of a document concerning the cultural life in

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32 "Porada o práci na scénáři muzea ghetta" [Meeting about the Ghetto Museum's concept], December 6, 1972, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

33 Miroslav Kárný to Václav Novák (Památník Terezín), November 3, 1973, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

34 Miroslav Kárný to Václav Novák (Památník Terezín), November 3, 1973, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

35 Václav Novák (Památník Terezín) to Miroslav Kárný, n.d. [November or December 1973], SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14.

36 "Zápis o plnění usnesení vlády ČSSR z 15.12.1968" [Record of the execution of the government resolution from December 15, 1968], September 9, 1971, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 13; "Kontrolní zpráva k usnesení rady SKNV č. 1/17 o Památníku Terezín" [Inspection report concerning the resolution of the council of the North Bohemian National Committee], November 11, 1971, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 13; "Zápis sepsaný dne 2.12.1971 v Památníku Terezín" [Record from December 2, 1971], December 1971, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 13.

Theresienstadt from the early 1970s,[37] Kárný did not publish in this journal until the 1990s.[38] He finally succeeded in getting institutional support from the State Jewish Museum in Prague. In 1976, two years after his retirement, the State Jewish Museum commissioned Kárný to carry out a research project about the "Nazi 'solution to the Jewish question' in the Czech lands."[39] Part of this project was also to document the period of World War II and gather material from domestic and foreign archives concerning the anti-Jewish persecutions in the Czech lands.[40]

Although Miroslav Kárný had been expelled from the communist party and was, partly, prevented from publishing his texts about the Holocaust of Czech Jews, he remained a communist and loyal to the state. Furthermore, his wife, Margita Kárná, remained a Party member. And unlike other journalists or historians who had been involved in the "Prague Spring," he did not choose to publish in the samizdat or to engage with the dissidents in the emerging civil society. His loyal stance was also appreciated by the communist secret service (Státní bezpečnost, StB) who approached him in early 1973 with the objective of obtaining information about "Zionism" in Czechoslovakia, that is, information about Czech Jews, the situation within the Jewish community, and their relations abroad. Miroslav Kárný was judged valuable by the StB officers because of his many contacts among Czechoslovak Jews and his relations with foreign scholars, part of whom were Jewish emigrants from Czechoslovakia (for instance the historian Livia Rothkirchen at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem).[41] The StB file containing information from the "secret collaborator" Kárný (with the cover name "Mirek") is almost 100 pages, covering 15 years from 1973 to 1988. From the file, it is not clear if Kárný harmed anyone directly by cooperating with the

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37   Miroslav Kárný, "Svědectví Josefa Taussiga" [The testimony of Josef Taussig], *Terezínské listy* 2 (1971): 12–23.

38   Miroslav Kárný to Památník Terezín, November 2, 1973, and Václav Novák (Památník Terezín) to Miroslav Kárný, January 23, 1974, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14. See also Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563, tape 5, 00:09:00–00:10:10. According to entries in Kárný's diary from 1979, he prepared another article (about "the path to the 'Final Solution'"), which has never been published in *Terezínské listy*. Diář 1979, NA, f. Kárných, box 3.

39   Miroslav Kárný, "Die historische Forschung der nazistischen 'Lösung der Judenfrage' im sog. Protektorat," *Judaica Bohemiae* 16, no. 1 (1980): 28–31. See also Milotová, "Miroslav Kárný (1919–2001)," 29, and Hájková, "Die Holocaustforschung in Tschechien nach 1989."

40   Miroslav Kárný to Miroslav Jaroš (State Jewish Museum), October 26, 1976, and October 5, 1978, NA, f. Kárných, box 31; "Zpráva o činnosti za 1. pololetí 1978. Vědecké oddělení" [Activity report for the first half-year 1978. Research department], n.d. [mid-1978], Archiv Židovského muzea v Praze, Prague (hereafter, AŽMP), f. Židovské muzeum v Praze (hereafter, ŽMP) 1969–1994, box 214, inv.č. 1171; "Návrh plánu práce na rok 1979—vědecké oddělení" [Draft activity plan for the year 1979—research department], n.d. [late 1978], AŽMP, f. ŽMP 1969–1994, box 214, inv.č. 1171.

41   Archiv bezpečnostních složek (hereafter, ABS), Prague, TS-800656 MV.

StB.[42] However, his collaboration certainly helped facilitate his research on the Holocaust. Kárný's anti-Zionist stance, which he demonstrated by working for the StB, probably helped him gain the support of the State Jewish Museum a few years later. Its scientific department declared the fight against Zionism and the critique of Zionist interpretations and "falsifications" of history as one of its main objectives in 1976.[43] The Museum's director from 1972 to 1976, Erik Klíma, was not only willing to adjust the Museum's politics to follow party lines and implement an anti-Zionist course, but he himself was also one of the secret police's collaborators who had recommended Kárný to the StB in 1973.[44]

Kárný's collaboration with the StB probably also allowed him to build contacts in Western countries (in particular with people from West Germany, the US, and Israel), to receive Western literature, and even travel to the West. In an StB memorandum on Miroslav Kárný from October 1973, the StB officer in charge did not see any indication that Kárný would attempt to emigrate if he was allowed to make a trip abroad.[45] Four years later, the secret police supported Kárný's successful application[46] for a three-week research trip to West Germany, Austria, and Switzer-

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42   The information given by Kárný was judged reliable, but his activity was considered little. (See, for instance, "Vyhodnocení spolupráce s TS 'Mirkem' za uplynulé období a doplnění údajů do memoranda" [Evaluation of the cooperation with secret collaborator 'Mirko' during the past period and completion of details to the memorandum], October 29, 1974, ABS, TS-800656 MV, n.p.) In the 1980s, Kárný's findings were considered of "only informative character." (See, for instance, "Vyhodnocení TS za rok 1980" [Evaluation of the secret collaborator for the year 1980], January 29, 1981, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 67–68.) Therefore, the collaboration lessened over the years and was suspended in 1988. ("Návrh na uložení TS MIRKA, č. sv. 21294" [Proposal to deposit secret collaborator MIRKO, no. 21294], June 9, 1988, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 96–97.)

43   "Aplikace XV. sjezdu KSČ na činnost vědeckého oddělení SŽM pro léta 1976–1980" [Application of the XV. congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the activity of the research department of the State Jewish Museum for the years 1976–1980], n.d. [ca. 1976], AŽMP, f. ŽMP 1969–1994, box 214, inv.č. 1169; "Návrh plán hlavních úkolů vědeckého oddělení na rok 1977" [Draft plan of the research department's main tasks for the year 1977], n.d. [late 1976], AŽMP, f. ŽMP 1969–1994, box 214, inv.č. 1171. See also Magda Veselská, *Archa paměti: Cesta pražského židovského muzea pohnutým 20. stoletím* [Ark of memory: the journey of the Prague Jewish Museum through the turbulent 20th century] (Prague: Academia and Židovské muzeum v Praze, 2012), 207–21.

44   "Návrh na získání ke spolupráci" [Proposal for the recruitment to collaborate], October 30, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 2–5; "Záznam číslo 29" [Note no. 29], November 1, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 19–20. For the person Erik (sometimes Erich) Klíma, see Veselská, *Archa paměti*, 207–8. Very briefly also Natalia Berger, *The Jewish Museum: History and Memory, Identity and Art from Vienna to the Bezalel National Museum Jerusalem* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 252; *Listy* 3, nos. 5–6 (November 1973): 64. Klíma's secret police file was destroyed six years after his death, in 1984.

45   "Memorandum," October 30, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 6–9.

46   State-socialist Czechoslovakia controlled and restricted travels to foreign—in particular to Western—countries. After a period of easing travels to both socialist and capitalist countries in the 1960s, travels were again severely limited. In order to travel to Western countries, Czechoslovak citizens had to not only to apply for a passport and a visa, but also, and first of all, for foreign currency. Applications were, thus, examined considering political (e.g., the applicant's loyalty and the probability of their emigration) and economic aspects.

land.[47] Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to assume that Kárný carried out his research simply on behalf of the secret police. For instance, while the StB officers closely supervised his first contact with Livia Rothkirchen,[48] they were apparently less interested in the voluminous correspondence that Kárný and Rothkirchen had throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which permitted Kárný to get a general idea of Israeli historiography on the Holocaust of Czechoslovak Jews, to exchange opinions, and to receive literature published in Israel.[49]

The impact of Kárný's collaboration with the secret police on the ability to carry out his research should also not be overestimated. However, if we believe a note written by an StB officer in 1987, relating to Kárný's—again successful—application for a trip to West Germany, Kárný considered the permission for the trip also to be a "reward" for his collaboration with the secret services.[50] In any case, compared to less loyal historians in socialist Czechoslovakia, Miroslav Kárný enjoyed quite a privileged position. He was able to carry out research in several domestic and foreign archives, for instance in East and West Germany, Poland, and Austria.[51] He could participate in international conferences in West

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See Jan Rychlík, *Devizové přísliby a cestování do zahraničí v období normalizace* [Foreign exchange promises and traveling abroad in the period of normalization] (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2012); Pavel Mücke and Lenka Krátká, eds., *Turistická odysea: Krajinou soudobých dějin cestování a cestovního ruchu v Československu v letech 1945 až 1989* [Tourist odyssey: Through the landscape of contemporary history of travelling and tourism in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1989] (Prague: Karolinum, 2018).

47   "Návrh na výjezd tajného spolupracovníka 'MIRKA,' číslo svazku 21294, do zahraničí" [Proposal for a foreign travel of the secret collaborator 'MIRKO,' no. 21294], July 19, 1977, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 54–56.

48   "Úřední záznam" [Administrative note], July 26, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 33; "Úřední záznam" [Administrative note], August 22, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 34–35; "Úřední záznam" [Administrative note], September 12, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 37–38; Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, July 23, 1973, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 36. (This letter and Rothkirchen's reply on August 15, 1973 [ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 39–40] are both in ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] [unsorted]).

49   Correspondence between Livia Rothkirchen and Miroslav Kárný, 1973–1993, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

50   "Návrh na výjezd tajného spolupracovníka MIRKA, č. sv. 21294" [Proposal for a foreign travel of the secret collaborator MIRKO, no. 21294], September 30, 1987, ABS, TS-800656 MV, fol. 89–90.

51   In several cases, his personal networks helped him not only to get access to the archives, but also to identify relevant archival collections. See, for instance, the correspondence between Hans Brenner and Miroslav Kárný, 1978–1979, and the correspondence between Bernt Engelmann and Miroslav Kárný, 1987–1988, both NA, f. Kárných, box 8. In other cases, he managed to receive photocopies of archival material. See, for instance, Gerhart M. Riegner to Miroslav Kárný, December 13, 1982, April 30, 1984, and June 13, 1984, NA, f. Kárných, box 10; Bundesarchiv (Klaus-D. Postupa) to Bernhard Füßl, May 2, 1986, and Bundesarchiv (Jürgen Real) to Bernt Engelmann, July 1, 1987, NA, f. Kárných, box 11. He travelled to West Germany in 1977, 1987, and 1989. Miroslav Kárný to Dietrich Eichholtz, December 9, 1987, NA, f. Kárných, box 8; correspondence between Bernt Engelmann and Miroslav Kárný, 1987–1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 8; Miroslav Kárný to Antonín Eliáš, February 8, 1989, NA, f. Kárných, box 8; Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Hans Booms) to Miroslav Kárný, April 11, 1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 11.

Germany, for instance in Hamburg in 1987,[52] and at the FernUniversität Hagen in January 1989.[53] He had access to Western literature through interlibrary loan—in 1973, he reportedly ordered about 60 books from abroad[54]—and also through private book shipments.[55] Indeed, his personal network enabled him to assemble a collection of books that was otherwise hardly available in Czechoslovakia. Through his private correspondence with historians abroad, in particular from West Germany, the US, and Israel, he had direct access to information about recent developments in the research on World War II and the Holocaust, such as the German "Historikerstreit."[56] He was able to publish articles in the country's most influential scientific journals[57]—although he had no university degree and was never employed as a historian—as well as in magazines, popular scientific journals, and newspapers—although he was officially banned from any journalistic activity.[58] In the 1980s, he was increasingly consulted as an expert in the field, for instance in reviewing new literature or ongoing research about the

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52 Miroslav Kárný to Dietrich Eichholtz, December 9, 1987, NA, f. Kárných, box 8; Miroslav Kárný to Angelika Ebbinghaus, December 28, 1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 8.

53 Miroslav Kárný to Angelika Ebbinghaus, December 28, 1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 8; Miroslav Kárný to Jakov Tsur, February 8, 1989, NA, f. Kárných, box 10. The result of this conference was the volume *Europa und der "Reichseinsatz": Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938–1945*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Essen: Klartext, 1991), with Miroslav Kárný's contribution "Der 'Reichsausgleich' in der deutschen Protektoratspolitik," 26–50.

54 Miroslav Kárný to Václav Novák (Památník Terezín), November 3, 1973, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14. Due to the difficulties in obtaining Western literature, scholars seemingly shared books they had ordered via interlibrary loan. Jaroslav Staněk to Miroslav Kárný, May 12, 1987, and January 11, 1988, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, unlabeled folder [R-Š] (unsorted).

55 From a complaint Kárný made in 1988 concerning a book shipment from the West German "Hamburger Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts," which was considered "incompatible with the interests of the ČSSR" by the Czechoslovak postal system, it becomes obvious that this was the first time for Kárný that a book shipment from Western countries was not delivered. Miroslav Kárný to Federální úřad pro tisk a informace, April 14, 1988 and May 6, 1988, Federální úřad pro tisk a informace to Miroslav Kárný, April 21, 1988, Petr Dřímalka (Ředitelství mezinárodní poštovní přepravy) to Miroslav Kárný, May 3, 1988, Kárný's reply, May 5, 1988, and Miroslav Kárný to Vratislav Vajnar (Federální ministerstvo vnitra), June 4, 1988, all in ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder F-G (unsorted); Miroslav Kárný to Angelika Ebbinghaus, April 23, 1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 8.

56 See, among many others, Miroslav Kárný to Angelika Ebbinghaus, January 23, 1988, and Angelika Ebbinghaus to Miroslav Kárný, August 22, 1989, NA, f. Kárných, box 8. Another example is the in-depth discussion about the Vrba-Wetzler report that Kárný had with John S. Conway from 1983 to 1985, NA, f. Kárných, box 10.

57 For instance, Kárný contributed to *Československý časopis historický*, *Sborník historický*, and *Historica*, all of which were edited by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

58 Miroslav Kárný explained that it was mainly his ban from publishing as a journalist that enabled him to publish in scientific journals. Interview with Miroslav Kárný, interviewed by Jana Friesová, March 21, 1996, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview Code 12563, tape 5, 00:08:30. He nevertheless continued to contribute to non-academic periodicals, in particular, until 1982, to *Hlas revoluce*, the weekly newspaper of the Union of Antifascist Fighters.

history of World War II.[59] In 1983, his book *Tajemství a legendy třetí říše* (Secrets and legends of the Third Reich), a collection of published articles and original contributions, appeared in an impressive initial print run of 25,000 copies in a series "intended for the youth."[60] Until the end of socialist rule in Eastern Europe, Kárný managed to establish an internationally respected position as a historian of the Holocaust of Czech Jews. His research was accessible not only because part of his publications in Czechoslovakia were published in German,[61] but also because he was given the opportunity to publish in East[62] and West German journals.[63] When, for instance, the Klarsfeld Foundation in France planned in 1985 to publish a *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs du Protectorat*, they asked Kárný to write the introduction. Kárný and Emmanuel Lulin from the Klarsfeld Foundation had met personally at the end of 1984, when Lulin visited Prague.[64] When foreign journalists and scholars were looking for Czech Holocaust survivors to interview, Kárný often acted as a mediator.[65]

Class Struggle and Imperialism, or the Persecution and Murder of the Jews?

Kárný was both a historian of World War II, interested in what Marxist historiography called the history of German fascism and imperialism, and a historian of the Holocaust.[66] Many of Kárný's studies examine German war goals in

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59 Miroslav Kárný, "Poznámky k práci V. Němce Ženský koncentrační tábor ve Svatavě" [Comments on V. Němec's work The women's concentration camp in Svatava], May 26, 1984, NA, f. Kárných, box 10; Miroslav Kárný, "Poznámky k práci F. Nedbálka Místa utrpení a vzdoru" [Comments on F. Nedbálek's work Sites of suffering and of resistance], May 27, 1984, NA, f. Kárných, box 10; Untitled document [Miroslav Kárný's review of Jaroslav Hrbek's Master's thesis], September 15, 1982, NA, f. Kárných, box 31; Miroslav Kárný, "Lektorský posudek rukopisu Dušana Hamšíka 'Život a dílo Heinricha Himmlera'" [Review of Dušan Hamšík's manuscript "The life and work of Heinrich Himmler"], February 22, 1982, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

60 Miroslav Kárný to Hans Brenner, January 8, 1979, NA, f. Kárných, box 8.

61 This was the case for his articles in the journals *Judaica Bohemiae* and *Historica*, which published texts in foreign languages (mainly German, French, English, and Russian).

62 Miroslav Kárný, "Waffen-SS und Konzentrationslager," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte* 33 (1986): 231–61.

63 Miroslav Kárný, "'Vernichtung durch Arbeit': Sterblichkeit in den NS-Konzentrationslagern," *Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik* 5 (1987): 133–58; Miroslav Kárný, "Theresienstadt und Auschwitz," *1999: Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 3, no. 3 (1988): 9–26.

64 Emmanuel Lulin (The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation) to Miroslav Kárný, January 2, 1985, and Miroslav Kárný to Beate Klarsfeld, January 20, 1985, NA, f. Kárných, box 9.

65 For instance, Malka Drucker to Miroslav Kárný, August 28, 1988. The interviews were then used for the book Gay Block and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992).

66 In several letters, Kárný presented his research interest as being the history of "German fascism." See, among others, Miroslav Kárný to Bernt Engelmann, June 2, 1987, NA, f. Kárných, box 8.

Eastern Europe, in particular in the Czech lands. Among these were various editions of sources that he prepared together with Jaroslava Milotová from the Central State Archives (today the National Archives) in Prague, which remain important reference works up to this day.[67] In these publications, he either did not address anti-Jewish persecution and the Holocaust at all,[68] or did so by presenting them as part of the persecution and murder of other groups, for instance non-Jewish Poles or Czechs.[69] Similarly to other socialist historians—even if this interpretation is, by far, not limited to Marxist thinking—he did not acknowledge the "singularity" of the Holocaust, and put it in the context of other persecutions, mainly of Slavs and communists.[70] Furthermore, he interpreted German anti-Jewish measures as a political instrument against occupied nations, insofar as they also served to spread fear among the general population and were intended as threats for the occupied nations, forecasting their own fate.[71] Thus, he reproduced the perception of the Holocaust as a "test" (in the

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67 Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Dagmar Moravcová, eds., *Anatomie okupační politiky hitlerovského Německa v "Protektorátu Čechy a Morava": Dokumenty z období říšského protektora Konstantina von Neuratha* [Anatomy of the occupation policies of Hitler's Germany in the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia": Documents from the period of Reichsprotektor Konstantin von Neurath] (Prague: Ústav československých a světových dějin ČSAV, 1987); Jaroslava Milotová and Miroslav Kárný, eds., "Od Neuratha k Heydrichovi: (Na rozhraní okupační politiky hitlerovského Německa v "Protektorátu Čechy a Morava')" [From Neurath to Heydrich: At the boundary of Hitler Germany's occupation policies in the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia"], *Sborník archivních prací* 39, no. 2 (1989): 281–394. Kárný and Milotová, together with Margita Kárná, published a third edition of sources after the collapse of communism: Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Margita Kárná, eds., *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* [The Protectorate policies of Reinhard Heydrich] (Prague: TEPS, 1991).

68 See, for instance, Miroslav Kárný, "Mnichov s Hitlerem či bez Hitlera? K cílům konzervativní protihitlerovské německé opozice v době Mnichova" [Munich with Hitler or without Hitler? About the objectives of the German opposition against Hitler in the period of the Munich agreement], *Československý časopis historický* 30, no. 2 (1982): 173–91, and no. 3 (1982): 382–95; Miroslav Kárný, "Logika Mnichova: K politice hitlerovského Německa vůči Československu od Mnichova k 'Protektorátu Čechy a Morava'" [The logic of Munich: About the politics of Hitler's Germany against Czechoslovakia from the Munich agreement to the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia"], *Československý časopis historický* 35, no. 2 (1987): 189–213, and no. 3 (1987): 371–403. In a letter to Livia Rothkirchen he openly admitted that in these studies he dealt only "marginally" with "Jewish issues." Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, April 30, 1987, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

69 Among others, see Miroslav Kárný, "Generální plán Východ" [The Generalplan Ost], *Československý časopis historický* 25, no. 3 (1977): 345–82; Miroslav Kárný, "Kolik verzí má Generální plán Východ?" [How many versions has the Generalplan Ost?], *Sborník k problematice dějin imperialismu* 11 (1981): 229–57.

70 See, for instance, Miroslav Kárný, "Poznámky k genocidní politice německého fašismu" [Comments on the genocidal politics of German fascism], *Sborník k problematice dějin imperialismu* 13 (1982): 195.

71 Miroslav Kárný, "Terezínský koncentrační tábor v plánech nacistů" [The Terezín concentration camp in the plans of the Nazis], *Československý časopis historický* 22, no. 5 (1974): 675; Kárný, "Poznámky k genocidní politice," 187, 190.

Czech context, an often used image is that of the "dress rehearsal"[72]) for the planned persecution and annihilation of other peoples in Eastern Europe in case of a German war victory. Like other Czech authors, Kárný wrote about the "final solution to the Czech question" in the same way as he wrote about the "final solution to the Jewish question."[73]

He clearly took up a Marxist position when explaining Nazi Germany as a product of capitalism and World War II as a class struggle. In his book reviews and articles, he also entered into the polemic discussion between "bourgeois" and Marxist historians that characterized historiography in the 1970s and 1980s. He openly accused West German and American historians of "falsifying" the history of World War II, for example, when they highlighted the differences of opinion within the German military elite and, thus, contradicted a perspective that considers class the primary explanatory model.[74] Reacting to critiques from West German scholars, such as Klaus Hildebrand, that Marxist scholars tie national-socialism "monocausally to the existence of capitalism,"[75] Kárný insisted that the Holocaust cannot be seen disconnected from the economic goals of Nazi Germany and its war strategies, or even as an end in itself.[76] That debate was also the reason why he focused so much on the German economy, the interactions between the economy and military, and the role of German enterprises within the system of Nazi concentration camps.[77] Kárný stated

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72 For this pattern, see Hallama, *Nationale Helden*, 46–47, 240.

73 M[iroslav] Kárný, "Jak měla postupovat germanizace" [How Germanization should proceed], *Hlas revoluce*, no. 6, February 10, 1979, 3. This was not a simple concession in order to be able to publish studies on the Holocaust under state socialism, since Kárný did not change fundamentally his interpretation after the "Velvet Revolution." In his monograph about the Holocaust of Czech Jews from 1991, he stressed once again the similarities between the "final solution to the Jewish question" and the "final solution to the Czech question." Kárný, *"Konečné řešení": Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* ["Final Solution": The genocide of Czech Jews in German Protectorate politics] (Prague: Academia, 1991).

74 Miroslav Kárný, "Druhé kolo" [The second wheel], *Československý časopis historický* 23, no. 4 (1975): 575–82.

75 Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich*, 2nd edition (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1980), 124.

76 See, for instance, Kárný, "Poznámky k genocidní politice," 178–79; Kárný, "Terezínský koncentrační tábor v plánech nacistů," 674.

77 Among others, Miroslav Kárný, "Koncentrační tábory, SS a německé monopoly" [Concentration camps, the SS, and German monopolies], *Československý časopis historický* 26, no. 5 (1978): 676–712; Miroslav Kárný, "Kruh přátel říšského vůdce SS: Příspěvek k výzkumu vztahu německé monopolistické oligarchie a SS" [The circle of friends of the Reichsführer SS: A contribution to the research on the relation between German monopolistic oligarchy and the SS], *Československý časopis historický* 28, no. 5 (1980): 669–702; Miroslav Kárný, "Úloha řídících štábů SS v mechanismu válečného hospodářství: případ Litoměřice" [The role of the leading staff of the SS in the mechanism of the war economy: The case of Litoměřice], *Sborník historický* 30 (1983): 145–86; Miroslav Kárný, "Strategie hospodářského koncernu SS" [The strategy of the business group SS], *Sborník historický* 33 (1986): 135–97; Miroslav Kárný, "Síla a slabost hospodářského koncernu SS: případ

that, notwithstanding the "specificity of Nazi politics towards the Jewish population, its motivation and realization is not understandable without the link to the overall plans of German fascism, its strategies and tactics."[78] Hence, Kárný agreed with Marxist historians from other state-socialist countries, such as Kurt Pätzold from the GDR, who refused to regard the murder of the Jews as Nazi Germany's primary ideological goal. He, too, shared the Marxist view that World War II and the Holocaust are to be explained by economic motivations, the capitalist system, and German imperialism.[79]

This Marxist perspective clearly came through in other studies where Kárný concentrated exclusively on the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto and the persecution and murder of Czech Jews. Due to his emphasis on economic aspects of the Holocaust and Czech Jews' economic discrimination, his studies suggested that the Jews were persecuted because of their important positions in Czechoslovak economy.[80] This interpretation had three logical consequences. First, Jews were considered as being passive objects of history, because German and Czech "capitalists" tried to grab Jewish companies and Jewish property. Like other Marxist authors, Kárný put special emphasis on the so called "Aryanizations," which he interpreted not only as a discriminatory measure against Jews, but first and foremost as a means to "Germanize" the Czech economy.[81] This view was not a simple concession to state censorship under socialism. As late as 1997, Kárný declared in an article that the Aryanizations were an "instrument of the German penetration into Czechoslovak economy."[82]

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závodu Bučovice" [Strength and weakness of the business group SS: the case of the Bučovice plant], *Slezský sborník* 84, no. 1 (1986): 32–50.

78 Kárný, "Poznámky k genocidní politice," 187.

79 See his programmatic contribution: Kurt Pätzold, "Von der Vertreibung zum Genozid: Zu den Ursachen, Triebkräften und Bedingungen der antijüdischen Politik des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus," in *Faschismus-Forschung: Positionen, Probleme, Polemik*, ed. Dietrich Eichholtz and Kurt Gossweiler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980), 181–208. For Kárný's position, see also his correspondence with the East German historian Dietrich Eichholtz (NA, f. Kárných, box 8), especially Kárný's letter from November 18, 1982, where he indicates differences in the interpretation of World War II between him and Pätzold.

80 This is very obvious, for instance, in Miroslav Kárný, "Die 'Judenfrage' in der nazistischen Okkupationspolitik," *Historica* 21 (1982): 137–92.

81 For instance, Kárný, "Terezínský koncentrační tábor v plánech nacistů," 634, 685; Kárný, "Die 'Judenfrage' in der nazistischen Okkupationspolitik," 144–46.

82 Miroslav Kárný, "Reinhard Heydrich als Stellvertretender Reichsprotektor in Prag," in *Deutsche Politik im "Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren" unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941–1942: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová, and Margita Kárná (Berlin: Metropol, 1997), 45. In a letter to Livia Rothkirchen from late 1992, he similarly stressed the importance to analyze the "Aryanizations" not only in their consequences for Czech Jews, but also for the Czechoslovak economy. Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, December 14, 1992, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

The second consequence, directly connected to the first, was that Kárný could logically incriminate the Czechoslovak "bourgeoisie" of the interwar period. He argued that they contributed to the persecution of Czech Jews by introducing anti-Jewish laws starting in 1938, during the "Second Czechoslovak Republic," which was created after the Munich agreements and the annexation of the Sudeten areas by Nazi Germany. Describing the motives of the political elite of this Second Republic in economic terms (and not as acts of antisemitism), Kárný reinforced the idea of a class struggle. Within this class struggle, German and Czechoslovak capitalists were the perpetrators, and Jews and "ordinary" Czechs the victims.

Third, by doing so, Kárný created a narrative of common suffering of Czechs and Jews during World War II. Whereas the Czechoslovak government and the conservative politicians (in Kárný's words, "the most reactionary elements of the Czech bourgeoisie,"[83]) were criticized for participating in the Holocaust for their own (economic) profit, Czech society was totally freed from blame. Kárný identified a "steadfast attitude of broad sections of the Czech people, which condemned the persecution of Jews and the participation of the Protectorate authorities in it."[84] According to him, the communist resistance movement in particular played an important role in dismantling Nazi Germany's antisemitic propaganda.[85] Furthermore, he highlighted the "solidarity of the Czech resistance movement [and] the moral and practical help which was given the persecuted every day."[86] This solidarity with the Jews was fostered, as Kárný put it, when it became clear that the ultimate goal of anti-Jewish persecution was the Germanization of the Czech lands and that this persecution was, thus, directly connected to the future "solution to the Czech question."[87]

That said, it is important to highlight that Kárný never aimed at studying the everyday attitudes of Czechs towards their Jewish fellow citizens during World War II. Even in his study on the Czech police unit that was in charge of guarding the gates of Theresienstadt and supervised prisoner commandos that

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83 Kárný, "Die historische Forschung der nazistischen 'Lösung der Judenfrage,'" 28.
84 Kárný, "Die historische Forschung der nazistischen 'Lösung der Judenfrage,'" 30.
85 Kárný, "Die 'Judenfrage' in der nazistischen Okkupationspolitik," 191.
86 Kárný, "Die historische Forschung der nazistischen 'Lösung der Judenfrage,'" 30.
87 Kárný, "Die 'Judenfrage' in der nazistischen Okkupationspolitik," 191. In 1994, the historian Jörg K. Hoensch, reviewing Kárný's monograph on the "Final solution" of the Czech Jews, noted critically that it would have been interesting to find out more about this Czech-Jewish solidarity to which Kárný continued to refer to. Jörg K. Hoensch, "[Review of] Miroslav Kárný, Konečné řešení: Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice," *Historische Zeitschrift* 258, no. 1 (1994): 251–52.

worked outside the ghetto, he clearly was interested only in those cases where Czech policemen offered help to Jewish prisoners and were consequently punished or imprisoned.[88] At the same time, he criticized those studies that gave a less positive assessment of Czech-Jewish relations during the Holocaust.[89]

This ideological bias notwithstanding, it is clear that Miroslav Kárný laid the bases of Holocaust research in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. From the 1970s on, his explicit goal was to write the first scientific monograph about the "Final Solution" of the Czech Jews.[90] In a letter to Livia Rothkirchen, he stated that he "always" promised himself that, once retired, he would write the history of Theresienstadt.[91] His studies about the history of the anti-Jewish persecutions in the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia have been published not only in the above-mentioned scholarly journals, but also in local periodicals (for instance, in *Litoměřicko*, the journal of the district museum in Litoměřice, not far from Terezín),[92] in periodicals of the Czech Jewish community,[93] or the State Jewish Museum's journal *Judaica Bohemiae*, which published its articles in foreign languages (all of Kárný's articles in *Judaica Bohemiae* were published in German, so they reached only partly a Czech readership).[94] These publications attest

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88 Miroslav Kárný, "Zvláštní četnický oddíl v Terezíně a terezínští vězňové" [The special police department in Terezín and the Theresienstadt prisoners], *Litoměřicko* 21–22 (1985–1986): 37. Already in an earlier edition of documents, Kárný included documents concerning the help of policemen to Jewish ghetto inmates. Miroslav Kárný, "Theresienstädter Dokumente (Teil I.)," *Judaica Bohemiae* 17, no. 1 (1981): 29, 44.

89 See, for instance, his reaction to one of Ruth Bondy's articles, where she put forward the hypothesis that the relatively small number of Jews who went into hiding has to be explained by the attitude of the Czech people. Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, November 11, 1984, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted). Ruth Bondy, "The Theresienstadt Ghetto: Its Characteristics and Perspective," in *The Nazi Concentration Camps: Structure and Aims, the Image of the Prisoner, the Jews in the Camps,* ed. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), 303–13.

90 Miroslav Kárný to Václav Novák (Památník Terezín), November 3, 1973, SOA Litoměřice, PT, box 14; Miroslav Kárný to Beate Klarsfeld, January 10, 1985, NA, f. Kárných, box 9.

91 Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, July 23, 1973, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

92 For instance, Miroslav Kárný, "Kaltenbrunnerova cesta do Terezína" [Kaltenbrunner's journey to Theresienstadt], *Litoměřicko* 16 (1980): 21–31; Kárný, "Zvláštní četnický oddíl v Terezíně"; Miroslav Kárný, "Terezínské balíčky ve světle archivních dokumentů" [Theresienstadt's packages in the light of archival records], *Litoměřicko* 23 (1988): 195–210.

93 For instance, Miroslav Kárný, "Osudy jedné zprávy" [The fate of one message], *Židovská ročenka* 5746 (1985–1986): 112–19; Miroslav Kárný "Přesná falešná čísla anebo kouzla nacistických statistik" [The exact false numbers, or the magic of Nazi statistics], *Židovská ročenka* 5747 (1986–1987): 89–94; Miroslav Kárný, "Akce Nisko—konec před začátkem" [The Nisko Plan—the end before the beginning], *Židovská ročenka* 5749 (1988–1989): 107–14.

94 Among others and in addition to those articles from *Judaica Bohemiae* already cited, see Miroslav Kárný, "Das Theresienstädter Familienlager in Birkenau," *Judaica Bohemiae* 15, no. 1 (1979): 3–26; Miroslav Kárný, "Vorgeschichte, Sinn und Folge des 23. Juni 1944 in Theresienstadt," *Judaica Bohemiae* 19, no. 2 (1983):

to his meticulous study of scientific literature, archival materials, and survivors' testimonies. He had a traditional understanding of what a historian is meant to be. His ambition was to find out the historical "truth" about the persecution of Czech Jews, and as such his approach was extremely positivistic. In several of his writings he concentrated on quite petty details, so much so that some of his work might be considered more like a chronicle than academic historiography.[95] For instance, he discussed in detail the statistics of Jews living in the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia.[96] He engaged also with semantic debates, in particular concerning the designation of Theresienstadt as a "ghetto" or a "concentration camp." In the first article he published in the renowned historical journal *Československý časopis historický* (Czechoslovak Historical Review) in 1974, the year of his retirement, he advanced an explanation for his choice to call Theresienstadt a "concentration camp," in contrast to Western historiography which tended to use the term "ghetto."[97] In doing so, Kárný confronted Western literature—which highlighted the ghetto's propagandistic function as a ghetto for elderly people and prominent prisoners mainly from Germany and Austria—with the function that Theresienstadt had for Czech Jews: a concentration and transit camp which served not only Nazi propaganda, but also the decimation of Jewish inmates.[98]

For his research, Kárný conducted numerous interviews and corresponded extensively with Holocaust survivors.[99] Not only as a historian, but also as a member of the Union of Antifascist Fighters (Svaz protifašistických bojovníků) he encouraged Holocaust survivors to write down their memories.[100] This activ-

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72–98; Miroslav Kárný, "Ein Auschwitz-Bericht und das Schicksal des Theresienstädter Familienlagers," *Judaica Bohemiae* 21, no. 1 (1985): 9–28.

95   See Wolfgang Benz, *Deutsche Juden im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Geschichte in Porträts* (Munich: Beck, 2011), 259–65.

96   Miroslav Kárný, "Zur Statistik der jüdischen Bevölkerung im sogenannten Protektorat," *Judaica Bohemiae* 22, no. 1 (1986): 9–19.

97   Kárný, "Terezínský koncentrační tábor v plánech nacistů."

98   Several years later, he resumed this debate in another article: Miroslav Kárný, "Zur Typologie des Theresienstädter Konzentrationslagers," *Judaica Bohemiae* 17, no. 1 (1981): 3–14. Ten years later, the main theses of this article were reproduced in a Czech version: Miroslav Kárný, "Terezín: koncentrační tábor a ghetto" [Theresienstadt: concentration camp and ghetto], 5 parts, *Národní osvobození*, from no. 49, May 4, 1990, 8 until no. 2, January 8, 1991, 8.

99   The records of these interviews constitute one of the parts of his personal papers at the Czech National archives (NA, f. Kárných) that are not yet categorized. Even though several of them are undated, one can clearly see that they were collected from the 1970s on. I would like to express my gratitude to Miroslav Šepták from the National archives for his help in studying these papers.

100 Josef Hornek to Miroslav Kárný, April 21, 1988, NA, f. Kárných, box 9; Dušan Mendl, "Vzpomínky na válku a činnost v ZB" [Memoirs of the war and of the activity in the (resistance group) ZB (Zbojník)], n.d., ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder M-R (unsorted).

ity was, without any doubt, original for its time. However, he was not what we would call today an "oral historian." His objective was not to describe the individual experiences of Jewish victims and survivors of the Holocaust.[101] He even had a certain mistrust for survivors' testimonies and the "truth" in survivors' accounts.[102] He was committed to a perpetrators' perspective. In the correspondence with Livia Rothkirchen in the middle of the 1980s, he clarified his research perspective: he was not preparing "a history of the Jews in the Protectorate, but a history of their persecution and extermination."[103] When, after the "Velvet Revolution," his monograph about the "Final Solution" of the Czech Jews was eventually published, he wrote similarly to the German-Swiss historian and philosopher Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich: "The topic of this book is not the history of the Czech Jews in the Protectorate but the history of the genocide perpetrated on them."[104]

In some of his publications, he nevertheless referred to individual accounts of Jewish victims. In his edition of documents about the history of Theresienstadt that he published in two volumes of *Judaica Bohemiae* in 1981 and 1982,[105] he included several excerpts from Holocaust survivor Eva Roubíčková's Theresienstadt diary.[106] This is all the more significant because, even though after the war she and her husband translated the diary from the original German into Czech, it was published for the first time in 1998 in an English edition. The German edition appeared almost ten years later and the Czech translation only in 2009.[107] In the late 1980s, Kárný prepared an edition of Otto Wolf's diary, together with

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101 This is evident also from the—mostly brief—notes he made of the interviews. As an example, see the notes from the interviews with Erich Terner, May 3, 1972, April 21, 1974, and May 22, 1975, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder T-Ž (unsorted).

102 For his understanding of "authenticity" and his attempt to distinguish between survivor testimonies and "documents," see, for instance, Miroslav Kárný, "Svědectví z Osvětimi" [Testimony from Auschwitz], *Tvorba*, no. 14, April 5, 1989, supplement p. 1–4; Miroslav Kárný, "Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte der tragischen Nacht vom 8. März 1944," *Judaica Bohemiae* 25, no. 1 (1989): 53–56.

103 Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, April 1, 1984, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted). See similarly Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, October 6, 1984, and December 12, 1989, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

104 Miroslav Kárný to Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, January 25, 1990, NA, f. Kárných, box 8.

105 Kárný, "Theresienstädter Dokumente (Teil I.);" Miroslav Kárný, "Theresienstädter Dokumente (Teil II.)," *Judaica Bohemiae* 18, no. 2 (1982): 65–87.

106 Kárný, "Theresienstädter Dokumente (Teil I.)," 21, 30, 35, 40–41, 44; Kárný, "Theresienstädter Dokumente (Teil II.)," 79, 83, 84, 85.

107 Eva Mändl Roubíčková, *"Langsam gewöhnen wir uns an das Ghettoleben": Ein Tagebuch aus Theresienstadt* (Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 2007), 7–11; Eva Roubíčková, *Terezínský deník: Svědectví o životě a smrti v terezínském ghettu* [We're alive and life goes on: A Theresienstadt diary] (Prague: P3K, 2009), 7–8, 173.

Ludvík Václavek, a scholar of Czech-German literature. Otto Wolf was a Czech Jew who had gone into hiding in the Moravian countryside in June 1942, where he was discovered and killed shortly before the end of the war. In 1984 part of the diary was discovered and four years later Kárný and Václavek managed to get a copy of the whole diary from Otto Wolf's sister, who lived in the United States at the time.[108] Thus, even though his research did not explicitly focus on survivor accounts, he nevertheless helped publish stories that would otherwise have remained untold and he drew his readers' attention to personal accounts of the Holocaust.

Notwithstanding his sometimes harsh critique of historical literature on World War II and anti-Jewish persecution,[109] Miroslav Kárný fostered Holocaust research in encouraging other, mostly younger, scholars in their research on the topic, putting his exceptional private library at their disposal.[110] Furthermore, although he considered himself first and foremost a historian and a scholar, he was concerned with contemporary sociocultural issues of Holocaust memory and memorialization.[111] He was one of the initiators of an international symposium on the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto that took place in March 1989. The symposium found an unusual echo in the media and was characterized as an unprecedented event in state-socialist Czechoslovakia,[112] mainly

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108 Correspondence between Miroslav Kárný and Ludvík Václavek, 1986–1993, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted); Miroslav Kárný and Ludvík Václavek, "Deník Otto Wolfa z let 1942–1943" [Otto Wolf's diary, 1942–1943], *Okresní archív v Olomouci* (1987): 31–41; Miroslav Kárný and Ludvík Václavek, "Otto Wolfs Tagebuch: 1942–43," *Exil: Forschung, Erkenntnisse, Ergebnisse* 9, no. 1 (1989): 88–94; Margita Kárná, Miroslav Kárný, and Ludvík Václavek, eds., *Deník Otty Wolfa 1942–1945* [Otta Wolf's diary, 1942–1945] (Prague: Sefer, 1997), 20–21.

109 See, for example, Miroslav Kárný, "Lektorský posudek rukopisu Dušana Hamšíka 'Život a dílo Heinricha Himmlera'" [Review of Dušan Hamšík's manuscript "The life and work of Heinrich Himmler"], February 22, 1982, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

110 Jaroslava Milotová remembers the flat of Miroslav Kárný and Margita Kárná as being an informal place of early Holocaust research, Milotová, "Miroslav Kárný (1919–2001)," 31–32.

111 A relatively voluminous correspondence between Miroslav Kárný, Margit Kárná, Anton Posset (ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder M-R [unsorted]), and Ernst and Edith Raim (ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder M-R and R-[Y] [unsorted]) from the years 1987–1992 concerned also the West German civic association in Landsberg (Bürgervereinigung Landsberg), which was created in 1983 in order to commemorate the eleven satellite camps of Dachau that had been established in Landsberg and Kaufering. Kárný, a former inmate of Kaufering, had been in Landsberg and Kaufering in late 1987.

112 The author of a report about the symposium in the newsletter of the survivors and remembrance association Beit Theresienstadt in the Israeli Kibbutz of Givat Haim Ihud saw the "choice of such a Jewish topic and the publicity [of the symposium] in radio, press, and television" as a sign for the spread of glasnost in Czechoslovakia. "Internationales Symposium in Theresienstadt," *Newsletter—Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association* (German edition), no. 27 (July 1989): 2–3, Beit Theresienstadt Archives, Givat Haim Ihud (Israel), Newsletter.

because of the—hitherto impossible—participation of three Holocaust survivors from Israel: Ruth Bondy, Otto (Ota) B. Kraus, and his wife Dita Kraus.[113] During the "Velvet Revolution" in late 1989, Kárný declared this symposium his "greatest success." By that he meant that at last in 1989 the Terezín Memorial organized a public and international event that openly dealt with the history of the ghetto and, thus, the Holocaust.[114]

Conclusion

In this study, I demonstrated the possibilities of Holocaust research in state-socialist Czechoslovakia. It is evident that it would be erroneous to speak about a taboo, or a successful suppression of the memory and the historiography of the Holocaust, during this period. This reading would miss the nuances of the situation in Czechoslovakia and, in particular, would oversee the Marxist contribution to the historiography of Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish persecutions. The example of Miroslav Kárný demonstrates that no clear political instruction on how to deal with Holocaust memory and historiography existed, and that developments were sometimes contradictory. Kárný was able to spend twenty years under state socialism doing research on the persecution and the murder of Czech Jews and publish his results in periodicals and books that were all censored. He was expelled from the Communist Party but received public funding for his research, could travel to the West, and was allowed to establish an international network of Holocaust scholars and survivors. He was barred from any journalistic work, but was nevertheless able to publish in the media. He was not able to publish his work in the journal of the Terezín Memorial, but was able to publish in a journal in Litoměřice, only a few kilometers from Terezín.

   This case study may help us critically examine a history that is usually understood as a dichotomy between state and society, official and unofficial spheres,

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113 For the symposium, see "Aktuality: Mezinárodní sympozium k historii terezínského rodinného tábora v Osvětimi-Birkenau" [News: International symposium on the history of the Theresienstadt family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau], *Věstník* 51, no. 4 (1989): 2; Karel Kroupa, "Mezinárodní sympozium v Terezíně" [International symposium in Terezín], *Hlas revoluce*, no. 11 (March 18, 1989): 1; Jarmila Škochová, "A Symposium on the History of the Terezín Family Camp at Auschwitz, Terezín, March 7–9, 1989," *Judaica Bohemiae* 25, no. 2 (1989): 113. The contributions of Ruth Bondy and Otto B. Kraus were published in the Jewish newsletter *Věstník* and the journal of the Terezín memorial (*Terezínské listy*): *Věstník* 51, no. 6 (1989): 2; *Věstník* 51, no. 10 (1989): 2; *Terezínské listy* 19 (1991): 27–33.

114 Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, December 12, 1989, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).

oppressors and oppressed. It leads us back to the previously mentioned reflections of dissidents, such as Milan Šimečka, Jan Křen, Tomáš Pěkný, and others, who criticized not only the state and state-sanctioned antisemitism, but also social phenomena, such as Czech and Slovak nationalism, antisemitism, and the indifference towards the Jewish fellow citizens and their history—including the Holocaust.

Benjamin Lapp

The Conflicted Identities of Helmut Eschwege: Communist, Jew, and Historian of the Holocaust in the German Democratic Republic

Helmut Eschwege, an East German-Jewish historian of the Holocaust, presents a fascinating and largely overlooked case of conflicted identities: communist, Jew, and historian. Eschwege's work was exceptional both in that he was a historian who worked outside of institutional boundaries and in that his own life demonstrated many of the tensions and complexities in German-Jewish history, Jewish identity, and Holocaust memory in the German Democratic Republic.[1]

As Konrad Kwiet has pointed out, historians of the German Democratic Republic predictably marginalized Jewish history, the history of antisemitism, and the history of the Holocaust.[2] Such themes, he wrote, were not considered "worthy of study for their own sake within the terms of reference of GDR historiography."[3] The official interpretative framework in the GDR remained bound by the Dimitrov formula (articulated by the Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov) that fascism "is an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist, and most imperialist elements of German fi-

2   Konrad Kwiet, "Historians of the German Democratic Republic on Antisemitism and Persecution," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 21 (1976): 173–98.
3   Kwiet, "Historians of the German Democratic Republic," 173.

nance capital."[4] Economic interpretative frameworks were prioritized; racial genocide was rooted in the logic of monopoly capitalism. This interpretation of fascism had immediate political implications. According to the SED (Socialist Unity Party), enduring elements of fascism remained a very real problem in capitalist West Germany. By contrast, East German historians proclaimed, the German Democratic Republic, a socialist country and a state that identified itself with the antifascist resistance, had destroyed the roots of fascism. More complex and nuanced interpretations of the Holocaust and Nazism were provided by novelists such as Johannes Bobrowski and Jurek Becker, and filmmakers such as Kurt Mätzig, director of *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947), and Konrad Wolf, director of *Stars* (1959) and *Professor Mamlock* (1961).[5] However, historical writing was far more rigid and constrained than in West Germany and mostly followed guidelines set down by the academic establishment of the GDR.

Just as there were prescribed boundaries on what could be written about the persecution of the Jews, there were also (unspoken) limitations on what could be stated about Jews and Jewish history. The German Democratic Republic rejected racial antisemitism as a matter of course. However, the SED viewed Judaism as a religion that would ultimately be transcended in a socialist society (following Marx's arguments in "On the Jewish Question").[6] While many of the governing elite came from Jewish families, their Jewish background, while not explicitly denied, was downplayed. A leadership position in East Germany necessitated the renunciation of one's Jewish identity. Viewing Zionism as a form of reactionary nationalism, they sought to dissolve their German Jewish background into a communist identity that would eventually lead to the total assimilation of the remaining German Jews. Following Marx's position, they believed that a socialist society would bring about an end to all religions, including Judaism. Antisemitism would then, they believed, disappear as well.

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4   Kwiet, "Historians of the German Democratic Republic," 175.

5   Anke Pinkert writes of the films of Wolf, Mätzig, and others, "Challenging the general assumption that the Holocaust was suppressed in public and cultural discourse of the East, these films provide varying models of both addressing and containing antisemitism and the Holocaust within a teleological master narrative of antifascism, including a focus on communist resistance and conversion and a clear hierarchy of victimization." The films of the later 1940s, in particular, dealt with the persecution of the Jews when there was silence in the West. Nevertheless, they did so within a certain prescribed ideological framework. See Anke Pinkert, *Film and Memory in East Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 41. On the somewhat different case of literary representations of the Holocaust, see Thomas C. Fox, *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust* (Rochester: Camden House, 1999), 97–144.

6   A good overview of Marxism and the "Jewish Question" is provided by Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "The Jewish Question" After Marx* (New York: NYU Press, 1992).

The writer Barbara Honigmann writes about her father, Georg Honigmann, a well-known East German journalist and a member of the communist elite, that by joining the Communist Party as a young man, he rejected what he felt was a provincial and limiting Jewish identity. To him communism represented a movement that "promised equality and fraternity . . . that claimed not to know any race but only class divisions and that wanted to simply 'abolish the Jewish question as such.'"[7] In a similar vein, French scholar Sonja Combe writes that communism in East Germany "allowed Jews with the impulse to assimilate, to suppress their otherness but also their Jewish suffering. Their political engagement and their communist identity erased their Jewishness. For the price of silence about Auschwitz in public life, they were successful in mastering their memories."[8]

A noteworthy exception to the tendency described by Combe and Honigmann was the historian of the Holocaust and of German-Jewish history, Helmut Eschwege. Eschwege had fled Germany as a young man and a member of the SPD but returned from exile in Palestine in 1946—now a committed communist—to help build a socialist society in the Soviet zone. However, along with his leftist orientation, he remained committed to his own version of Jewish identity that was reflected, above all, in his desire to engage in historical research and

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7 Barbara Honigmann, *Damals, dann und danach* (Vienna: Hanser Gardner Publications, 1999), 44.

8 Sonja Combe, "DDR: Die Letzten Tage der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose," in *Erinnerung: Zur Gegenwart des Holocaust in Deutschland-West und Deutschland-Ost*, ed. Bernhard Moltmann, et al. (Frankfurt: Haag and Herchen, 1993), 147, quoted in Fox, *Stated Memory*, 4. There were, however, many forms of Jewish "identity" in the GDR. Ute Frevert has provided a nuanced exploration of some of the identity issues related to leading Jewish communists in the GDR. See her article "Jewish Hearts and Minds? Feelings of Belonging and Political Choices among East German Intellectuals," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 56 (2011): 353–84. The economic historian Jürgen Kuczynski (like Hermann Axen and Albert Norden) embraced a form of "red assimilation," which meant not disavowing a Jewish background but denying its significance. Kuczynski, Frevert writes, considered his connection to Judaism as "purely accidental." By contrast "identification with the Party and the communist movement came as a matter of course" (365). He never "believed in, or experienced, a common Jewish nationality or identity." By contrast, the economist Hans Mottek, a committed communist who refused to visit his sister in Israel, nevertheless quietly acknowledged his Jewish background/identity and insisted on being buried in the Jewish cemetery in Weißensee. Another version of Jewish/communist identity in the GDR is exemplified by Lin Jaldati, an assimilated Dutch Jewish communist, and a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen who was known as a singer of Yiddish folk songs of the workers' movement and the antifascist resistance. Since her version of Jewish culture prioritized antifascism, it was promoted by the East German government. See David Shneer, "Yiddish Music and East German Antifascism: Lin Jaldati, Post-Holocaust Jewish Culture and the Cold War," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 60, no. 1 (2015): 207–34. On the concept of "red assimilation," see Karin Hartewig, "Die Loyalitätsfalle—Jüdische Kommunisten in der DDR, 1949–1960," in *Zwischen Politik und Kultur: Juden in der DDR*, ed. Moshe Zuckermann (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 48–62.

publish works on the history of the Holocaust and the history of Germany's Jewish minority. He did this despite resistance from the academic establishment and from ruling elites.[9]

Eschwege's research on Jewish history and the Holocaust dated back to the mid-1950s when there was little historical research on these topics in the GDR. He published a path-breaking collection of documents detailing the Final Solution, *Kennzeichen J: Bilder, Dokumente, Berichte zur Geschichte der Verbrechen des Hitlerfaschismus an den deutschen Juden 1933–1945* in 1966. He followed this with *Die Synagoge in der deutschen Geschichte* in 1980 after long delays, having originally completed the manuscript in 1967. According to the historian Peter Honigmann, it was a much sought after and difficult book to obtain in the German Democratic Republic.[10] His influential book on German-Jewish resistance (co-written with Konrad Kwiet) was published in West Germany in 1984, although Eschwege had already published in the West on this topic as early as 1970.[11] Other works such as a history of the Yiddish language and a history of Jews in the former territories of the German Democratic Republic remained unpublished, but are tributes to Eschwege's dogged commitment to the study of German-Jewish history.[12]

The productivity and quality of Eschwege's work are all the more impressive given his lack of a university education and the difficulties involved in obtaining access to archives in the GDR. He was never employed as a historian.[13]

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9   I first met Helmut Eschwege in Dresden in 1987–88 as an exchange scholar working on a dissertation on bourgeois politics and the rise of Nazism in Saxony during the Weimar Republic. Through Eschwege and his family, I was introduced to Jewish life in the GDR and the newfound interest in Jewish life among younger people from communist households of Jewish or mixed parentage in their Jewish background. For some discussions of the renaissance of Jewish identity in the GDR during the 1980s, see Robin Ostow, *Jews in Contemporary East Germany: The Children of Moses in the Land of Marx* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989) and Cora Granata, "The Cold War Politics of Cultural Minorities: Jews and Sorbs in the German Democratic Republic," *German History* 27, no. 1 (2009): 60–83.

10 Honigmann writes that he and his future wife, the writer Barbara Hongimann, were only able to obtain the book with great difficulty, using all their "connections." Correspondence with Peter Honigmann, August 16, 2017.

11 Konrad Kwiet and Helmut Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand: Deutsche Juden im Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde, 1933–1945* (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1984); and Helmut Eschwege, "Resistance of German Jews against the Nazi Regime," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XV* (1970), 143–80.

12 Eschwege's unpublished manuscripts are available at the Eschwege *Nachlass* (NL Eschwege) held by the Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (Central Archive for the Research of Jewish History in Germany) at the University of Heidelberg (hereafter, Zentralarchiv). The titles are as follows: *Geschichte der jüdischen Friedhöfe auf dem Gebiet der ehemaligen DDR* (B 2/11, n. 222); *Die Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinde in der DDR* (B2/11, n. 292–303) *Geschichte der Juden in den Ländern und Städten der ehemaligen DDR* (B2/11, n. 92–123, 189–97)

13 According to his own account, Eschwege worked in Berlin from 1948–52, developing a historical archive of

Beyond his prodigious scholarship, Eschwege was also a public figure in the GDR and beyond, introducing non-Jews to Jewish history and furthering dialogue between Christians and Jews particularly in the East German group Begegnung mit dem Judentum (Encounters with Judaism). He was recognized for his activism in the West, receiving in 1984, along with the Leipzig pastor Theodor Arndt, the prestigious Buber-Rosenzweig medal for Christian-Jewish cooperation.[14] Clearly, Eschwege's work and activity resonated in the GDR and spoke to a desire among at least some East Germans to learn more about Jewish life and the Holocaust.[15]

Eschwege's path to becoming a Jewish historian and activist was a response to the historical crises that shaped his fate. At the center of his development lay his own struggles with Jewish identity. Born in 1913 in Hannover, he grew up in an observant household; his family moved to Hamburg so that he could attend an orthodox Jewish day school.[16] Eschwege never attended University; after completing his Realschule diploma, he completed a training in business (*kaufmännische Ausbildung*) in 1931 and his journeyman training in 1929–1933.

In the volatile atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, however, the young Eschwege became more drawn to left-wing politics than to Judaism. In 1929, he secretly joined the youth organization of the Social Democratic Party, rejecting the religiosity of his family home. "Among the reasons that led me to the SPD was the orthodox background of my family which I found deeply alienating," he wrote in his autobiography in 1991.[17] Beyond the adolescent revolt against parental authority, Eschwege was also provoked by the political violence of the early 1930s. He fought in street brawls with right-wing political youth, and he also came to identify with Marxism and Social Democracy.

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the German worker's movement. In 1952, he was employed by the Museum for German History, also in Berlin, as an archivist, but was let go in 1953 during the late-Stalinist purges of Jewish communists in the GDR. He was then hired as an archivist for the Technical University in Dresden, a job which he held until his retirement in 1986. In 1976, he was for a time demoted to the position of doorman as a punishment for making copies of Western academic literature without permission.

14   See his paper, "Warum juedisch-christlicher Dialog," n.d., NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv B.2/11(Eschwege), nr. 65.

15   See Martin Jander, "Helmut Eschwege—'Fremd unter Meinesgleichen,'" in *Durch den Horizont sehen: Lernen und Erinnern im interreligiösen Dialog*, ed. Vito Palmieri, et al. (Berlin: Wichern Verlag, 2005), 193–96.

16   Helmut Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen: Erinnerungen eines Dresdner Juden* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 1991), 12–16. His autobiography is the primary source for Eschwege's story before his arrival in East Germany in 1947.

17   Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen,* 18.

Despite his alienation from the Judaism of his parents, Eschwege nevertheless remembered his political activism in very Jewish terms. In a letter to the East German Jewish (but highly assimilated) writer Stephan Hermlin, Eschwege described his youth in the following terms: "In contrast to your family, I grew up in a religiously observant family, I attended a Jewish school and my friends were with few exceptions Jewish; this was also true when I joined the Social Democratic Party." Young Jewish communists and socialists interacted primarily, he remembered, with other Jewish youth organizations, including Zionist ones.[18]

In June 1934, with the help of the left-wing Zionist group Hashomer Hatzair, Eschwege fled to Denmark where he joined an agricultural collective that focused on immigration to Palestine. Eschwege, however, quickly fell out with the Zionists because of his increasingly pro-Soviet orientation, soon departing Denmark with the goal of travelling to the Soviet Jewish colony of Birobidzhan. Eschwege found that the border to the Soviet Union was closed and ended up spending several years in Estonia, where he was exposed to a Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jewish world, and began learning the Yiddish language, reinforcing his view that the Jews were a "national group" as opposed to simply a religious one. While the Jews he met in Estonia were quite secular, "they were culturally and socially bound to Jewish culture and defined themselves as part of the Jewish nation."[19] In 1937, he left Estonia for Palestine. His siblings were already there, and he was able to arrange a visa for his mother as well. However, his time in Palestine was clearly difficult for Eschwege. In 1937, Eschwege's allegiances lay with Moscow and not with the Zionist movement.[20] In his memoirs, Eschwege spoke of the profound hostility that existed between the Zionists and the communists, and he was expelled from a series of Kibbutzim because of his political activities. A major reason for his commitment to communism, he writes, was his revulsion for "the hate of the Zionists towards the Palestinians."[21] Eschwege was, however, drawn to the largely German Jewish group Brit Shalom, which called for a binational state and reconciliation with the Palestinian

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18 Helmut Eschwege to Stephan Hermlin, July 17, 1982, NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11 11.4: *Opfer der antiisraelischen Hetze.*

19 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 31.

20 Eschwege joined the Communist Party of Palestine in 1937. NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11, 10 Personalbogen. See letter from the Communist Party of Palestine of August 6, 1946, in NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11, 10.

21 Eschwege, "Ein Jude der DDR zwischen Stasi und Judentum," n.d., NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B. 2/11, nr. 28, 27.

Arabs; it was through Brit Shalom that he became friends with the writer Arnold Zweig.[22] But, Eschwege complained, the more mainstream Zionists did not understand that they were "driving the Arabs into a struggle for their own national existence." In contrast to the Zionists, he writes, the communists "stood up for human rights."[23]

Encouraged by the Soviets to join the British army, Eschwege served in a non-military capacity for health reasons. After the war, Eschwege made every attempt to return to Germany, where he hoped to participate in the construction of a socialist society. Managing to get a visa to Czechoslovakia, he took the opportunity to leave Palestine with no regrets: "It was not difficult for me to leave this land. . . . The communists, like all citizens who opposed Zionist chauvinism, had a very difficult time there." Marked by the struggle against Nazism and his own critical perspective on Zionism, Eschwege's loyalties were to the internationalist left rather than to Jewish nationalism.[24]

Eschwege was not a Zionist, but how did he identify himself: as a Jew, as a German, or as a German Jew? His own identity seems to have shifted according to context. After having fled Germany, Eschwege remembered that, in Estonian exile, he was seen by others as, above all, a Jew. "To present myself as German would have made me a laughing stock."[25] The same reinforcement of a Jewish national identity came in Palestine, not so much from the Zionists but from the Soviets. Eschwege described how in 1942 when he attempted to enlist in the Soviet army, he was told by the officer in charge that according to Soviet law, he was of Jewish nationality. A similar dynamic occurred in 1946 upon entering the Soviet Zone of Germany; the Soviet official insisted that Eschwege was a Jew.

However, it was only in the GDR, Eschwege complained, that he was forced to accept German nationality under pressure.[26] It would not have been possible in either West or East Germany to declare oneself of "Jewish nationality." But, at least in retrospect, Eschwege subjectively identified with a Jewish national identity even as he declared his intention to live and work in Germany, because

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22 Eschwege, "Ein Jude der DDR zwischen Stasi und Judentum," n.d., NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B. 2/11, nr. 28, 31.

23 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen,* 48.

24 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 48.

25 Eschwege, "Ein Jude der DDR zwischen Stasi und Judentum," 29.

26 Eschwege recounts lengthy conversations with representatives of the SED in Saxony in which his claims to Jewish nationality were discussed: "The fourth discussion unnerved me to such an extent that I signed a form acknowledging my German nationality." Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 66.

he was a German. For Eschwege, there was apparently no contradiction. When he was interrogated by the officials of the Stasi in 1953, they reported that Eschwege, when asked why he returned to Germany, replied that he did so because he was a German. Why, then did he enter the Jewish community despite being a non-believer? Because, Eschwege responded, he was a Jew.[27]

Eschwege's sense of Jewish identity was strengthened and reinforced by his awareness of Nazi genocide. According to his own account, this realization only occurred after the war's end and his departure from Palestine. He received a visa to go to Czechoslovakia where he stayed with the writer Egon Erwin Kisch. He wrote that it was in Czechoslovakia that he realized the full extent of Nazi crimes against the Jews, and the degree to which the German population had been "Nazified." It was in Prague, he wrote, "that I fully understood what criminals had ruled in Germany and to what an extent a large part of the population had participated willingly in the genocidal fanaticism that was directed above all against my people."[28] When he was given permission to return to Germany and settled in Dresden, this impression of mass complicity in German criminality was reinforced. "In Dresden," he remembered in a 1983 interview, "I realized that the Germans, too, were all more or less influenced by the Nazis, even those who had been in concentration camps and in the punitive battalions in the military."[29] He made every effort to join the small Jewish community, despite the fact that the head of the community initially refused to accept him because of his secular orientation. Later, when asked in a Stasi interrogation why he chose to declare a religious affiliation, Eschwege responded that he felt "solidarity" with the few remaining Jews and that he belonged with them.[30]

In Germany, Eschwege developed a close relationship with Paul Merker, a veteran communist and member of the Politburo of the SED. During his time in exile in Mexico (1942–45) Merker, along with other communists such as Leo Zuckermann, Rudolf Feistmann, Leo and Otto Katz, had argued in favor of German restitution to the Jews and for the Zionist movement. Historian Jeffrey Herf has demonstrated that the positions of Merker and his colleagues were intensively debated

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27 Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (hereafter, BStU), Personalakte Eschwege, Report of May 6, 1953, 448/58.

28 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 51.

29 Helmut Eschwege, "The Unorthodox View of Jewish History in the German Democratic Republic," in *Jews in Contemporary East Germany: The Children of Moses in the Land of Marx*, ed. Robin Ostow (London: Palgrave, 1989), 138.

30 "Protokoll über die Unterredung mit dem Gen. Helmut Eschwege am 7.3.1953," BStU, Personalakte Eschwege, 448/58, 00007-13.

within the SED through early 1949 until the Soviet-inspired campaign against "cosmopolitanism" aimed largely at communists who had found refuge from Nazism in the West shut such discussions down.[31] Eschwege was clearly drawn to Merker's position that the Soviet Union and East Germany should acknowledge the Jewish catastrophe and attempt to address the needs of the survivors. When asked by Merker for his thoughts on German postwar policy, Eschwege recommended that a postwar German government issue the following statement:

> The German people hope that they will regain the trust of the Jews in the future. They hope to bring this about as a result of their future leadership and its actions. The German people recognize their guilt toward the Jews, which stems from their active or passive participation by an overwhelming majority in the Hitler system. Through the most far-reaching restitution of the economic and physical damage to the few surviving Jews and Jewish communities, it seeks to remove a part of its guilt.[32]

Eschwege went on to recommend that the German Jews who remained abroad should also receive restitution, that Nazis should be purged from all political positions, and that Jews should be recognized as a national minority, "in view of the developments since 1933." "The German people," Eschwege declared, "do not regard these measures as a replacement for the extermination of Jewish life but rather as an important part of justice."[33] Eschwege's recommendations, writes Herf, captured the hopes of some communists "that a postwar government would unambiguously accept obligations created by Nazi anti-Jewish persecution."[34] They also reflect his own identification with a Jewish nation, or ethnicity, despite his distance from Zionism.

Eschwege and Merker's hopes that such guidelines would help shape postwar communist policy were not to be realized. As the scholarship has made clear, the onset of the Cold War and the creation of the State of Israel led to a decisive rejection of Merker's (and Eschwege's) perspectives on Jewish issues.[35] Commu-

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31 Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). See esp. chapters 2–5.

32 Helmut Eschwege to Paul Merker, February 2, 1946, SAPMO-BA, ZPA IV 2/2027/29, 3–4. Cited by Herf, *Divided Memory,* 85–86. The translation is by Herf.

33 Herf, *Divided Memory*, 86.

34 Herf, *Divided Memory,* 86.

35 See, for instance, Mario Keßler, *Die SED und die Juden: Zwischen Repression und Toleranz; Politische Entwicklungen bis 1967* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995)*;* Erica Burgauer, *Zwischen Erinnerung und Verdrän-*

nists in Czechoslovakia, eleven of whom were Jewish were charged with treason, the subsequent anti-Zionist campaign and the Moscow Doctor's Plot preceding Stalin's death in 1953 were all aspects of a Soviet directed antisemitic policy.

Following Moscow's lead, the SED launched a campaign against Jewish communists—particularly those who had found refuge in the West during World War II—who were accused of "chauvinism and cosmopolitanism" and of being allied with American and Israeli imperialism. Paul Merker, while not a Jew, was subjected to interrogations and imprisoned because of his advocacy for Jewish restitution and his sympathy for Zionism and sentenced to eight years in prison for "Zionist" espionage. Many other leading Jewish communists were purged from the Party, and as a direct consequence the small Jewish communities were decimated as East German Jews, including most of the leaders of the Jewish communities, fled to the West. The population of Jews in East Germany fell from 3,800 in 1949 to 1,900 in 1956.[36]

Unlike Merker and others, Eschwege was not imprisoned; he was however interrogated repeatedly and briefly expelled from the SED. Despite his membership in the Communist Party during his time in Palestine, Eschwege lost his status as a "resistance fighter" and became simply a "victim of fascism." Victims of fascism—a category which included Jews—was seen as a lesser category than "resistance fighters" who were awarded more generous benefits and privileges.[37] He also lost his job at the Museum of German History in Berlin at the prompting of its director Dr. Alfred Meusel.[38] Eschwege's Stasi files reveal the enor-

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gung: Juden in Deutschland nach 1945 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993); Jutta Illichmann, *Die DDR und die Juden* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1997); Angelika Timm, *Hammer, Zirkel, Davidstern: Das gestörte Verhältnis der DDR zu Zionismus und Staat Israel* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1997); Karin Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt: Die Geschichte der jüdischen Kommunisten in der DDR* (Köln, Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau, 2000); Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel: Die jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ und der DDR 1945 bis 1990* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1997); Jay Howard Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

36 See Mario Kessler, "Anti-Semitism in East Germany, 1952–53: Denial to the End," in *Unlikely History: The Changing German-Jewish Symbiosis, 1945–2000*, ed. Leslie Morris and Jack Zipes (Palgrave: New York, 2002), 141–54; Jeffrey Herf, "East German Communists and the Jewish Question: The Case of Paul Merker," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994): 27–61. For an outstanding recent discussion of the impact of the Cold War on one Jewish community in the GDR, see Hendrik Niether, *Leipziger Juden und die DDR: Eine Existenzerfahrung im Kalten Krieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

37 See Olaf Groehler, "Antifaschismus und jüdische Problematik in der SBZ und der frühen DDR," in O. Groehler and M. Keßler, *Die SED-Politik, der Antifaschismus und die Juden in die SBZ und der frühen DDR* (Berlin: Gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Forum, 1995), 5–31. Also see Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen,* 62.

38 Letter from Meusel to the Technische Hochschule Dresden, Personalakte Eschwege, Personalabteilung of April 23, 1953, BStU 00043.

mous pressure that Eschwege was under from the Party to withdraw from the Jewish community (as a condition for remaining in the Party). A Stasi report on an interrogation of Eschwege reflects that pressure: Eschwege was told, the report stated, that the Jewish community "with its overwhelmingly petit-bourgeois social makeup, was a stronghold of the class enemy" and that Eschwege must distance himself from it:

> Regarding his continued membership in the Jewish Community, Eschwege declared that he would leave it, if commanded to do so by the Party. Eschwege was told that his membership was brought about by his Jewish nationalism. While the Party tolerates religious superstition in its ranks, that was not the case with Eschwege.[39]

It was not superstitious religious belief but only his Jewish nationalism, the report pointed out disapprovingly, that led Eschwege to remain in the Jewish community. Eschwege was encouraged to study the Marxist classics on the "Jewish question" and to abandon his mistaken notion that the Jews could be considered a national minority in Germany. As a consequence of the interrogation, Eschwege withdrew from the Jewish Community in 1953.

The personal toll was considerable. According to his own account, he suffered a nervous breakdown and his marriage fell apart when his wife, a loyal communist, left him.[40] In 1956, during the post-Stalinist thaw, however, Eschwege rejoined the Jewish community and expressed shame at his previous decision to withdraw. He was, he wrote, influenced by the defamation and persecutions that he had suffered. Unlike those communists of Jewish background who rejected Jewish affiliation, however, Eschwege insisted on embracing his Jewish identity. "I know," he wrote, "that there are many comrades who see themselves as assimilated, and there are many who are scared of the repercussions . . . if they acknowledge their Jewish identity. I am proud of my nationality and my people and . . . experience it as a disgrace to have followed the dictates of the special commission."[41]

The most disturbing features of Stalinist antisemitism—accusations of treachery and "cosmopolitanism," removal from important positions in the

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39   "Protokoll über die Unterredung mit dem Gen. Helmut Eschwege am 7.3.1953," PA Eschwege BStU 00007-13.

40   Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 78.

41   "Ein Jude der DDR zwischen Stasi und Judentum," 53.

Party apparatus for communists of Jewish descent, interrogations and in some cases imprisonment—ended following the death of Stalin. Jewish communists who had been purged were rehabilitated. Indeed, the East German Jews became a protected minority.[42] The tiny Jewish communities were instrumentalized by the state as "exhibits in a socialist museum," receiving aid to care for cemeteries and synagogues and called upon when needed to demonstrate to the world that antisemitism did not exist. Even as the persecution and murder of Jews in the Third Reich was not highlighted in the historical literature or in the concentration camp memorials, East German propaganda regularly denounced incidents of antisemitism in West Germany, and the Nazi past of West German government officials.[43] At the same time, the dogmatic anti-Zionism of the SED and the unwillingness to acknowledge the uniqueness of the Holocaust continued well into the 1980s. The East German leadership certainly acknowledged the Jews as victims, but it was the communists who were the main victims of Nazis, since they were persecuted as resistance fighters whereas the Jews were "merely" victims, according to the official narrative.[44]

The memory of late Stalinist antisemitism and its impact on the GDR deeply affected Eschwege. Thirty-five years later, Eschwege suggested that his traumatic experiences of persecution and marginalization during this period played a central role in determining his later choices: "It was through this experience," he declared, "that I began to get interested in Jewish history. I said to myself: 'Write, study Jewish history, show them what the Nazis did and they can see it's the same thing.'"[45] In his focus on Jewish history and in his insistence on the loud proclamation of a specifically Jewish identity, Eschwege sharply distin-

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42 As pointed out by Constantin Goschler and Anthony Kauders, "The state controlled by the SED viewed itself as the guarantor of Jewish security, thereby drawing a clear line between it and the Federal Republic which was demonized as a haven for former Nazis and neo-Nazis." Goschler and Kauders, "The Jews in German Society," in *A History of Jews in Germany since 1945: Politics, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michael Brenner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 339.

43 Mike Dennis, "Between Torah and Sickle: Jews in East Germany, 1945–1990," in *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany*, ed. Mike Dennis and Norman Laporte (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 37. At the Jewish cemetery in Weißensee, the monument quoted the East Berlin Rabbi Martin Riesenburger's assertion that "in our state the torch of antisemitism has gone out forever and religion is free." By contrast "The West German state of imperialists and militarists is the boiling point for a new war in Europe and hence the breeding ground for revanche and racial persecution." Quoted in Fox*, Stated Memory*, 56.

44 "The Holocaust, a story of unmitigated disaster did not fit into the story of victory and redemption of official antifascism. . . it was the narrative of Soviet suffering and redemption that dominated Communist memory after 1945." Herf, *Divided Memory*, 382. On the issue of East Germany's troubled relationship with Israel, see Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967–1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

45 Ostow, *Jews in Contemporary East Germany*, 138.

guished himself from other communists of Jewish background with their strongly assimilationist orientation. He rejected the dominant narrative that denied the specificity of the German-Jewish experience in favor of the particularism of a "stubborn Jewish otherness" even as he continued to embrace socialism and live in the German Democratic Republic.[46]

Eschwege's insistence on his Jewish identity inspired his commitment to scholarship, which can be viewed in part as an attempt to ground and defend that identity on historical grounds. It was a project, however, that involved overcoming considerable obstacles. The difficulties he faced as a scholar were considerable. Firstly, he had never attended university and was an autodidact. In his autobiography he described his struggles with writing: "Upon returning from work, I sat at my desk for six or seven hours. . . . My lack of a formal education was a problem. It began with the formulation of sentences which gave me headaches."[47] Furthermore, Eschwege had no institutional support in the GDR; he pursued his research and writing in his free time.[48] He was frequently denied access to archives in the East and so was dependent on copies and historical literature sent to him from contacts in Western countries, which were often either delayed or rejected by East German postal authorities.

Eschwege wrote a letter of complaint to the department of sciences of the Central Committee in which he described the state archives of the GDR as a "hindrance" to research. In response, Helmut Lötzke, the director of the German Central archive, the main archival institution in the GDR, simply denied Eschwege access without further explanation.[49] The "Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden" held in Potsdam was off limits to researchers both from the GDR and abroad, a policy which only changed in 1989.[50] Documents relating

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46 The phrase is borrowed from Herf, *Divided Memory*, 95. Herf is suggesting that an emphasis on a positive Jewish identity did not fit into the strongly anti-religious and assimilationist orientation of the SED.

47 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 188–89.

48 After his dismissal from his position in Berlin, Eschwege worked as an archivist at the Technical University in Dresden.

49 Letter to Hannes Hörnig, August 21, 1970; letter from Director Helmut Lötzke of February 16, 1971. Both letters are cited by Joachim Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte: Faschismus und Holocaust im Spiegel der Geschichtswissenschaften und Geschichtspropaganda der DDR* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1999), 211. See Käppner's discussion on the blocking of Jewish archival material for historians generally, *Erstarrte Geschichte*, 209–13.

50 This archive was created in 1906 and contained the archival holdings of German-Jewish communities, personal papers, records of associations including such significant ones as the Reich Association of German Jews, and the Jewish community of Berlin, extensive collections of personal papers of German Jews. In 1945, the Red Army took it over. In 1950, it was given to the Jewish Communities of the GDR and held at the Jewish community center in East Berlin. In 1953, the Central State Archive in Potsdam took the archive over. See Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 209–10.

to Jews and Jewish history as well as to Nazi persecution of Jews were difficult to gain access to even for "approved" East German scholars. Nevertheless, Eschwege was able to gain access to material with the help of libraries (and librarians) in Dresden and in West Germany, as well as from scholars in Poland and Israel.[51]

Thus, overcoming considerable difficulties, Eschwege was able to produce significant scholarly work through his extraordinary persistence. Eschwege's first major project, begun in the mid-1950s but only published in 1966 (long after its completion) was *Kennzeichen J*, an anthology of documents edited by Eschwege that chronicled the Nazi persecution and extermination of the Jews.[52] With a brief preface by Arnold Zweig and a historical introduction by Rudi Goguel, a concentration camp survivor and scholar based at Humboldt University in Berlin, it was the first volume in the GDR for a wider audience that dealt with the Holocaust in a substantive way.

Eschwege's collection was indeed an extraordinary achievement, given the academic and historiographic silence in the GDR concerning the Nazi genocide up to that point.[53] As Joachim Käppner points out, in the wake of the Eichmann trial in Israel, and the increased international attention devoted to Nazi genocide, the GDR felt a good deal of pressure to publish a text on this subject.[54]

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51 In 1957, Eschwege had arranged for the return of the entire holdings of the library of the Hamburg Jewish community, which had been moved to Dresden during the war. Thus, he developed good relations with the university and academic libraries there. See Miriam Rürup, "Wessen Erbe? Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung nach 1945—das Hamburger Beispiel," *Kaloynmos* 19, no. 4 (2016): 4–6. He also received support from the historian of the Holocaust and director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Bernard Mark and Eschwege's cousin, also a significant historian of the Holocaust, Shaul Esh. Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 191–96.

52 Helmut Eschwege, *Kennzeichen J. Bilder, Dokumente, Berichte zur Geschichte der Verbrechen des Hitlerfaschismus an den deutschen Juden* (Berlin-Ost: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1966). The first draft was submitted to the publisher in 1958.

53 There were less significant contributions written in the late 1940s that dealt with the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Siegbert Kahn wrote a pamphlet in 1948, *Antisemitismus und Rassenhetze*, which discusses the history of antisemitism and its culmination in the Holocaust, and in the same year Stefan Heymann published *Marxismus und Rassenfrage*. Both authors presented a "differentiated view of antisemitism which they regarded as a basic component of Nazi ideology." See Fox, *Stated Memory*, 21. Also see Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 52–53. In 1948, the debates among East German communists concerning the "Jewish Question" had not yet been shut down. Furthermore, in contrast to historical scholarship, there were memoirs, films, and literary representations of the Holocaust. See Fox, "Berlin, Moscow and the Imagined Jerusalem: The Holocaust in East German Literature and Film," in *Stated Memory*, 97–144. For the history of Holocaust writing in the Federal Republic, see Ulrich Herbert, "Extermination Policy: New Answers and Questions about the History of the 'Holocaust' in German Historiography," in *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), 1–52.

54 Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 144–45.

Still, there were limits on what could be said. While the volume was published, Eschwege's lengthy historical analysis, which was meant to accompany the document collection, never saw the light of day despite the initial interest of a publisher. Eschwege's text, entitled *Der Leidensweg der deutschen Juden*, is a thorough reading of secondary sources and published survivor accounts. While Eschwege placed his narrative in an SED approved framework, highlighting the leading role of the Communist Party in the resistance, the manuscript itself far transcended the limitations of GDR Holocaust historiography inasmuch as it emphasized the experience of Jewish victims and drew on their narratives. In that sense, Eschwege's work foreshadowed more contemporary Holocaust scholarship.[55]

Eschwege had support from some of his reviewers, notably Stefan Heymann and Rudi Goguel. Nevertheless, Eschwege's book in its presentation of Jewish history and the role of genocide in the Nazi dictatorship, violated basic tenets of GDR dogma.[56] Thus, Stefan Heymann—like Goguel, a survivor of the concentration camps and a leading East German diplomat—advocated for the publication of the manuscript, while simultaneously criticizing its lack of understanding of the foundation of Nazi policies towards the Jews in monopoly capitalism. Eschwege, he wrote "comes to a false conclusion whereby the monopolies tolerated the crimes, racial hatred, and concentration camps of the Nazis. No, the monopolies did not 'tolerate' such things, they were, rather, an integral part of the ruling system of monopoly capitalism. . ."[57]

Furthermore, Heymann suggested, Eschwege needed to do more to emphasize the ongoing problems of antisemitism and Nazism in the Federal Republic in contrast to the German Democratic Republic, a society that represented

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55 See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews,* vol. 1, *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1997) and *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 2, *The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (New York: Harper-Collins 2007). Christopher Browning's path breaking study *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: Norton, 2010) is based largely on the oral testimony of Jewish survivors. The emphasis on Jewish experience and testimony had, however, no place in East—or West—German historiography of the 1950s. Eschwege was, however, in contact with Bernard Mark, director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw whose own work also placed the experience of Jews in the foreground of the Holocaust. The institute collected approximately 10,000 survivor accounts which allowed the Holocaust research conducted there to incorporate a Jewish perspective into the analysis. Thanks to Stephan Stach for this insight.

56 See Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 143–45. Käppner bases this judgement on the evaluation of the East German readers. He did not, however, have access to the manuscript itself which is now held by the Zentralarchiv.

57 "Gutachten (1. Teil) zu dem Buch von H. Eschwege," Stefan Heymann, n.d., NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/22, nr.13.

"freedom, democracy, and socialism, in which racial hate and antisemitism no longer existed because the basis for them [capitalism and imperialism] had forever been removed." Nevertheless, Heymann, even while pointing out Eschwege's deviations from East German ideological orthodoxies, acknowledged Eschwege's achievement in addressing an enormous gap in East German historiography and supported the book's publication. Likewise, Rudi Goguel wrote that, despite his reservations about aspects of the manuscript, "we must acknowledge the author's achievement" because after 20 years, the absolute absence of any scholarly discussion of the Nazi policies towards the Jews could not be politically defended. "The fact," he wrote, "that up till now there has been no scholarly representation of the destruction of the Jews by the Nazi regime in the scholarship of the GDR is shameful."[58]

While the more sympathetic reviewers of Eschwege's work acknowledged the striking neglect of the theme in GDR historiography, even while simultaneously criticizing his deviations from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, more negative evaluations provided a basis for the ultimate rejection of Eschwege's text. Henry Görschler, an East German sociologist who had written on antisemitism, argued against its publication because of Eschwege's unorthodox approach: Eschwege was, wrote Görschler, "entirely unfamiliar" with the state and conclusions of the GDR historiography, particularly in his understanding of the Jewish question. The basic assumptions underlying Eschwege's analysis were false: "A Jewish nation" wrote Görschler, does not exist. "The Jewish question is above all a question of class: what is a Jewish comrade," he asked rhetorically, "either a comrade or a Jew!"

While the fate of the Jews under the Nazi regime served as proof of fascist barbarism, there was no Jewish question per se; the Jewish bourgeoisie was ultimately on the side of the class enemy, and its politics was a reflection of its class standing. Indeed, inasmuch as the Jewish bourgeoisie did not side with the KPD, it was on the wrong side of history. Eschwege's lengthy discussion of organized Jewish reactions to persecution and the destruction of the German-Jewish heritage by the National Socialists reflected for Görschler a Zionist agenda predicated on the false (Zionist) conception of a Jewish "people." Eschwege, Görschler complained, used exclusively bourgeois and Zionist sources (by which he meant historical works written in Israel and the West, as well as

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58   Rudi Goguel, "Bemerkungen zum Manuskript von Helmut Eschwege," April 14, 1963, NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11, nr. 13.

the published accounts of Jewish survivors who were not communists). Eschwege's sources (accounts of Jewish survivors) were dictated entirely by "feeling" and avoided a systematic Marxist-Leninist analysis. Eschwege's discussion of German-Jewish contributions to German culture—with its implication of a cultural/ethnic German-Jewish identity that was not simply rooted in religion—reflected a "Zionist bias." Indeed, he criticized Eschwege for not attacking the state of Israel, which according to Görschler was an imperialist state and a vassal of American capitalism.[59] Another negative appraisal of Eschwege's manuscript that recommended against publication came from Heinz Kamnitzer, one of the founding members of the important East German historical journal, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*.[60] A book that placed such emphasis on the Jewish victims of Nazism and that saw European and German Jews as having characteristics that could not be reduced to religious affiliation had no place in East German historiography. Indeed, even those who unsuccessfully advocated for Eschwege were ideologically opposed to the assumptions that underlie his work, particularly in regard to the existence of a Jewish nation. It was the dogma of German communism, wrote Eschwege in his memoir, that caused these scholars to reject the very notion of a Jewish nation. For Goguel and his colleagues, Jews were to be defined as a religious group, and there was thus an irreconcilable contradiction between Jewish identity and membership in the socialist or communist parties. For Eschwege, by contrast, there was no such contradiction.[61]

Similar difficulties underlie the East German reception of Eschwege's work on German-Jewish resistance. Eschwege had begun gathering material on this theme since 1965. The view that the European and German Jews had simply been passive victims of fascism was, Eschwege felt, fundamentally wrong.

Eschwege had himself suffered from this wholesale categorization of Jewish experience. As mentioned previously, Eschwege had lost his status as a "fighter against fascism" during the period of late-Stalinist antisemitism and was demoted to the status of a "victim of fascism," which entailed considerably fewer benefits. Academic discussions of German-Jewish resistance were, complained

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59   "No word," wrote Görschler, "concerning the politics of the state Israel, the destructive role that Israel plays as the vassal of the USA in the fight against the progressive liberation movements in the middle east. . . . Why not?" Henry Görschler, "Gutachten zum Manuskript," July 24, 1962, NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11, nr. 13.

60   Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 136.

61   Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen,* 210–11.

Eschwege, "excluded." There was, he wrote, "resistance" against the resistance of the Jews.[62] When he asked the old communist (and Jew) Bruno Baum for the names of Jewish resistance fighters in Germany, Baum refused, writing to Eschwege that the resistance fighters he was familiar with were communists and could not be considered Jewish resistance fighters. It was this "typical perspective of an SED functionary" that Eschwege set out to revise, to bring to light a history that was thoroughly marginalized.[63] After examining the Nazi documentation in municipal archives that was available to him in the GDR and conducting extensive interviews with individuals who had been active in the resistance in East Germany, Eschwege completed a manuscript, *Der Widerstand deutscher Juden gegen das Naziregime, 1933–1945* (The resistance of German Jews to the Nazi regime, 1933–1945).

Eschwege submitted the manuscript to two publishers in the GDR and received rejections.[64] In 1969, Arnold Paucker, director of the London branch of the Leo Baeck Institute, encouraged him to publish the article in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*. Much to the irritation of the East German authorities, the intent of the article was to correct the notion that German Jews had been entirely passive victims.[65] By no means did Eschwege glorify Jewish behavior: given the degree of Nazi repression of the Jewish community, most Jews "were incapable of offering any appreciable resistance."[66] Jews were by no means a homogeneous group, however, "wherever there was the slightest chance of doing so, Jews did offer resistance. . . . They fought on every front of the struggle against German fascism, in numbers vastly out of proportion to the relative size of the Jewish population." Eschwege's article emphasized the high proportion of Jews in the antifascist organizations of the left, the heightened risks that Jewish resistance members faced, and the "draconian penalties which hit the Jews far harder than their non-Jewish comrades."[67] Much of the article focused on the Baum group, a youth group led by young communists known for organizing an arson

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62 Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 185.

63 Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen*, 230.

64 Rejection letters from Deutscher Militärverlag, April 10, 1967, and Buchverlag Der Morgen, July 29, 1968, NL Eschwege, Zentralarchiv, B.2/11, nr. 1.

65 Eschwege's relationship with the Leo Baeck Institute and his work on German-Jewish resistance was one of the reasons for the launching of an investigation against Eschwege in the early 1980s. The work of the Institute, reported the Stasi, "highlights the 'special role' that Judaism played in German history and as such provides a justification for Zionism and the State of Israel. With that comes . . . a defamation of the Marxist-Leninist historical perspective and the politics of the Socialist states." See BStU 222/84, Bl.761, Zionist 00206, n.d.

66 Eschwege, "Resistance of German Jews."

67 Eschwege, "Resistance of German Jews," 155.

attack on an anti-Soviet exhibition prepared by Joseph Goebbels at the Berlin Lustgarten. Following the attack, most of the members of the group were arrested; twenty were sentenced to death. East Germans had glorified the group's memory without, Eschwege pointed out, "allowing for the specific situation of that isolated Jewish resistance movement and . . . without attention to the distinctive tragic element which accompanied it from the beginning to its very last minutes." That is, the official GDR narrative glossed over the fact that the Baum group was made up of Jews, some of whom were Zionists and all of whom were terribly isolated within German society because of their Jewishness.[68]

Eschwege's important study, co-written with Konrad Kwiet of the University of Sydney, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand: Deutsche Juden im Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde, 1933–1945* (Hamburg, 1984) represented a huge step forward in the study of German-Jewish resistance. Kwiet, who had come into contact with Eschwege through Arnold Paucker of the Leo Baeck Institute, had access to archives in the West that Eschwege was not allowed to visit. Their close cooperation allowed the study to extend beyond the parameters of Eschwege's earlier manuscript (which focused on the workers' movement) to include the attempts of middle-class Jewish organizations to preserve Jewish life and aid with the emigration of Jews before the war.[69] Furthermore, the authors greatly expanded the notion of what could be considered resistance, moving beyond the more limited notion of resistance only as armed resistance to include other forms of Jewish agency and self-assertion. While they examined many forms of resistance such as the uprisings in the ghettos and concentration camps, they included forms of passive resistance, the organization of emigration, flight, hiding and (most controversially) suicide, all seen as various forms of protest or resistance to the Nazi genocide.[70]

The book, of course, challenged the monopoly communists held over the history of the antifascist resistance movement and as such could not be published in the GDR. After the book was published in West Germany in 1984, the East German historian of the communist resistance, Margot Pikarski described the

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68 Eschwege, "Resistance of German Jews," 168–69.

69 Kwiet and Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, 141–216.

70 Just as Eschwege's work on the Holocaust and his incorporation of the testimony of Jewish victims into his narrative foreshadowed more recent approaches to the Holocaust, so too did Kwiet and Eschwege's work presage broader definitions of Jewish resistance associated with historians like Yehuda Bauer and Marion Kaplan. See, for instance, Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

book as "anticommunist," accusing Eschwege of falsifying history.[71] In 1988, hoping that the times had changed with Perestroika and Glasnost and the new-found openness of the GDR to Jewish themes (as well as his own collaboration with the Staatssicherheit at this time), Eschwege submitted his book to the Militärverlag of the German Democratic Republic in the hope of publishing an East German edition. It was, Eschwege reported, rejected.[72]

In 1991, shortly before his death in 1992, Eschwege published his memoir, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen: Erinnerungen eines Dresdner Juden*. Eschwege addressed his highly combative relationship to the East German state, his persecution as a Jew during the period of late Stalinist antisemitism, and his consequent attempt to defend Jewish life in East Germany. Individual chapters focus on his struggles with the dogmatic anti-Israel politics of the GDR, his critical relations to the leadership of the Jewish community in the GDR and in Dresden, and his cooperation with East German Christians in developing various forums for Jewish-Christian understanding. The memoir's second half, entitled "Publications and Obstacles," describes his experiences in each of his research projects and the hindrances placed in the way of his research by the state.

The book concludes with the collapse of East Germany and his own role as a founder of the newly formed SPD in Dresden. While the book is an invaluable source for the historian as well as a testament to Eschwege's achievements, it also must be read somewhat critically. Throughout the memoir, Eschwege presents himself primarily as an adversary and victim of the East German state. It is arguable, however, that Eschwege's relationship to the SED and to East Germany was more complex than he allows. Thus, Eschwege's fight to retain his membership in the SED through the 1950s and 1960s as well as his decision to remain in East Germany despite contacts in Israel and West Germany suggest an ongoing identification with the East German social and political model. To be sure, this was not unusual among Jewish leftists in the 1950s and 1960s, given the prominence of ex-Nazis in West German public life. However, even in the 1970s and 1980s, his "loyalty to the GDR and his hope for a democratic socialism kept Eschwege in the country despite all of his personal and political conflicts."[73]

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71 For a useful discussion of the East German objections to the book, see Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte,* 185–88.

72 Eschwege does not tell us what the reasons for the rejection were. Eschwege, *Fremd unter meinesgleichen,* 251.

73 Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt,* 193.

Most controversially, while Eschwege discusses his "unusual" relationship with the state security services, his memoir is not entirely forthcoming on the formal aspects of that connection. The Stasi had persecuted him in the 1950s and in the early 1980s; because of his engagement in Christian-Jewish understanding projects and because of his extensive Western contacts, he was the subject of a criminal investigation, codename "Zionist." However, he also was an unofficial accomplice (IM) of the Stasi between May 1956 and June 1958 and again between 1985 and 1989. In each case there seems to have been a quid pro quo. In the 1950s, he used his relationship to the Stasi to enable a trip to Israel to visit his family to see his elderly and ill mother. In return, he wrote detailed reports on his visit to Israel for the secret service.[74] In the 1980s, following the conclusion of the criminal investigation, the Stasi approached him to inform on activities within the Jewish community and on his contacts with the West, even as they continued to observe him closely. Eschwege made it clear to his Stasi-handlers that he wanted to ensure his access to archives and the ability to conduct his research.[75] There is no evidence within the Stasi files that Eschwege divulged any information that would be potentially harmful to individuals. Indeed, he seems to have used the Stasi as a conduit for expressing his (publicly stated) critique of GDR anti-Zionism, and his (publicly stated) critiques of the leadership of the Jewish community in the GDR. In the 1980s, the most important issue for Eschwege was that his ability to conduct research in the GDR for his work on the history of the Jews in the territories of East Germany be protected. However, the files suggest also that he hoped to exert some influence on policy regarding the themes closest to his heart: the dogmatic anti-Zionist position of the GDR, the public discussion of Nazi genocide, and Jewish history in the GDR generally.[76]

Conclusion

Eschwege's return to East Germany from Palestine in 1946 clearly was related to his belief that the communists would create a better Germany. At the same

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74   "Bericht-Israel," January 28, 1957 in BStU, Personalakte Eschwege 448/58, GI Bock, 52–55.

75   "Eschwege," wrote a Stasi handler, "sees in the cooperation with the Stasi a means towards realizing his work as a historian." See Report of October 28, 1985, BStU AST Dresden 510/90.

76   For an overview of Eschwege's relationship to the security services, see in particular, Hartewig, *Zurück-gekehrt,* 186–94; Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte*, 263–72; Stefan Meining, *Kommunistische Judenpolitik: Die DDR, die Juden und Israel* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), 205–10, 234–39. To be sure, even if Eschwege did his best to avoid "naming names" the Stasi did its best to pursue leads suggested by Eschwege's reports. See Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte*, 271.

time, Eschwege hoped that the GDR would fully acknowledge the Nazi crimes committed against the Jewish minority. The failure of that hope led to his turn toward a deeply engaged period scholarship and a strong commitment to researching the Holocaust and the fate of German Jews, in particular during the Third Reich. In doing so, Eschwege demonstrated his willingness to engage with and challenge the limitations of the GDR's official historical perspectives on the Holocaust and Jewish history.

Through his scholarship and activism as well as his occasional collaboration with the Stasi, Eschwege may have well felt that his contributions could impact the conditions of socialism in the GDR and influence policies and practice: that the experience of Jews would be recognized and acknowledged. His hope was clearly misplaced. Yet, it should not let us lose sight of Eschwege's very real achievements both as an East German citizen ready to engage non-Jews in a dialogue about Jewish history and as a scholar committed to writing the history of German Jews in a milieu in which that history was not fully acknowledged and addressed.

Part Two

Sites of Memory

Kata Bohus

Parallel Memories? Public Memorialization of the Antifascist Struggle and Martyr Memorial Services in the Hungarian Jewish Community during Early Communism

Photos of the Jewish National Assembly (Izraelita Országos Gyűlés) from February 20–21, 1950, show representatives of the Hungarian Jewish community sitting in their headquarters on Budapest's Síp street, together with Gyula Ortutay, Minister of Religion and Public Education. Behind them, a wall is adorned with the portraits of three men: Lenin, Stalin, and Mátyás Rákosi, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja). In the background, one can also see a large, ornate menorah, one of the most well-known symbols of Judaism. The photos depict what appears to be an unremarkable gathering, giving little indication of the dramatic turn that the assembly represented for Hungary's Jewish community.

The event marked the formal establishment of complete communist state control over Jewish institutions in Hungary. The atheist state implemented massive restrictions on all religious activities. It defined Jews strictly in religious terms, referring to them as "Israelites" (*izraeliták*) to emphasize a distinction from previous ethnic (and politically tainted) definitions. It was at this assembly in 1950 that the merger of the three traditional branches of the Hungarian Jewish religious community (the Neolog, the Orthodox, and the Status Quo Ante[1]) was announced. Everyone concerned, however, knew that the decision had not been made by the Jewish community leadership but by the communist state apparatus.

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1   These three branches had existed since the so-called schism of 1871 with separate institutional structures and different understandings of Jewish religious practices.

Figure 4.1. Gyula Ortutay, representing the ruling communist Hungarian Workers' Party, speaks at the Jewish National Assembly, 1950. Courtesy of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Budapest.

The merger was one in a series of communist policies that sought to consolidate the power of the Soviet-style Stalinist dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi, who would lead Hungary's Communist Party and state until his forced retirement in 1956.[2] Financially, Jewish institutions became completely dependent on the state. Jewish schools were nationalized.[3] Many yeshivas were closed, their teachers incarcerated.[4] Religious Jews were forced to work on Saturdays and could not keep Sabbath.[5] The Hungarian Zionist Association had already been disbanded in 1949,[6] and the activities of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

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2   See Árpád Pünkösti, *Rákosi: Sztálin legjobb tanítványa* [Rákosi: Stalin's best student] (Budapest: Fapadoskonyv.hu, 2010).

3   For further details about the Jewish community's situation under early Communism, see Róbert Győri Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság Magyarországon 1945 után* [Communism and Jews in Hungary after 1945] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2009); György Haraszti, "Lejtmenetben: A magyarországi zsidóság vészkorszak utáni első 12 éve" [Downhill: the first 12 years of Hungary's Jewry after the age of destruction], *Múlt és Jövő*, no. 4 (2007): 4–36; András Kovács, "Magyar zsidó politika a háború végétől a kommunista rendszer bukásáig" [Policies towards Jews from the end of the war until the fall of communism], *Múlt és Jövő*, no. 3 (2003): 3–39.

4   For example, the teachers of Budapest's Kazinczy street Orthodox synagogue were imprisoned. See Zsuzsanna Toronyi, "Bevezető" [Introduction], *Magyar Zsidó Levéltári Füzetek*, no. 7 (2010): 22; Sándor Bacskai, "A második nap" [The second day], *Múlt és Jövő*, no. 3 (2003): 50.

5   Sándor Bacskai, *Egy lépés Jeruzsálem felé* [One step towards Jerusalem] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1997), 121.

6   Attila Novák, *Átmenetben: A cionista mozgalom négy éve Magyarországon* [In transition: the four years of the Zionist movement in Hungary] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2000), 172.

(JDC) aid organization were banned two years later.[7] Members of the Party who had received aid from the JDC (or whose close family members did so), or who had been members of the Hungarian Zionist Association (Magyar Cionista Szövetség) were dismissed from the Party.[8] Several former members of the organization were arrested, but even Jews who did not have close ties with the Zionists often lived in fear of being picked up by the State Security Services.[9] The communists also employed explicitly or implicitly antisemitic policies and rhetoric.[10] Even though the state's ideology was officially antifascist (and thus "anti-antisemitic"), both coded and open antisemitism was present in Hungarian society in general, and within the Communist Party in particular.[11] Following similar initiatives in Moscow[12] and elsewhere in the Soviet zone of influence,[13] several spectacular anti-Zionist, antisemitic trials were scheduled to take place in 1953. The plans were only aborted by Stalin's death and the consequent change in Soviet policies.

According to the renowned historian of the Hungarian Holocaust Randolph L. Braham, the communists' totalitarian repression effectively silenced narratives of Jewish victimhood during the Holocaust.[14] Regina Fritz also noted

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7   For further details about the activities of the Joint in postwar Hungary, see Kinga Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary, 1945–1953," in *The JDC at 100*: *A Century of Humanitarianism*, ed. Linda G. Levi, Atina Grossmann, Maud S. Mandel, and Avinoam Patt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 421–38; Kinga Frojimovics, "Different Interpretations of Reconstruction: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress in Hungary after the Holocaust," in *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after World War II*, ed. David Bankier (New York and Jerusalem: Berghahn Books and Yad Vashem, 2005), 277–92.

8   László Svéd, "A magyar zsidóság és a hatalom" [Hungarian Jews and authority], *Múltunk*, nos. 2–3 (1993): 248–98.

9   Sándor Bacskai, *Egy lépés Jeruzsálem felé*, 44–50.

10   András Kovács, "Antisemitic Elements in Communist Discourse: A Continuity Factor in Post-War Hungarian Antisemitism," in *Antisemitism in an Era of Transition: Continuities and Impact in Post-Communist Poland and Hungary*, ed. François Guesnet and Gwen Jones (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Land, 2014), 135–47; Róbert Győri Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság*, 212–19; Éva Standeisky, *Antiszemitizmusok* [Antisemitisms] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007), 39–43.

11   On the various forms of antisemitism during the communist period in Hungary, see Éva Standeisky, *Antiszemitizmusok*.

12   On anti-Zionist trials in the Soviet Union, see Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Zvi Y. Gitelman, "The Evolution of Soviet Anti-Zionism: From Principle to Pragmatism," in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 11–25.

13   One of the most notorious trials was against Rudolf Slánský in Czechoslovakia. See Helaine Debra Blumenthal, "Communism on Trial: The Slansky Affair and Anti-Semitism in Post-WWII Europe," UC Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, July 23, 2009, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4wr2g4kf.

14   Randolph L. Braham, "Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust," in *Hungary and the Holocaust: Confrontation with the Past* (Symposium Proceedings, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2001), 51.

in her monograph on Holocaust memory in Hungary that "in the Rákosi era, the memory of the persecution and murder of Hungarian Jews was increasingly limited to the Jewish community."[15] Communist doctrine interpreted World War II as the struggle between fascism and antifascism, a monumental battle in which the persecution of Jews was but an episode, leaving no room for a more particular public narrative about their racial persecution. When Jews did make an appearance in official narratives on World War II, they were but one group among the many victims of fascism.

Though newer research has called into question the universal validity of this statement, scholars have only concentrated on the post-Stalinist period, particularly the 1960s.[16] When it comes to Rákosi's reign, academics have still not challenged this assumption. This paper, however, offers a critical reassessment of this "myth of silence," arguing that memorialization of the Holocaust did occur during the first years of communism in Hungary and was not completely suppressed. Though such efforts were indeed marginalized, some elements of the history of the wartime destruction of Hungarian Jewry did in fact make their way into official versions of the history of the war. Moreover, the communist regime tolerated the Jewish community's memorial services for martyrs of the war (i.e., Jewish victims of the Holocaust), despite its preference for antifascist com-

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15 Regina Fritz, *Nach Krieg und Judenmord: Ungarns Geschichtspolitik seit 1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 236.

16 The thematic issue of *Múltunk*, no. 2 (2019) included several essays on various aspects of Holocaust memory during socialism. See also Tamás Bezsenyi and András Lénárt, "The Legacy of World War II and Belated Justice in the Hungarian Films of the Early Kádár Era," *Hungarian Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (2017): 300–327; Kata Bohus, "Not a Jewish Question? The Holocaust in Hungary in the Press and Propaganda of the Kádár Regime during the Trial of Adolf Eichmann," *Hungarian Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (2015): 737–72; Richard S. Esbenshade, "'Anti-Fascist Literature' As Holocaust Literature? The Holocaust in the Hungarian Socialist Literary Marketplace, 1956–1970," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 31 (2018): 405–26.; András Lénárt, "Perek: A Holokauszt tematizálásának példái a hatvanas évek magyarországi nyilvánosságában" [Trials. Examples of the thematization of the Holocaust in Hungary's public sphere in the 1960s], in *A forradalom ígérete? Történelmi és nyelvi események kereszteződései*, ed. Tibor Bónus, Csongor Lőrincz, and Péter Szirák (Budapest: Ráció, 2014); Vera Surányi, ed., *Minarik, Sonnenschein és a többiek: zsidó sorsok magyar filmen* [Minarik, Sonnenschein, and the others: Jewish fates in Hungarian films] (Budapest: MZSKE-Szombat, 2001); András Szécsényi, "Holokauszt reprezentáció a Kádár-korban: A hatvanas évek közéleti és tudományos diskurzusának emlékezetpolitikai vetületei" [Holocaust representation in the Kádár era: aspects of memory politics in the public and intellectual discourses of the sixties], in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2017), 291–329; Teri Szűcs, *A felejtés története: A Holokauszt tanúsága irodalmi művekben* [The history of forgetting: commemorating the Holocaust in literary works] (Budapest: Kalligramm, 2011); Máté Zombory, András Lénárt, and Anna Lujza Szász, "Elfeledett szembenézés: Holokauszt és emlékezés Fábri Zoltán Utószezon c. filmjében" [Forgotten confrontation: Holocaust and memory in Zoltán Fábri's film *After-Season*], *Budapesti Könyvszemle*, no. 3 (2013): 245–56.

memorations of World War II that focused on communist political martyrs and heroes, because some aspects of the Jewish services matched the official ideological standards and language.

Furthermore, a close examination of the content and context of memorial celebrations and so-called martyr memorial services held by the Hungarian Jewish community reveals that these celebrations came to fill in the gaping hole left by the lack of community events and services no longer available to many Jewish survivors, particularly in provincial Hungary. These martyr memorial celebrations within the Jewish community strengthened cohesion at a time when the atheist communist state all but destroyed it and represented the community's early attempts to develop a new perception of itself, one framed by the memory (and memorialization) of the Holocaust.

Mutually Exclusive Memories? Jewish Martyr Memorial Services and the Communist "Cult of the Martyrs"

The manifesto of Hungarian Jews in 1946 proclaimed that "the heaviest losses caused by the last world war and fascist insanity in this country have been suffered by the Jews."[17] The document was one of many testimonies that the community produced in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Unquestionably, Jewish survivors would dominate the field of Holocaust historiography and memory production in the postwar years. They took on the job of documenting the tragedy, creating statistics, and laying the foundations of memorialization practices.

Shortly after the end of the war, "rabbis and other religious leaders [all over Europe] attempted to think religiously about both how to commemorate the victims and how to explain their deaths."[18] They needed to address serious questions of Jewish religious practice (like how to convene a minyan of ten Jewish men to pray during the synagogue services when there were less than ten survivors at a given location) as well as larger theological problems (like deciding whether the destruction of World War II should be included in the preexisting narrative of Jewish suffering or considered something new). The desire to commemorate victims also posed philosophical questions to the community of sur-

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17   *Manifesto of Hungarian Jewry*, August 7, 1946, Hungarian Jewish Archives, XXXIII–5–b/4, 29.
18   Leah Wolfson, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, vol. 5, *1944–1946* (Washington DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2015), 410–11.

vivors. Was it at all possible to give meaning to such destruction? Should Jews take revenge on the persecutors or was forgiveness possible? What value should be placed on differences within the Jewish community when Jews were targeted as a whole? Were religious bodies responsible for the commemoration of those victims they had not recognized as Jews, but who had nevertheless been persecuted on the grounds of being racially considered Jews?

Historian Leah Wolfson claims that "memorial services and the reformulation of Jewish holidays provided a way to perform evolving theological beliefs and practices"[19] about these fundamental issues. Commemorating Jewish martyrdom had played an important role in both Jewish religious practice and historiography for centuries, and thus the reformulation of this tradition in the wake of the Holocaust is unsurprising. Medieval *Memorbücher* of Central European Jews listed the Jewish martyrs who had been killed during the first Crusade and other medieval massacres. Traditional fast days of Jewish religious tradition commemorate tragedies that befell the ancient Jewish people, for example *Tzom Gedaliah* (The Fast of Gedaliah) which commemorates the assassination of Ben Achikam, the Governor of Israel during the days of the Babylonian conquest. The 20th of Sivan was established in Ashkenazi communities as a Memorial Day of fasting to commemorate the Khmelnitsky massacres that had taken place in 1648–49 in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During the Cossack and peasant revolt against Polish rule, hundreds of Jewish communities were destroyed. Postwar martyr memorial services can be viewed as newer forms of this longer tradition of commemorating Jewish martyrdom.

The communist narrative of World War II was formed at the same time when the new commemorative traditions of Jewish victimhood were established within the Jewish community. Communist propagandists and historians in Hungary had to face the fact that the country had entered the war on the side of Nazi Germany and remained its ally despite the Horthy leadership's aborted attempt to switch sides in 1944. The narrative of the successful antifascist struggle bore an immense significance in the Soviet Union where millions had died[20] to defeat Nazi Germany, but Hungarian soldiers had given their

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19   Wolfson, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 415.

20   Nearly 27 million Soviet citizens died in the course of what Joseph Stalin declared to be the Great Patriotic War, constituting half of the total 55 million victims of World War II. Out of this 27 million, close to 9 million were military dead. Roger Markwick, "The Great Patriotic War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Collective Memory," in *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 692–713; Olga Baranova, "Politics of Memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union," working paper, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, www.iwm.at, accessed January 13, 2019.

lives fighting on the opposite side, making commemoration of the antifascist struggle in the country much more fraught. Moreover, the homegrown Hungarian communist movement had been weak and received little support from the population before or during the war, generating a feeble and insignificant opposition to fascism in the country.[21] However, communist historians could not emphasize this. Had they done so, the communist takeover after 1948 would have seemed imposed by the Soviets and opposed by the majority of the Hungarian population.[22]

To remedy this discrepancy and to construct, retroactively, an image of wide popular support for the Hungarian antifascist movement before and during the war, the communist regime presented its own miniscule wartime movement as one embedded in the tradition of Hungary's national history, transforming its fairly minor antifascist heroes into national ones.[23] "Our martyrs were everywhere to fight against the enemies of the Hungarian people. . . . The French Communist Party is also called the party of martyrs because they alone gave more heroes for the liberation of their homeland than all the other political parties together. We can proudly say the same thing about the Hungarian Communist Party,"[24] wrote General Secretary Mátyás Rákosi in 1946, exaggerating the role of his Party both in the imagined, grandiose Hungarian antifascist resistance, and in the Soviet occupation that he interpreted as liberation.

The nascent communist state's attitude toward political opposition to Admiral Miklós Horthy's regime between 1920 and 1944 was similar. The minutes from a meeting of the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party Committee of Greater Budapest in July 1949 sheds light on this phenomenon. Discussing the "fight of Hungarian communists against the oppressive Horthy regime," the department declared that "these [communists] are the heroes of the Hungarian people, who fought and died for the freedom and independence of the working people even though they did not live to see the liberation of our

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21   István Deák, "A Fatal Compromise? The Debate Over Collaboration and Resistance in Hungary," *East European Politics and Society* 9, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 209–33.

22   Hungary was by no means the only country in Europe where national identities and historical narratives had to be reconciled with the general population's wartime collaboration with the German occupiers, and their indifference (or even hostility) towards their persecuted Jewish neighbors. See Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

23   Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 191–212.

24   *A Magyar szabadságért: A Magyar Kommunista Párt vértanúi* [For Hungarian freedom: martyrs of the Hungarian Communist Party] (Budapest: Szikra, 1946), 7–8.

country and our people, achieved by the Red Army of the Soviet Union."[25] This narrative emphasized the "importance of wartime sacrifice as a model of the antifascist struggle"[26] (i.e., active participation in political opposition) that would qualify someone as a martyr.

The antifascist narrative was being developed during the early years of communist rule and, in practice, it was not always clear who actually belonged among its martyrs and heroes. For example, according to a 1948 governmental decree, those who had died during forced labor service during World War II were considered to have met a "heroic death" (*hősi halál*).[27] The category was not only a symbolic honor but also brought financial benefits for surviving family members. With the inclusion of those who had died during labor service, a group of predominantly Jewish martyrs was established. Forced labor service meant unarmed military service during World War II, and though originally not established exclusively for Jews, as the war progressed, it gradually became a method of discrimination against Jewish men (defined according to racial laws) of military age.[28] Forced labor service cost the lives of 50–70,000 people,[29] the great majority of them (over 40,000) Jews. That they were defined as war heroes by the postwar Hungarian government contradicted a strictly political activity-based definition of heroism or martyrdom.

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25 "Javaslat mártírjaink megemlékezésére" [Proposal to remember our martyrs] by the Propaganda Department of the Party Committee of Greater Budapest, July 5, 1949. Budapest City Archives, HU BFL – XXXV.95.a, MDP Budapesti Titkárságának ülései, July 19, 1949.

26 Péter Apor, *Fabricating Authenticity in Soviet Hungary: The Afterlife of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic in the Age of State Socialism* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 29.

27 "A magyar köztársaság kormányának 6510/1948: számú rendelete a katonai szolgálatot teljesítő személyekre és családtagjaikra vontakozó születés, házasságkötés és halál, valamint a hősi halálra vonatkozó megjelölés anyakönyvezése tárgyában" [Decree no. 6510/1948 of the government of the Republic of Hungary: on the registration of births, marriages and deaths of persons performing military service and their family members, as well as the designation of a heroic death], *Magyar Közlöny,* no. 133 (June 15, 1948): 1341; "Kik a hősi halottak? Rendelet az elhunyt hadifoglyok, muszosok, leventék, szabadságharcosok és 44-es szökevények hősi halottá nyilvánításáról" [Who are the heroic dead? Decree about the declaration of the heroic deaths of deceased prisoners of war, labor service men, levente members, freedom fighters, and fugitives of 1944], *Világ,* June 16, 1948, 6.

28 For a comparative perspective on the institution of Hungarian forced labor service, see László Csősz, et al., "Munkaszolgálat a második világháború idején a történelmi Magyarország utódállamaiban" [Labor service during World War II in the successor states of historic Hungary], *Múltunk,* no. 2 (2015): 72–139. The edited volume by Elek Karsai, *"Fegyvertelen álltak az aknamezőkön...": Dokumentumok a munkaszolgálat történetéhez Magyarországon* ["They stood unarmed in the minefields...": Documents on the history of labor service in Hungary] (Budapest: MIOK, 1962) was the first comprehensive documentary account of forced labor service in Hungary that was published during the communist period.

29 Csősz, et al., "Munkaszolgálat," 120.

There was one element in the forming new communist memory politics that vaguely resonated with Jewish experiences and commemorations of the war's end. Introduced in 1950,[30] April 4 became the national holiday of Hungary's liberation by the Soviet Red Army.[31] Mass celebrations and processions held all over the country thanked the victorious Red Army for liberation, and wreathing ceremonies at symbolic graves and monuments reminded everyone to the sacrifices of Soviet soldiers who had died during military operations in Hungary.[32] In early 1945, the arrival of the Red Army was a question of life and death for the country's surviving Jews, most of whom were by then confined in the Budapest ghettos,[33] and terrorized and decimated by the Hungarian Arrow Cross militia. For them, as opposed to Hungary's non-Jewish population that rightfully dreaded the Soviets' approach,[34] the Red Army's arrival was indeed an event to be celebrated. "They are here! Finally, the Russians have arrived," wrote the relieved Éva Weinmann in her diary, which she managed to keep even in the Budapest ghetto, on January 19, 1945.[35] The narrative of freedom was central to the yearly celebrations commemorating the liberation of the Budapest ghetto held by the Jewish community during the postwar years, and allowed for the continued functioning of a religious space as a location for gathering large numbers of community members without imposing the threat of state retributions on them.

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30 Legislative Decree no. 10/1950 officially proclaimed April 4 the Day of Hungary's Liberation.

31 In fact, Soviet military operations in Hungary continued at least until April 11, 1945, so even the date of Soviet "liberation" was incorrect.

32 Minutes of the Meeting of the Secretariat of the Hungarian Workers' Party, March 8, 1951, Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL), 276. f. 54. cs. 133. ő. e.

33 Though Budapest's Jewish residents were forced into a ghetto during the last phase of the war, the rapid advance of the Red Army prevented large-scale deportations from the city, which was liberated in February 1945. The Jewish survival rate was above 50 percent in the capital, as opposed to a mere 20 percent in the provinces. Thus, the majority of survivors in Hungary—about 120,000–140,000 persons—lived in Budapest. Tamás Stark, *Zsidóság a vészkorszakban és a felszabadulás után (1939–1955)* [Jews in the age of destruction and after liberation, 1939–1955] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1995), 47. András Kovács refers to 144,000 survivors in Budapest. András Kovács, "Jews and Jewishness in Post-war Hungary," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, no. 1 (2010): 39.

34 Soviet troops brought immense suffering to the country: violence, killing, rape, and looting were common events. They took more than half a million Hungarians to Soviet labor camps, from which tens of thousands never returned. On these various issues, see Andrea Pető, *Elmondani az elmondhatatlant: A nemi erőszak Magyarországon a II. világháború alatt* [To say the unspeakable: Sexual violence in Hungary during World War II] (Budapest: Jaffa, 2018); Éva Mária Varga, "Magyar hadifoglyok és internáltak a Szovjetunióban az oroszországi levéltári források tükrében (1941–1956)" [Hungarian prisoners of war and internees in the Soviet Union in the light of Russian archival sources, 1941–1956], PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, 2008; Krisztián Ungváry, *Budapest ostroma* [The siege of Budapest] (Budapest: Corvina, 2005), 281–95.

35 The original document can be found in the collections of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives. The diary's text is available at: https://issuu.com/milev/docs/weinmann_lapozos/35, last accessed December 10, 2019.

For very different reasons, both the Hungarian communist state and Jewish survivors were struggling with the problem of how to interpret the recent war, and the deaths it caused, in a historical perspective. Though the totalizing state did not tolerate deviance in questions of ideology, the communist narrative of antifascism and its heroes and martyrs was not yet ossified, and suffered from discrepancies and inconsistencies at this time. Though communist propaganda did not allow the inclusion of explicit accounts of Jewish persecution during World War II into this antifascist narrative framework, some elements of Jewish commemorations resonated with official interpretations of the war. This had long-term consequences for Holocaust memorialization practices that managed to continue, if in a very limited and restricted form, among Jewish survivors and filled a void that the officially imposed silence left among them.

Screaming Silences? Memorialization of World War II in Public Spaces

A monumental, six-meter-tall sculpture commemorating the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who had saved thousands of Jewish lives in Budapest during the war, was supposed to be unveiled in Budapest's Szent István Park on April 10, 1949. The structure had already been standing in the small green public space next to the Danube for days, ready and waiting for the big day. The area was part of the former "International Ghetto"[36] that had housed thousands of Jews during World War II who were protected by a number of different neutral powers, most importantly Sweden. However, the inauguration of the statue never took place.

During the night on April 9, 1949, there was an unusual commotion around the sculpture. Pál Pátzay, the memorial's well-known and decorated sculptor got a phone call from his friend, writer Lajos Hatvany, in the wee hours of the morning of April 10. Hatvany, who lived right next to the park, witnessed what happened. "Pali, your sculpture is being demolished right now!" he shouted into the telephone. But by the time the confused and rather panicked Pátzay made his way to the scene from the other side of the river, he only found the empty space where his sculpture used to stand. The figure, depicting a muscular man squeez-

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36 The International Ghetto was established by the government of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party in November 1944. About the ghettoization of Budapest, see Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (London: Routledge, 2003).

ing the neck of a snake that is attacking him, together with the base and the inscription on it, disappeared.[37]

As it soon turned out, Hungarian communist authorities took the sculpture down on direct Soviet orders. Wallenberg arrived in Budapest in the summer of 1944, when deportations of Hungarian Jews in the provinces were well underway. Having no doubts that the same fate awaited the 200,000 strong Jewish community of Budapest, Wallenberg issued thousands of Swedish protective passports (the so-called *Schutzpass*) to Hungarian Jews, and also sheltered many in about 30 protected buildings in what is now Budapest's 13th district.[38] Wallenberg disappeared, under mysterious circumstances, on January 17, 1945, after having been seen in the company of Soviet officials as the Red Army besieged Budapest. Presumably, he was detained on suspicion of espionage and was subsequently murdered by the NKVD.[39] Soviet authorities in 1949 probably wanted to avoid the publicity about Wallenberg's suspicious disappearance, and thus instructed Hungarian authorities to call off the inauguration of the monument in Szent István Park. Furthermore, Wallenberg's story did not fit at all with the antifascist narrative. He came from a western country, he was not a communist, and he was not trying to save communists or defeat the fascists. He was to be commemorated for saving Jews, regardless of their political leanings, and he was killed by the so-called antifascists as a potential enemy.

Though the inauguration was aborted, the artwork and its political significance managed to survive both physically and in the public mind. A year later, in August 1950, Pátzay exhibited a smaller version of it in Budapest's Art Hall (Műcsarnok) during the First Hungarian Fine Art Exhibition (I. Magyar Képzőművészeti Kiállítás). The bronze sculpture had received a new title, "Figure with Snake" (*Kígyós figura*), and was now presented as an antifascist work, symbolizing the fight between ideologies where the good man (socialism/antifascism) triumphs over the evil snake (fascism). According to the introduction of the exhibition's catalogue, "with the leadership of our Party, we have rebuilt

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37 Gábor Murányi, "Wallenberg-emlékművek Budapesten" [Wallenberg monuments in Budapest], *Barátság* 19, no. 2 (2012): 7122–26.

38 For a detailed description of Wallenberg's activities in Budapest, see Bengt Jangfeldt, *The Hero of Budapest: The Triumph and Tragedy of Raoul Wallenberg* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2014).

39 On the arrest, see Mária Ember, "Wallenberg elrablása" [Wallenberg's abduction], *Budapesti Negyed* 8, no. 2 (1995): 181–208. Based on a Soviet government report from 1956, Wallenberg was long believed to have died on July 17, 1947, while imprisoned by Soviet authorities in Moscow's infamous Lubyanka Prison. However, eyewitness accounts of Wallenberg still being alive in the Soviet penal system after that date called his death into question. The exact date and circumstances of Wallenberg's death are not known up to this day.

our country from the ruins, we gained victory after victory against the internal and external enemy, and successfully laid the basis of socialism."[40] Thus, Pátzay's figure commemorating the real heroic deeds of a Swedish individual came to symbolize the fictitious collective effort of the Hungarian people to defeat fascism and build communism. According to contemporary reports, the sculpture received a lot of attention from the visitors of the exhibit,[41] though a professional evaluation at the meeting of the Association of Hungarian Artists of Fine and Applied Arts (Magyar Képző- és Iparművész Szövetség) criticized the piece for relying on symbolism rather than a realistic portrayal (surely a consequence of the sensitivity of the of the artwork's original topic).[42]

When György Rácz, an architect entrusted with the planning of a pharmaceutical company's penicillin production building in the city of Debrecen saw Pátzay's sculpture at the exhibit, he decided to get it for the garden of the future building. When he mentioned his idea to Iván Tabéry, the director of the Iparterv State Architectural Office who oversaw industrial construction in the whole country, Tabéry was baffled. "For the love of God, are you always mixed up in such things?" he exclaimed to Rácz, "That is the Raoul Wallenberg memorial that was demolished."[43] Tabéry knew, at first mention, which sculpture Rácz was talking about and its original meaning was absolutely clear for him. That the industrial architect Tabéry, who was neither a propagandist nor deeply involved in memory politics, knew about the statue's removal indicates that its connection to Wallenberg was not immediately erased from public memory.

Rácz did not change his plans and in 1952 or 1953, a copy of the sculpture was permanently erected in front of the pharmaceutical company, which appropriated it as the company's emblem.[44] Meanwhile, the repaired original statue was placed in the forested area behind the company buildings, hidden out of

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40   *I. Magyar Képzőművészeti Kiállítás: Műcsarnok, Hősök Tere, 1950* [First Hungarian Fine Art Exhibition: Art Hall, Heroes' Square, 1950] (Budapest: Szikra, 1950).

41   "Az I. Magyar Képzőművészeti Kiállítás szoborművei" [Sculptures of the First Hungarian Fine Art Exhibition], *Kis Újság*, September 2, 1950, 4.

42   One participant at a meeting of the Association opined that "[t]he way Pátzay talks about the fight against fascism with his statue was the way the bourgeoisie fought: vaguely, elusively." "A Magyar Képző- és Iparművész Szövetség szakmai ankétja" [Discussion of the Association of Hungarian Artists of Fine and Applied Arts], *Szabad Művészet*, December 1, 1950: 476.

43   Barnabás Winkler's academic chair acceptance speech at the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Art, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, March 8, 2010, https://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/szima/szekfoglalok/Winkler_Barnabas.pdf.

44   Originally, the company was called Hajdúsági Gyógyszergyár, and after its merger with the Debreceni Gyógyszergyár in 1960, it was renamed Biogal and became one of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in communist Hungary. For further details on its history, see *10 éves a Biogal Gyógyszergyár* (Debrecen: Alföldi Nyomda, 1962).

sight. The male figure with the snake appeared on millions of medication packages during communism, becoming a well-known symbol of fighting diseases.[45]

Instead of an example of the communist suppression of the memory of the Holocaust, which it may seem at first glance, the history of the Wallenberg statue and its disappearance should be viewed as a case that highlights the regime's intolerance of narratives that could have questioned communism's (and the Soviet Union's) commitment towards antifascism. The statue was removed not because Wallenberg had saved Jews specifically but because he was a representative of a capitalist country engaged in true antifascist activities, captured (and most likely killed) by the supposedly antifascist Soviets. This is further supported by the fact that in 1953, a show-trial was planned where two wartime leaders of the Hungarian Jewish Council—Lajos Stöckler and Miksa Domonkos—would have been accused with Wallenberg's murder, proving that the murderers of the diplomat were not in Moscow.[46] Stöckler and Domonkos were horribly tortured in prison, but eventually freed in November 1953, when the show-trial preparations were aborted after Stalin's death.

Ironically, the postwar communist ideological commitment to antifascism made the survival of the Wallenberg sculpture possible: though stripped from its original, very concrete antifascist meaning (i.e., to commemorate a man who saved lives that were supposed to be extinguished by German and Hungarian fascists), it was given a new interpretation through a symbolic fight of (fascist and antifascist) ideologies. In fact, there is no indication that the third transformation of the artwork's message into something apolitical was the result of communist ideological considerations. Most probably, it was a mere coincidence.

That the abrupt and drastic removal of the Wallenberg statue from Szent István park had more to do with the attempt to cover up Soviet war-crimes than the tabooization of Holocaust memory can further be underscored by the fate of another, similar artwork. The journal *Világ* reported a mere three months after the Wallenberg statue incident that the renowned Hungarian caricaturist

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45   A replica of this original statue would eventually be erected in Szent István park on April 18, 1999, fifty years after this episode. As Pátzay was already dead, the copy was made by Sándor Győrfi.

46   József Szekeres, *A pesti gettók 1945 januári megmentése: "A magyar Schindler"—Szalai Pál visszaemlékezései és más dokumentumok alapján* [The rescue of the Pest ghettos in January 1945: "The Hungarian Schindler"— Based on the recollections of Pál Szalai and other documents] (Budapest: BFL, 1997); János Kenedi, "Egy kiállítás (hiányzó) képei 2," *Élet és Irodalom* 48, no. 42, October 15, 2004, https://www.es.hu/cikk/2004-10-18/kenedi-janos/egy-kiallitas-hianyzo-kepei-2.html.

and painter Lipót Herman[47] had just finished a monumental painting. The composition depicted "various martyrdoms (labor service, deportation, ghetto, etc.) surrounding one single vision: the resurrection and glorification of millions of martyrs."[48] Herman was quoted as saying that he had wished that destructive "fascist cruelties" had not provided such rich materials for his art about resurrection. A significant collection of Herman's art was exhibited in Budapest's Ernst Museum in 1954 and the introductory text of the catalogue also mentioned his sources of inspiration in the postwar years, when he was motivated to work by "the liberation from the chains of fascism" and by "Persecution, the painful memory of the millions who died."[49] Though it seems that Herman's painting depicting the death and resurrection of Jews who had died during the Holocaust was not exhibited at that time, the topic of Jewish martyrdom was clearly discussed in both of the above mentioned sources. This discussion was possible as long as it was placed within the context of fascism's cruelty, and as far as those who had suffered were not admittedly engaged in political activities outside the communist movement.

Marginalized Memory? Martyr Memorial Services in the Jewish Community[50]

The need to erect one central memorial structure to commemorate the approximately 600,000[51] Hungarian Jewish victims of the Holocaust, most of whose

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47   Lipót Herman (1884–1972) was born in the town of Nagyszentmiklós into a Jewish family. His talent for drawing was discovered at a young age, but his parents wanted him to have a real profession in small trade. They eventually let him study art in Budapest, and Herman made a living from an early age with small caricatures and illustrations. He later also studied in Munich, Berlin, London, and Paris. He was conscripted into the Hungarian Army during World War I. From 1921 onwards, he taught at the independent school of the National Association of Hungarian Israelite Public Education. He worked in a number of places after World War II, Zsennye and Szolnok among them. In 1952, he received the prestigious Munkácsy Prize from the Hungarian communist state, acknowledging his artistic achievements. Herman always acknowledged his Jewish roots and identity, which he frequently depicted in his artwork.

48   "Hatalmas mártírfestményt fejezett be Herman Lipót" [Lipót Herman finished a monumental painting of martyrs], *Világ*, July 26, 1949, 4.

49   *Herman Lipót festőművész gyűjteményes kiállítása* [Collection exhibition of painter Lipót Herman] (Budapest: Ernst Múzeum, 1954), 9.

50   The author would like to thank Borbála Klacsmann for her immense help with the research for this part of the paper.

51   This number includes the 50,000–90,000 Christians categorized as Jews by the Hungarian racial laws who were living on the territory of what would become postwar Hungary. It also includes the Jewish population of territories that were annexed by Hungary in 1938 and 1940. Including these territories, the Jewish population under Hungarian jurisdiction amounted to about 800,000. See Stark, *Zsidóság*, 54.

places and times of death were unknown, was expressed in Hungary's Jewish community in the early years following the war. After several calls for architectural proposals and a long period of debates about which of the submitted plans for a Central Martyr Memorial (Központi Mártíremlékmű) was to be accepted, the *Chevra Kadisha* of Pest decided to erect the memorial based on the plans of the architect István Hermányi.[52] Hermányi, so the argument went, "was in Auschwitz, and his soul is filled with pain and compassion towards those who did not survive the war."[53] First-hand experiences of the death camp and the understanding of the recent destruction from a Jewish point-of-view were of central significance when choosing the architect.

The Memorial was inaugurated in 1949 in the Jewish cemetery in Budapest's Kozma street, in the outskirts of the Hungarian capital. The structure consists of thirteen pillars which each contain the names of the identified victims of the Holocaust, marking the place of the camps where they were likely killed. On the side of the structure, the Hungarian inscription reads: "Hate killed them, love guards their memory," while the Hebrew text above it says "God be mindful of the souls of our Jewish brothers who gave their lives for the blessing of God's name."[54] There is a distinct tension between the two inscriptions: while the Hungarian text focuses on victimhood ("killed them") the Hebrew text refers to heroism ("gave their lives"). The "blessing of God's name" mentioned in the Hebrew inscription is also a reference to the *Kiddush Hashem*, a principle of Judaism according to which any action by a Jew that brings honor, respect, and glory to God is considered to be the sanctification of his name. The tension between the Hungarian and Hebrew texts highlights a fundamental problem that Jewish memorialization practices of the Holocaust were grappling with at the time: were those who had been killed martyrs because they died for their faith, or victims of a meaningless massacre?

In his speech at the inauguration of the memorial, József Katona, rabbi of the Dohány street Great Synagogue, emphasized the continuity of Jewish sacrifices for the homeland during World War I (when many Jews served in the regular Hungarian Army) and World War II, resolutely placing Holocaust victims in the

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52   Notes of the meeting of the Memorial Committee, July 15, 1946, Hungarian Jewish Archives, HU HJA XIII-1-6 (1947–50), Pesti Chevra Kadisa Iratai, Központi Mártíremlékmű iratai.

53   Notes of the meeting of the Memorial Committee, July 15, 1946.

54   Tim Cole, "Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory: Holocaust Memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1945–95," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 278.

pantheon of heroes. Katona had always been a firm believer in Jewish assimilation into the majority Hungarian society and his commitment to the idea continued even after World War II.[55] He also pledged that Jewish survivors were ready to take part in the building of a "better future." His words could be interpreted both as a commitment to a socialist future, and to one without antisemitism.

> Behind us stands the memorial of ten thousand heroes of the [First] World War, the sign of Hungarian Jews' love for the homeland, faithfulness and honest steadfastness. In front of us stands the memorial of our hundred thousand martyrs . . . we are sad to think about the fact that there still are [people] who look back into the past. We are worried because there are some who want to incite peoples against each other. This memorial testifies that we want to, and we will take part in the building of a better future."[56]

Whichever way the rabbi's thoughts about the "better future" were understood, they were acceptable both for communist functionaries present at the event, and Jewish survivors, respectively. The rabbi's words about Jews' "love for the homeland" also echoed the already mentioned introduction by Mátyás Rákosi in the book of communist heroes who fought "against the enemies of the Hungarian people."

The parallel usage of the words "martyrs" and "heroes" also hints at another possible answer to the question "Why did they die?"—one that was not to be uttered in 1949 anymore. In the earlier postwar years, before the establishment of communism in Hungary, the argument that the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was an acceptable rationale for the death of 6 million European Jews made frequent appearance in commemorative speeches.

> Why did six million Jewish martyrs die? Why did God's justice tolerate their innocent deaths?—we have been torturing ourselves, and those whose faith is wavering have also been torturing us with this question for years. They [the Jewish martyrs] are gone, but they did not die miserably. Life was born from their deaths. Their martyrdom awakened the consciousness of nations, their deaths brought the resolution that the stateless people which

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55 Kinga Frojimovics, *Szétszakadt történelem: Zsidó vallási irányzatok Magyarországon 1868–1950* [Torn history: Jewish religious trends in Hungary 1868–1950] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008), 394–95.

56 Rabbi József Katona's speech, Hungarian Jewish Archives, HU HJA XIII-1-6 (1947–1950), Pesti Chevra Kadisa Iratai, Központi Mártíremlékmű iratai.

has always been everyone's prey but has resurrected from thousands of deaths, should again find a homeland after two thousand years.... We say for the eternal peace of the agitated blood of our martyrs: your deaths were not in vain. We tell you: Eretz Israel was born from your blood. [57]

When Rabbi Sándor Scheiber held the above speech in January 1948, less than two months after the United Nations had voted for the partition of Palestine, such an open expression of support of the Zionist cause was still possible. The Soviet Union, and thus the countries in its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, supported the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. The Soviet leadership saw in this an opportunity to extend its influence in the Middle East. However, as the Jewish state's foreign policies became increasingly oriented towards Western countries, so did Soviet policies change their course. By the second half of the decade, Israel was considered the "mainstay of Western imperialism" in the Middle East.[58] As of the early 1950s, a speech like the above was not possible anymore, even within the confines of the mourning Jewish communities of Hungary.[59] With Zionism outlawed and ostracized by communist propaganda as "nationalist deviation," another positive image of the future was evoked during commemorative celebrations. This positive image, which was also in line with the official communist narrative of World War II, was the continued fight for a better future (as mentioned by Katona above) and against fascism.

One prominent communist representative at the inauguration of the Central Memorial was István Szirmai, Head of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party. In his speech, Szirmai emphasized the need to not only mourn those who were dead, but also to take revenge against those who were enemies of "freedom, happiness and progress" and take part in the continued war and triumph over "new fascism and new antisemitism."[60] Applying a truly communist revolutionary language, the former Zionist turned

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57   Rabbi Sándor Scheiber's speech quoted in "Emlékünnepély a Vadász utca 29-ben" [Memorial celebration in 29 Vadász street], *Új Élet*, January 8, 1948, 13.

58   Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations 1953–1967: From Confrontation to Disruption* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 45.

59   According to a number of Jewish accounts, the communist takeover actually compelled many who had still believed in the possibility of remaining in Hungary after the war to change their minds and try to leave. "But in forty-seven ... only the blind could not see that the communists would take over the power.... Unconsciously, our main goal became to send the children who had survived the Holocaust to Eretz Israel." This report of an orthodox Jewish man is quoted in Sándor Bacskai, *Egy lépés Jeruzsálem felé*, 40–41.

60   István Szirmai's speech, Hungarian Jewish Archives, HU HJA XIII-1-6 (1947–1950), Pesti Chevra Kadisa Iratai, Központi Mártíremlékmű iratai.

communist[61] did not even identify the victims as Jews, but called for everyone to take on arms against what he defined as various ideological enemies. Commemoration was thus not enough; survivors were needed to actively take part in the continued war against fascism. During the official commemorations of the Jewish community, especially in the early years, communist officials frequently emphasized their conviction to help Jewish survivors in this struggle against the enemy (fascism). László Bóka, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture solemnly promised, "in the name of the democratically thinking people," to all those survivors gathered at the inauguration of a memorial plaque in the city of Szolnok that "they will make sure that the atrocities of the past would never be repeated."[62] Similarly, State Secretary László Peska vowed during his speech at the inauguration of the martyr memorial in Budapest's 4th district in the summer of 1949 that "The Hungarian People's Democracy and its government will assure that the conditions that would allow the repetition of the tragic and barbaric events of the past would not be present anymore."[63] Commemorations provided an opportunity for communist state officials like Bóka, Peska, and Szirmai to remind their audiences about the continued threat of fascism, and communism's immense importance in fighting against it.

The language of antifascism was present during strictly Jewish commemorations as well. It is very likely that the speeches held at the memorial celebrations by rabbis and other leaders of the Jewish community had to conform to the offi-

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61   The partaking of István Szirmai in the commemoration was not surprising though it was, given his biography, a rather fascinating element, revealing the multitude of attitudes and identity choices of Eastern European Jews in the postwar period. Szirmai was born into an emancipated petty bourgeois Jewish family in 1906 in the small town of Zilah (Zalău) in Transylvania. He was among the many Jews who became supporters of the Zionist movement there. He joined Hashomer Hatzair at an early age, but later became a member of the then illegal Romanian Communist Party and the secretary of the Transylvanian branch of the International Red Aid. Szirmai officially transferred his party membership to the Hungarian Communist Party (Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, HCP) in 1943, and later its successor, the Peace Party (Békepárt). After the end of the war, he held several positions within the HCP, including secretary of the National Organizing Committee (Országos Szervező Bizottság), which managed the Party apparatus. He not only continued in this post after the forced merger of the HCP with the social democrats, but was appointed president of the Hungarian Radio, as well as the Party's unofficial functionary responsible for Zionist affairs. Despite his early career in Hashomer Hatzair, Szirmai's opposition toward Zionism became more extreme during this period and he came to play a key role in the liquidation of the Hungarian Zionist movement in the early 1950s.

62   "A kormány, a pártok, a felekezetek képviselőinek beszéde után avatták fel a szolnoki mártírok emlékművét" [The monument of the martyrs of Szolnok was inaugurated after the speeches of the representatives of the government, the parties, and the religious denominations], *Új Élet*, August 19, 1948, 11.

63   "A köztársasági elnök jelenlétében avatták fel az újpesti mártír emlékművet" [The martyr monument of Újpest was inaugurated in the presence of the President of the Republic], *Új Élet*, July 29, 1948, 8.

cial antifascist ideology. However, it should also be kept in mind that during these early years, the symbolism and language widely known and used today to commemorate the Holocaust was not yet developed. Martyr memorial services had taken place before the Holocaust became a central element in (mostly West) European memory culture in the 1960s. Even the very terms "Holocaust" and "Shoah" became widespread only later.

An early publication of the Jewish community about the efforts to exhume and rebury approximately 10,000 former forced laborers who had been killed in Hungary during World War II stated that the main importance of the graves was that they "reached towards the sky as an index finger, as a silent pledge: never again fascism!"[64] In the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, memorial services were held to commemorate those who were interned in the building during the Arrow Cross regime in late 1944 and early 1945. "The few who survived gather here, at the scene of their sufferings, every year to commemorate their martyr comrades and to gain strength for the continued struggle against Fascism,"[65] reported the newspaper of the Jewish community. In this interpretation, the deaths of Jews killed during forced labor and interned in the Rabbinical Seminary during the war gained meaning when linked to a continued fight against fascism.

The need for continuing the fight against fascism was emphasized during commemorations both by the leaders of the Jewish community and by communist state officials. This shared narrative nevertheless had a different significance and meaning for the actors. For the Jewish community, it was an assurance that antisemitism would not reoccur and that their dead would be remembered. For communist representatives, it offered legitimacy for staying in power. That martyr memorial services were still able to continue in this difficult period was closely connected to this shared use of the antifascist narrative. Nevertheless, the very marginalization of specifically Jewish victimhood by the communist regime facilitated more than just Jewish remembrance.

The Martyr Memorial in the Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of Budapest was practically invisible to the greater public. However, this marginalization made the Martyr Memorial a "living memorial" for the Jewish community where the structure remained in constant dialog with its visitors and viewers. As the

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64 *10,000 hazahozott hősi halott*: *A Munkaszolgálatosok Exhumációs és Síremlék Bizottságai Kiadása* [10,000 heroic dead brought home: Edition of the Labor Service Men's Exhumation and Monument Committees (Budapest, 1948).

65 *Új Élet*, May 26, 1949, 3.

years passed, survivors added the names of their beloved ones onto the pillars, continuing the identification process of victims and guarding their memory. Had the Martyr Memorial been erected in a more central location, such dignified and undisturbed interaction would most likely not have been possible.

By about 1950, the official representatives of the Party and State were not present at the martyr memorial services held within the Jewish communities anymore. However, this did not mean that commemorations ceased to exist. On the contrary, the official newspaper of the Hungarian Jewish community, *Új Élet*, which regularly reported about such celebrations listed more than fifty martyr memorial services from all over the country in 1949 alone. These memorial celebrations meant, most frequently, the inauguration of a plaque or a smaller structure on Jewish community grounds (either in the synagogue or the cemetery), bearing the names of those community members who had been killed during World War II. In the years that followed, such inaugurations became less frequent, and memorial services came to mean a service of mourning in the synagogue and/or at the memorial structure or plaque. But they came to bear a great significance especially in places where the remaining Jewish population was so small that communal structures or services were not available anymore.

The yearly martyr memorial celebrations started to function as important community events. For example, *Új Élet* reported that the memorial service in the summer of 1950 in Devecser, a smaller town in Western Hungary, drew Jews from nearby locations, and "it was moving to see how Jews from the area made a pilgrimage to the memorial in the cemetery. The memorial day became a convention for the Jews who live in the area but have no community life."[66] In 1953, the Memorial Day in the synagogue of Nagykanizsa was attended by "deportees and their family members from the area and the capital." The synagogue, covered in black drapery for the occasion, was overflowing with people.[67] During these years, it became customary that survivors who were living in Budapest but who used to belong to other Jewish communities across the country, travelled to these commemorations on buses organized by the leadership of the community. Thus, commemorative events became not only occasions to commemorate the dead but also to meet the survivors of one's own extended family or former community, and exchange information about the everyday life of survivors across the country. The goal of the atheist communist regime by tolerating such memo-

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66   *Új Élet*, June 22, 1950, 4.
67   *Új Élet*, June 4, 1953, 2.

rial services was definitely not the strengthening of Jewish community cohesion. However, the services did in time come to bear this significance within the Jewish community.

Conclusions

For the Hungarian communist state, the struggle against fascism was not over with the end of World War II. In order to continuously mobilize people and to legitimize its own power, it needed justification. Commemorating the Hungarian people's fight against fascism during World War II and the heroes who gave their lives for it was one important element of this justification. However, in the early years of communism, this narrative was still developing, with a changing emphasis on certain elements like the presentation of communist heroes as national ones.

Meanwhile, martyr memorial services within the Hungarian Jewish community were developing the narrative of the recent destruction from a Jewish perspective. Characteristic of the Jewish memorialization process was the parallel consideration of those commemorated both as victims and heroes, which allowed this narrative to be at least partially fitting into the framework defined by the combative antifascist narrative. In fact, the attempts to articulate the consequences of fascism within and outside the Jewish community did produce certain similar elements like the need for a continued struggle, even though with differing justification: to build a communist future (in case of the official antifascist narrative), or to honor the victims of the Holocaust, give meaning to their deaths, and ensure that antisemitism would not re-emerge (in case of the Jewish narrative).

Though the official antifascist narrative did not emphasize that fascist policies especially targeted Jews, the very fact that commemorations were confined to Jewish spaces (like the Jewish cemetery or the synagogue) served as reminders of the victims' identities. As in the case of these "invisible" (Jewish) spaces or connected to the peculiar disappearance and "rebranding" of the Wallenberg memorial, the communist regime's totalizing attempt to silence the memory worked counterproductively and produced long lasting (if perhaps limited and localized) pockets of remembrance to the Jewish catastrophe.

One of the unforeseen consequences of martyr memorials was that these yearly services within the Jewish community grew into perhaps the biggest community events of postwar Hungarian Jewry and had more than one function.

One was to make sense of the recent destruction and try to define its place in Jewish traditions and practices. Another function of these commemorations was that those survivors who remained without a local community or without a rabbi were able to observe Jewish rituals and connect with other Jews in the area by attending these events. Even though martyr memorials were confined within the religious sites of the Jewish communities, most frequently the synagogues and cemeteries, they did not necessarily carry a religious meaning, and in fact offered a certain secular Jewish identification, born out of a shared experience of persecution. As a result, perhaps paradoxically, even under the most repressive Stalinist dictatorship, Hungarian Jews were able to memorialize their dead and even maintain their community cohesion through martyr memorial services. Over time, the Hungarian Jewish community managed to articulate their own changed self-definition after the war through these commemorations.

Gintarė Malinauskaitė

Holocaust Narrative(s) in Soviet Lithuania: The Case of the Ninth Fort Museum in Kaunas

Sometimes historians assert that in the postwar Soviet Union no discussion on the Holocaust took place. This is not a completely accurate perception. American scholar Thomas C. Fox confirms that "an event of such magnitude could not be airbrushed from history books, not even communist ones, but it could be rewritten within the confines of a comforting teleological narrative."[1] This was also the case of Soviet Lithuania, where the Holocaust was not erased, even if this term was not used and Jewish victims were not always identified as such.[2] Many publications in Soviet Lithuania exposed the mass murder of the Lithuanian Jews and discussed the issue of collaboration during the Nazi occupation. The Soviet regime tried to illuminate the collaboration of nationalists with fascists and often included in their publications chapters on the Lithuanian Activist Front, Lithuanian police battalions, and their collaboration with the Nazi regime.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the mass murder of Jews during World War II in Lithuania was very comprehensively documented in historical publications and unleashed in the memoirs of Lithuanian Jewish survivors.[3] Marija Rolnikaitė, considered "Lithuania's Anne Frank," wrote about her experiences in the Vilnius ghetto.[4] Lithuanian Jewish partisans Dimitrijus Gelpernas, Mejeris Elinas-Eglinis, and Makaras Kurganovas remembered not only the destiny of the Lith-

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1   Thomas C. Fox, "The Holocaust under Communism," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (London: Palgrave, 2004), 420.

2   The term Holocaust started to be used in most of the post-communist states only in the 1990s. The Yiddish press of the Soviet Union only used the Yiddish word *khurbn* ("destruction").

3   In 1958, a special department for publishing archival documents in the Academy of Sciences was created in Soviet Lithuania.

4   Marija Rolnikaitė, *Turiu papasakoti* [I have to tell] (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1963).

uanian Jews in the Kaunas ghetto and its surroundings but also portrayed the Jewish resistance against the Nazi regime.[5] The most significant historical work on the Holocaust was a two-volume document collection titled *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje 1941–1944* (Mass murders in Lithuania 1941–1944),[6] which depicted the mass murder of the Lithuanian Jews in Vilnius and Kaunas and in the Lithuanian countryside. This two-volume book, published in 1965 and 1973, listed the names of those murdered and indicated the Jewish background of the victims. Moreover, in the introduction, the editors of this publication spoke explicitly about the racist nature of the mass executions.[7] According to contemporary Lithuanian historians, this two-volume edition contains many valuable documents and photocopies and should be perceived as one of the first important books on the Holocaust published in Lithuania. Thus, it is not surprising that Lithuanian Jewish historian Dov Levin asserts that during the Soviet period Lithuanian works of history, even tendentious ones, "featured an accurate portrayal of the fate of Lithuanian Jews during the war."[8]

In addition to historical publications and memoirs, the memory of World War II in Soviet Lithuania was also extensively musealized. Soviet authorities perceived the museum both as an institution aimed at organizing historical knowledge on the war and educating Soviet citizens and the place where the public would identify themselves with these historical, often hegemonic and ideological, narratives presented in the exhibition halls. Therefore, the museum in Soviet Lithuania functioned as "a public educator" and as a catalyst of (re) writing history. The Ninth Fort Museum, since its establishment in one of the former Kaunas fortress fortifications in 1958, was one of the most important sites commemorating the victims and heroes of World War II in the Soviet times. It attracted members of the Soviet political elite, anti-Nazi resistance fighters, and Lithuanian Jews. During the Nazi occupation, the Ninth Fort be-

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5   Makaras Kurganovas, *Mirties akivaizdoje* [Facing death] (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1960); Mejeris Elinas-Eglinis, *Mirties fortuose* [In the forts of death] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1966); Mejeris Elinas-Eglinis and Dimitrijus Gelpernas, *Kauno getas ir jo kovotojai* [The Kaunas ghetto and its fighters] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1969).

6   Genovaitė Erslavaitė et al., *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje (1941–1944): dokumentų rinkinys, 1 dalis* [Mass murders in Lithuania 1941–1944: Collected documents, part 1] (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1965); Genovaitė Erslavaitė, et al., *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje (1941–1944): dokumentų rinkinys, 2 dalis* [Mass murders in Lithuania 1941–1944: Collected documents, part 2] (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1973).

7   Genovaitė Erslavaitė et al., *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje, 1 dalis*, 4.

8   Dov Levin, "Lithuania," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 343.

came a site of mass executions, where from October 1941 to August 1944 more than 50,000 people were murdered.[9] The fascists eliminated more than 30,000 Jews there, including inmates of the Kaunas ghetto and Jews from various European countries such as France, Austria, Germany, Poland, and others.[10]

Nonetheless, the neglect of the specifically Jewish victimhood and the narrative of resistance became the most prominent elements of the fort's history in Soviet times. However, in this paper, I argue that despite the political instrumentalization of this site and its ideologically conceptualized exhibitions, Lithuanian Jews, especially male partisans, managed to voice, at least partly, memories of their traumatic experiences on the grounds of the Ninth Fort. They spoke publicly during the commemorative events, published memoirs, and tried to leave some mark in the historical understanding of World War II. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to trace the construction of memories of the Nazi occupation in Soviet Lithuania based on the case study of the Ninth Fort Museum. I will focus on two questions: (1) Who were the key actors who created the museum? (2) How was the memory of the war constructed, medialized, and gendered at the site of the museum?

Agency and Power: Creating the Ninth Fort Museum

On July 16, 1958, following Decree No. 300 of the Soviet Ministers' Council, a Museum of Revolution History was established in the Ninth Fort. The Council chose the year 1958 intentionally as this date was the 40th anniversary of the October revolution. The establishment of the Ninth Fort Museum was not only initiated on the highest political level, but it was also conceptualized by the Soviet Lithuanian communist elite itself. Motiejus Šumauskas, the chair of the Council of Soviet Ministers,[11] who was interned in the fort during the interwar years, even offered a conceptual design for the memorial site.[12] The establishment of the Ninth Fort Museum was part of the broader communist cultural policy of commemorating World War II in Soviet Lithuania. In 1960, two other

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9   Yad Vashem, "Ninth Fort," Yad Vashem, accessed October 19, 2016, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205960.pdf.

10 Shmuel Spector and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust,* vol. 2 (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 607.

11 Motiejus Šumauskas was a chairperson of the Council of Soviet Ministers from 1956 to 1963. From 1967 to 1975 he was chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR.

12 Ekaterina Makhotina, *Erinnerungen an den Krieg—Krieg der Erinnerungen: Litauen und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 175.

important museums began operating: the Ponar Memorial Museum[13] and the Pirčiupis Museum of the Victims of Fascism.[14]

Historian Ekaterina Makhotina, a researcher of museum representations of World War II in Lithuania, noticed that the 1960s was "a boom time for war museums in Soviet Lithuania."[15] These museums, as similar sites in other communist countries, were conceptualized as places of collective memory and social cohesion that avoided any ethnic identification of the victims.[16] Their aim was to honor and mourn the death of Soviet national heroes and victims, not commemorate individual deaths.[17] The commemorative idiom of this site was antifascist ideology, which divided the world into oppositional fascist and antifascist camps. Antifascism was a foundational ideology that "mythologized the very existence of the Soviet Union" and legitimized its expansion.[18] Following Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet political elite found it important to strengthen the ideological foundations of the Soviet Union in many of its member states, including Soviet Lithuania. Therefore, it is not surprising that just between 1959 and 1960 three museums related to the memory of World War II opened in Soviet Lithuania.

The main actors in the establishment of the Ninth Fort Museum, as mentioned above, were the communist elites of Soviet Lithuania. Such high political motivation for establishing a memorial site could be explained through the personal experiences of the Lithuanian communists. During the interwar period, the newly reestablished Lithuanian state lacked prisons and detention sites.[19]

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13 The Ponar Memorial Museum was founded in 1960 as a branch of the Museum of Revolution in Vilnius. It was located at the former site of the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews near Vilnius. In the Ponar forest, around 100,000 people, mostly Lithuanian Jews, were killed between 1941 and 1943. After Lithuanian independence in 1990, the Ponar Memorial Museum became a branch of the Jewish State Museum in Vilnius.

14 Pirčiupis Museum of the Victims of Fascism was established in 1960 as a branch of the Museum of Revolution. Pirčiupis is a village that was burnt down by the Nazis during the war. It is located 44 kilometers away from the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. On June 3, 1944, a group of Nazi Germans was attacked by pro-Soviet partisans in the surrounding forest of the village. The German military took revenge by burning almost all the inhabitants of Pirčiupiai alive. 119 people were murdered and only 13 managed to escape. A monument, "The Mother of Pirčiupiai," next to the memorial museum was erected in 1960. The museum was closed in 2010 because of the decline in popularity.

15 Ekaterina Makhotina, "Staging Soviet (Hi)Story in Lithuania: Museum Representations of the Second World War in Lithuania," *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen*, accessed 19 October 2016, http://erinnerungskulturen.ifa.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Staging-Soviet-HiStory-in-Lithuania.pdf.

16 Siobhan Kattago, "Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials along the Road to Narva," in *Contested and Shared Places of Memory: History and Politics in North Eastern Europe*, ed. Jörg Hackmann and Marko Lehti (London: Routledge, 2010), 57.

17 Kattago, "Commemorating Liberation," 56.

18 Kattago, "Commemorating Liberation," 57.

19 Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, "Hard Labour Prison," Kauno IX forto muziejus, accessed October 19, 2016, http://www.9fortomuziejus.lt/istorija/test/?lang=en.

Therefore, in 1924, a division of the Kaunas Hard Labor Prison was established in the fort.[20] In this prison, the state detained criminals and political prisoners, mostly members of the Communist Party of Lithuania, which "was outlawed as inimical to independent Lithuania."[21] For example, Motiejus Šumauskas, later Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Lithuania, and Antanas Sniečkus, later First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, both served sentences in the fort. Therefore, it is not surprising that the highest-ranking Soviet Lithuanian political figures of that time later supervised the creation of the museum.

Due to the ideological dictates of the state, the Ninth Fort Museum had to commemorate both the victims of Nazi violence and pay tribute to the Soviet resistance heroes of World War II and the Soviet partisan fighters of the interwar years. These earlier Soviet partisans fought for the socialist revolution during the ruling years of the authoritarian president of Lithuania, Antanas Smetona, who was in power from 1926 to 1940. Thus, the Ninth Fort Museum was both a site for the commemoration of the dead and for honoring the living Lithuanian communist elite in power in the 1960s and their former fights for communist ideals. Such memorialization sought to strengthen the legitimacy of the ruling communist elite in the country. The persecution of the Lithuanian communists during Smetona's regime was beneficial to the state's narrative for the museum in that it allowed for a clear continuity of communist resistance rather than Jewish victimhood and martyrdom in the Ninth Fort.

However, it is also important to mention that in addition to the communist elite, Lithuanian Jewish partisans were also given agency, mostly a passive and representative one, in the creation of the Ninth Fort Museum. The majority of Lithuanian Jewish survivors who stayed in postwar Soviet Lithuania were former Jewish partisans from the Kaunas ghetto, whose relatives were murdered at the site of the Ninth Fort. Many of these partisans joined the units of the Soviet partisans in the surrounding forests after having escaped from the ghetto. Following the war, Lithuanian Jewish partisans received high positions[22] in the Soviet state apparatus and, therefore, could influence the process of memorializa-

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20 Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, "Hard Labour Prison."
21 Leonas Sabaliūnas, "Lithuanian Politics under Stress: Ideological and Political Developments before the Soviet Occupation," *Lituanus* 14, no. 3 (1968), accessed 18 June 2021, http://www.lituanus.org/1968/68_3_02Sabaliunas.html.
22 For instance, the Lithuanian Jewish partisan Alex Faitelson graduated from the economics faculty of Vilnius University while working as assistant director of a factory. Later he worked as an economist in the Ministry of Light Industry.

tion. Thus, they were included in the memorial activities taking place at this site. Survivor of the Kaunas ghetto and former Jewish partisan, Alex Faitelson, writes in his memoirs that he gave numerous lectures in Soviet Lithuania, and even in Moscow, where he spoke about the Nazi crimes and even called for the fort to be turned into a museum.[23]

Creation of a Commemorative Idiom: Antifascism and the (Im)possibility of the Jewish Narrative of the Holocaust in the Ninth Fort Museum

On May 30, 1959, the museum officially opened with an exhibition in four cells that presented Nazi war crimes in Lithuania. The museum's exhibition confronted visitors with emotionally charged texts and objects (see figure 5.1). It aimed at displaying "evidence": documents, photographs, inscriptions on the walls, and personal belongings of the murdered, including prosthetic limbs, human hair, and bones. These objects were often left unexplained; they evoked deep emotions but had limited didactic value. The failure to identify specifically Jewish victims in the exhibition was a historic oversight, as during World War II the Ninth Fort had primarily been a mass murder site for Jews. In the 1960s, new research work and excavation of the mass graves began to search for more forensic evidence of the Nazi crimes in the Ninth Fort, which led to more and more objects for exhibition. The aim of this research was to define the exact boundaries of the mass murder site and to collect proof that could be displayed in the museum exhibits.[24]

The Soviet authorities declared the opening ceremony of the Ninth Fort Museum to be a public demonstration against the Nazis and their collaborators.[25] During this event, the First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party Antanas Sniečkus delivered a speech. In it he declared that the Ninth Fort Museum was not only a reminder of the victims of fascist violence but, first and foremost, symbolized the heroic struggle of the Soviet people that ended in victory.[26] In his speech, he also identified the ethnic background of

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23 Alex Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth: Jewish Resistance in Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2006), 412.

24 Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, "The Museum."

25 "Garbė žuvusiems kovotojams! Amžinai atminsime fašizmo aukas! Mitingas skirtas Kauno devintojo forto muziejaus atidarymui [Respect to the dead fighters! We will remember forever the victims of fascism! Demonstration dedicated to the opening of the ninth fort museum]," *Tiesa*, May 31, 1959.

26 The speech was quoted in Zigmas Kondratas, ed., *IX fortas* [The ninth fort] (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1961), 48.
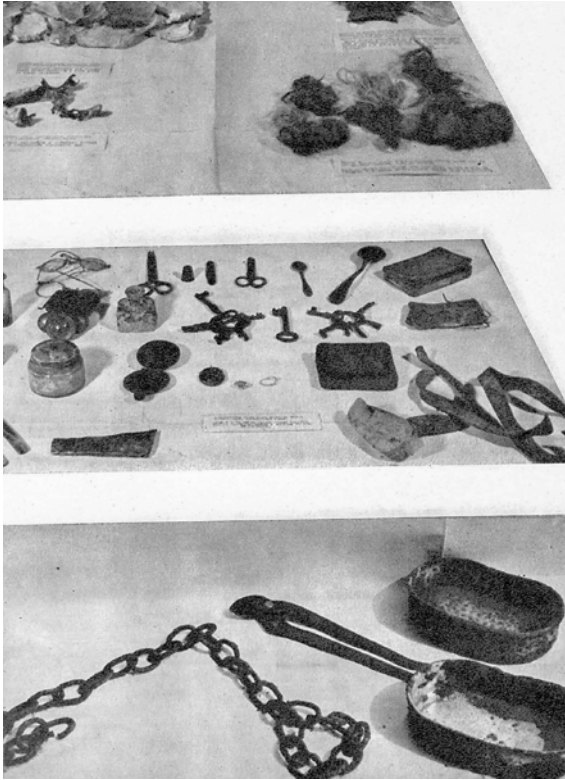
Figure 5.1. Exhibition objects in the Ninth Fort Museum. Source: Zigmas Kondratas, ed., *IX fortas* (Vilnius: Valstybinė politinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1961). Courtesy of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

the victims: "Among the victims of the fascists there were people of different nationalities: Lithuanians, Jews, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, and Poles."[27] He also mentioned the names of the perpetrators responsible for the mass murders in the Ninth Fort, like Kazys Škirpa, the founder of the antisemitic Lithuanian Activist Front, and Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis, who served as the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Lithuania from June 1941 to August 1941. Sniečkus also reminded his audience of the collaboration of the Lithuanian Catholic Church and its priests with the Nazis.[28] He stated that the Ninth Fort represented direct evidence of the mass exterminations and thus the Soviet people had to be careful that such cruel crimes would never be repeated again.[29] It might be claimed that the museum had a forward-

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27   Cited according to "Garbė žuvusiems kovotojams!" 1.

28   "Garbė žuvusiems kovotojams!" 1.

29   "Garbė žuvusiems kovotojams!" 1.

looking political goal, namely that any fight against the Soviet regime was to be seen as the continuation of fascist crimes.

Historian Jonathan Huener, in his book on *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979*, writes that during the communist period, a "memorial site could function as a political aesthetic for the communist government, historical revisionism or vigilance toward a Western security threat and not as a metonym for the Shoah."[30] This was obviously the case for the Ninth Fort Museum, which was primarily defined as a memorial site for the revolutionary struggle and proletarian internationalism. In this Soviet commemorative framework, even Jewish victims from foreign countries who were executed in the Ninth Fort were turned into international proletarians. Their names inscribed on the walls of the fort's cells were displayed in the exhibition and included in the publications about the Ninth Fort. The language of war commemoration in the Ninth Fort Museum was that of class struggle. Nazis and their Lithuanian helpers were "bourgeois nationalists," while victims were "proletarians," who suffered from the crimes of fascism and racism.

However, after Stalin's reign of terror ended, Lithuanian Jews found it easier to breathe in Soviet Lithuania. According to Lithuanian historian Samuelis Barnajus, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Lithuanian Jewish community flourished, for example the renowned Jewish dance and song ensemble *Fajerlech* (headed by Jakovas Magidas), which still exists today, was founded in 1971.[31] Historians Atamukas and Barnajus, the two main authors who have studied Jewish life in Soviet Lithuania in depth, have both noted that the Soviet Lithuanian government was relatively liberal towards Jews in comparison to other Soviet republics, and Lithuania was seen as "the island" where Jews could foster their own cultural heritage.[32] According to Atamukas, there are several reasons why Lithuanian Jews managed to display Jewish culture more openly. First, he highlights the traditionally high level of Jewish national consciousness in Lithuania.[33] Second, in

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30   Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 80.

31   Samuelis Barnajus, "Žydai sovietinėje Lietuvoje: Atgimimas po Holokausto" [Jews in Soviet Lithuania: Rebirth after the Holocaust], in *Lietuvos žydai: Istorinė studija* [Lithuanian Jews: A historical study], ed. Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, et al. (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2012), 503.

32   Samuelis Barnajus, "Žydai sovietinėje Lietuvoje" [Jews in Soviet Lithuania], in *Žydai Lietuvoje: Istorija, kultūra, paveldas* [Jews in Lithuania: History, culture, heritage], ed. Larisa Lempertienė and Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2009), 115.

33   Solomonas Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias: Nuo XIV a. iki XXI a. pradžios* [The road of Lithuania's Jews: From the end of 14th century to the end of 20th century] (Vilnius: Alma Littera, 2007), 321.

contrast to other Soviet republics like Latvia and Estonia, in Lithuania, many leading communist figures were native Lithuanians. Some of these politicians had strong connections with Jews. They had spent years together in jail or fought together against Nazi Germany.[34] Justas Paleckis, who until 1967 was the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR,[35] was a friend of the famous Jewish poet and partisan Avrom Sutzkever.[36] Such Jewish connections, Barnajus and Atamukas argue, made these communist officials motivated to successfully confront antisemitic policies emanating from Moscow. Moreover, the Soviet regime chose Vilna as the representative city for Jewish culture and heritage to demonstrate that Jewish culture was also blossoming in the Soviet Union.[37] The Soviet news agency regularly reported internationally on the cultural activities of Vilna Jews.[38] However, historian Aurimas Švedas, who also affirms that in Soviet Lithuania antisemitism was not so intense as in other parts of the Soviet Union, explains this phenomenon differently. He claims that lessened degree of antisemitism was not due to the politics of Sniečkus and the "soft" position of the Lithuanian Communist Party, but rather a consequence of there being few Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Lithuania.[39] Only 5 to 10 percent of Lithuanian Jews survived the war; more than 195,000 of them were killed.[40] 80 percent of the Jewish population of Lithuania had been already executed by the end of 1941. In fact, most of Lithuanian Jewry perished during the first days of the war, even before the ghettos were created in July and August 1941; in provincial areas, many Jews were killed immediately not far from their homes.[41]

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34 Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, 321.

35 The Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

36 Avrom Sutzkever*, Le Ghetto de Wilno 1941–1944* (Paris: Denoël, 2013 [1946]), 37.

37 Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, 322.

38 Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, 322.

39 Aurimas Švedas and Irena Veisaitė, *Gyvenimas turėtų būti skaidrus* [Life should be transparent] (Vilnius: Aukso žuvys, 2016), 232.

40 Arūnas Bubnys, ed., *Holokaustas Lietuvoje 1941–1944 m.* [Holocaust in Lithuania, 1941–1944] (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2011), 562.

41 Arūnas Bubnys, *The Holocaust in Lithuania between 1941–1944* (Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, 2008), 6. See more in Alfonsas Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003); Vincas Bartusevičius, Joachim Tauber, and Wolfram Wette, eds., *Holocaust in Litauen: Krieg, Judenmord und Kollaboration im Jahre 1941* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003); Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliūnas, eds., *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); Joseph Levinson, ed., *The Shoah (Holocaust) in Lithuania* (Vilnius: The Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum, 2006); Arūnas Bubnys, *Holokaustas Lietuvoje 1941–1944 m.* [The Holocaust in Lithuania, 1941–1944] (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2011); Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011); see also the book of the Lithuanian journalist and writer Rūta Vanagaitė, *Mūsiškiai* [Our people] (Vilnius: Alma Littera, 2016).
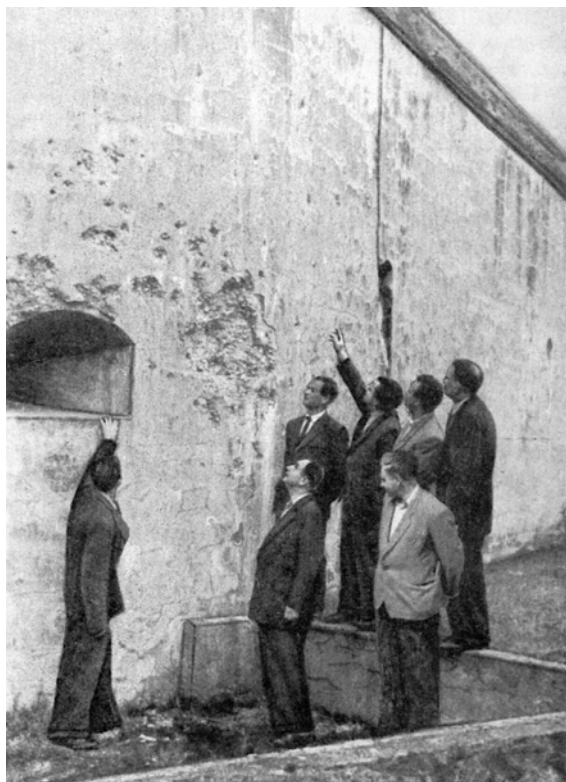
Figure 5.2. Former prisoners at the opening of the Ninth Fort Museum in 1959 explain how they had escaped from the Ninth Fort. Source: Mejeris Elinas-Eglinis, *Mirties fortuose* [In the forts of death] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1966). Courtesy of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

The estimated percentage of Jews murdered in Lithuania was one of the largest in Europe.[42] Most Jews, the main objects of Soviet antisemitism, had simply perished and so, Švedas claims, without them there was naturally less antisemitism.

Whatever the nature of antisemitism in Soviet Lithuania, the opening ceremony of the Ninth Fort Museum honored both communist bureaucrats and Lithuanian Jews who had been imprisoned in the fort's cells or lost their relatives there. And they were not invisible participants. On the contrary, Lithuanian Jewish partisans who escaped the Ninth Fort were allowed to speak publicly and tell their memories about the Ninth Fort (see figure 5.2). Even the official photographer from the opening ceremony had connections to former Jewish inmates of the fort. Povilas Karpavičius, an official state photographer, was assigned after the war to photograph the traces of the Nazi crimes in Soviet Lithuania. Karpavičius, like other inhabitants of Kaunas, knew exactly what was happening

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42   Compared to approximately 95 percent in Latvia, 90 percent in Poland, and over 80 percent in Germany.

in the Ninth Fort. His close Jewish friends, the family Rozenblat, which included two small children, were interned in the Kaunas ghetto, and Karpavičius, along with his wife Alevtina, "supported them at every opportunity."[43] In April 1944, he sheltered their daughter, a four-year-old girl named Ginda Rozenblat, at his home in a secret hiding place inside the piano.[44]

After the opening of the Ninth Fort Museum, many Lithuanian Jewish partisans published their memoirs from the Kaunas ghetto and retold the crimes committed in the fort.[45] Their books were illustrated with photographs by the Lithuanian Jewish photographer interned in the Kaunas ghetto, George Kadish.[46] Some of their publications even made the ethnic identification of Jewish victims explicit.[47] These publications were less subject to Soviet censorship as they were written in the Lithuanian language and distributed locally, so the communist authorities in Moscow most likely did not see them as a threat to their dominant antifascist narrative. Of course, first and foremost, their memories were embedded in the heroic narrative of Soviet resistance against the Nazi regime. Nonetheless, antifascist ideology, which was instrumentalized for political ends, provided a possibility to speak about the Nazi crimes against Jews specifically. It served as an arena for Lithuanian Jews to commemorate the Holocaust and to present, at least partly, their narrative of the past. This contributed to a far richer understanding of World War II and the Holocaust in Soviet Lithuania than it is usually believed.

Medialization of the Ninth Fort as a Site of Memory in Soviet Lithuania: Narrative(s) of Male Martyrdom

The memories of victims in the Ninth Fort were channeled through many different forms of media. The majority of Soviet publications, memoirs, documentaries, and feature-length films based on the history of the Ninth Fort were re-

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43 Yad Vashem, "The Righteous Among the Nations: The Karpavičius Family," Yad Vashem, accessed October 18, 2016, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4022641.

44 Yad Vashem, "The Righteous Among the Nations. The Karpavičius Family."

45 See footnote no. 5 of this chapter.

46 George Kadish documented the life of the inmates of the Kaunas Ghetto. He secretly took pictures with his handmade camera through the buttonhole of his coat or over the window-sill. After the war, he emigrated to the USA, however, some of his pictures remained in Soviet Lithuania.

47 There were more publications related to the Holocaust that managed to avoid censorship in Soviet Lithuania. One of the most prominent cases was the book published by Sofija Binkienė about the rescuers of Lithuanian Jews, published in 1967. See Sofija Binkienė, ed., *Ir be ginklo kariai* [Untitled fighters] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1967).

leased after the opening of the museum. It might be argued that media coverage and publicity were conceived of by the communist authorities as the public program accompanying the exhibition at the Ninth Fort. That program was aimed at popularizing the museum within Soviet Lithuanian society as well as attracting international attention, with some of the books on the Ninth Fort being translated into English.[48]

The central narrative of the Ninth Fort Museum, transmitted through different media, was the escape of 64 prisoners on December 25, 1943. Most of these escapees were Jewish prisoners who were interned in the Ninth Fort and were ordered to dig up the bodies of exterminated people from mass graves and cremate them. This was part of the Nazi operation, known as "Operation 1005," which was supposed to help cover up the mass murders. The operation began in the fall of 1943 with the approach of the Red Army of the Soviet Union. Jewish prisoners, mainly brought to the Ninth Fort from the Kaunas ghetto, were ordered to burn the bodies of their fellow Jews. They resided in a number of cells in the cellar of the fortress along with a number of Jewish prisoners from the Red Army. When they could not stand it any longer, the prisoners decided to escape. Alex Faitelson, one of the organizers of the escape, remembers: "We were very depressed. It could be felt that we were all suffering from a form of fatalism and apathy."[49] After doing a series of test runs in their cells, an escape plan was formed: on the night of Christmas Eve the guards were distracted, the prisoners would exit their cells after the Germans had retired to the guard room and climb the stairs until they reached a locked metal door. They would drill through the metal door, pass through the tunnel, and build ladders needed to climb over the high wall of the fortress. They successfully executed this plan and escaped. Most of the escapees fled to the forest and joined the partisans; others were taken in by local Lithuanians.

This story of wartime heroism and resistance embodied the idiom of martyrology and became an official Soviet narrative of World War II in the Ninth Fort Museum. The narrative voices of this memory were mostly Lithuanian Jewish partisans, although they were publicly defined as communist fighters or *komsomolists*. This narrative was also supported by a dozen of books in large editions on the subject of the Ninth Fort and the escape of the corpse-burners. One

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48 Osias Kaplanas, *The 9th Fort Accuses* (Kaunas: K. Požela Press, 1964). The revised version of this book was published 12 years later: Osias Kaplanas, *The Ninth Fort Accuses* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1976).

49 Alex Faitelson, *The Escape from the IX Fort* (Kaunas: Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, 1998), 52.

of the most important publications was a pamphlet entitled "The Ninth Fort Accuses," which was published in one million copies and translated into four languages.[50] In this publication, the escape is defined by the Soviet authorities as "an act of unbelievable heroism," which revealed to the world "the horrifying crimes of the occupiers and the bourgeois nationalists."[51] This pamphlet, similarly to the exhibition in the museum and other Soviet publications, did not mention the underground antifascist partisan organization of the Kaunas ghetto or the renowned Lithuanian Jewish partisan Chaim Yellin, the leader of the Jewish resistance in the Kaunas ghetto who helped the escapees of the Ninth Fort. The heroization of the escapees and their supporters was a very selective choice made by the Soviet leadership. Faitelson observes that there was a constant fight in organizing the exhibition between the Lithuanian Jewish escapees and Soviet authorities on issues like the leadership and organization of the escape.[52] According to him, the Communist Party wanted "to prove the 'respectable' role played by Lithuanians in the heroic escape" and even turned some non-Jewish Lithuanians who "had nothing to do with organizing the escape" into initiators of the escape from the Ninth Fort.[53]

This narrative additionally reflected on another important feature of the Soviet memorialization of the Nazi occupation, which was the anonymization of victims who were portrayed without ethnicity. The Jewish partisans were amalgamated with the partisans of the Red Army. However, according to Faitelson, the group, which was comprised of 26 Jewish prisoners-of-war, 14 partisans and 17 men from the Kaunas ghetto, including a young boy, 3 women from the Kaunas ghetto, 3 Russians from the vicinity of Jonava, and 1 Polish woman, "differed in character, state of mind, education, manners, their worldview, profession and age. Among them, there were four doctors, a pharmacist, an engineer, a mechanic, an artist, a lawyer, professionals and laymen."[54] However, Faitelson was able to tell his own version of the escape, mentioning the participation of Jews, during commemorative events. The Soviet authorities tolerated his narrative to some extent. On September 16, 1960, he delivered a speech in the auditorium of the Polytechnical Institute of Moscow.[55] During

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50   Kaplanas, *The Ninth Fort Accuses.*
51   Here quoted from Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth,* 406.
52   Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth,* 404–5.
53   Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth,* 405.
54   Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth,* 41–42.
55   Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth,* 148.

the opening of the Ninth Fort Museum in 1959, he explained the escape of 1943. He also served as an official witness of World War II and met with school students.[56] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Faitelson claimed: "The party compelled us to serve as witnesses to forged events. We agreed to this in order to leave some mark in history of the role of the Jews in the general upris-ing against the Nazis."[57]

Another example of medialization of the Ninth Fort was the film *Footsteps in the Night* (Žingsniai naktį), which was created in 1962 by the then young Lithuanian film director Raimondas Vabalas. In the 1960s, the topic of Nazi oc-cupation became very popular in Soviet Lithuanian cinema and this film pre-sented this cinematographic tendency.[58] The screenplay for the film was written by poet and writer Vladas Mozūriūnas and was imposed by the Soviet authori-ties on Vabalas as a graduation work "with requisite to turn Jews into 'Young Communist League fighters from Kaunas.'"[59] The film portrays the escape of prisoners from the Ninth Fort on Christmas Eve in 1943, but in the film only one escapee can be identified as Jewish. The main character of this film, who was identifiably Jewish, carried the name Alex, referring to the real-life protagonist of the escape Alex Faitelson. Film scholar Irina Gradinari notes that in Soviet films, the Jewish figure quite often receives "ethnical designation only through his name," however, he "plays no specific role for the filmic narration and for the expression of Jewish identity."[60]

The main idea of the film was to show Soviet youth the fighting spirit of the *komsomolists* against the Nazi Germans. Antanas Raguotis, who from 1962 to 1968 was a member of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Lithuania, claimed that "this film will play a significant societal role, because [Soviet Lithuanian] youth is well informed about the Ninth Fort, and will watch it with interest."[61] Therefore, it is not surprising that the film was also very well received by the So-

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56 Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth*, 149.

57 Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing but the Truth*, 410.

58 Anna Mikonis-Railienė and Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje: Sistema, filmai, režisieriai* [Film in Soviet Lithuania: System, films, directors] (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2015), 203.

59 Mantė Valiūnaitė, "The Undiscovered Cinema of Lithuanian Director Raimondas Vabalas: Raimondas Va-balas' First Creative Period (1962–1971)," *East European Film Bulletin* 66 (Summer 2016). https://eefb.org/retrospectives/raimondas-vabalas-first-creative-period-1962-1971/.

60 Irina Gradinari, "Der glatte Raum der Revolution: Juden als Figuren politischer Subversion im Film *Die Kommissarin*," in *"Rasse" und Raum: Dynamiken, Formationen und Transformierung anthropologischen Wissens im Raum*, ed. Claudia Bruns (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2016), cited from manuscript.

61 Quoted in Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje*, 207.

viet leadership in Moscow.[62] However, most probably because of the film's melancholic mood and unhappy ending, as the heroic escape was presented as an unsuccessful one, it was not met with such enthusiasm by Soviet Lithuanian audiences as the Soviet authorities had hoped.[63]

In his retrospective interview following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, film director Vabalas stated that he was very dissatisfied with the screenplay of Mozūriūnas. He criticized it especially for its representation of prisoners as an unknown uniform mass of people and not as individual characters, and for the erasure of the Jewishness of the escapees.[64] Vabalas mentioned that during the creation of his film he and his colleagues were of the opinion that the scenes of the shootings between the communists and Nazis in the city of Kaunas that had to be portrayed in the first part of the film were irrelevant, as they did not reflect on what had really happened in the Ninth Fort.[65] Still, he could not confront the prescribed scenario and change its ideological content because communist authorities insisted on it.[66] Therefore, in the second part of his film he focused more on the portraits of the prisoners of the Ninth Fort and discussed the condition of a human being in captivity.[67] He later admitted that he had apologized to members of the Lithuanian Jewish community for such representation of the escape, and that he still regretted not being able to speak directly about the executions of Lithuanian Jews in the Ninth Fort.[68]

Notwithstanding Vabalas' own concerns, Lithuanian film critic Valiūnaitė claims that the film, despite its ideological agenda, was not "naked propaganda" and that the filmmaker "managed to convert the project into his first *auteur* film" because he presented the Nazi occupation in his own cinematic style.[69] For instance, Vabalas managed to import two Jewish actors to his film, Giršas Šarfšteinas and Julis Kacas, who were famous in the Jewish folk theatre in Vilnius. Through the presence of Jewish actors, the director managed to include specifically Jewish aspects of the narrative of the escape from the Ninth Fort.

62   Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje*, 207.
63   Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje*, 207.
64   Eglė Baikštytė, "Interview with Raimondas Vabalas," *Kino pasaulyje*, Lithuanian National Radio and Television, Vilnius: LRT, November 11, 1995, http://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/3393.
65   Baikštytė, "Interview with Raimondas Vabalas."
66   Baikštytė, "Interview with Raimondas Vabalas."
67   Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje*, 208.
68   Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje*, 208.
69   Valiūnaitė, "The Undiscovered Cinema."

Figure 5.3. Former prisoners of the Ninth Fort. From left: M. Kurganovas, P. Krakinovskis, J. Maisteris, I. Veselnickis, A. Faitelson, A. Vilenčiukas, T. Fridmanas, M. Deičas. The photograph was taken in 1959 during the inauguration of the Ninth Fort Museum. Source: Elinas-Eglinis, *Mirties fortuose.* Courtesy of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

Nonetheless, the narration of the escape and the commemorative events in the Ninth Fort were marked not only by ideological constructions of memory but also gendered ones. The Soviet heroes and Nazi victims of the Ninth Fort were usually shown as a certain closed community of men (see figure 5.3). This male perspective on war heroism was a common tendency in the depiction of World War II in the Soviet Union. The Nobel Prize-winning writer Svetlana Alexievich argued in her 1985 book *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II* that war representation in the Soviet Union had no female face.[70] Similarly, Gradinari notices that women during their wartime duties are defined firstly through the private and then through the social dimension, as they are usually presented "as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives or lovers of the soldiers," as well as "objects of love and sexuality."[71] They are likewise portrayed through "female clichés," and are shown as "collecting flowers, doing their hair, dancing, changing their clothes . . . speaking about men and children."[72]

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70 Svetlana Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988).

71 Irina Gradinari, "'Der Krieg hat kein weibliches Gesicht': Die Frau im sowjetischen Kriegsfilm *Im Morgengrauen ist es noch still* von Stanislav Rostočkij," in *Texturen—Identitäten—Theorien: Wortmeldungen aus der jungen Slavistik,* ed. Nina Frieß, et al. (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag, 2011), 343–44.

72 Gradinari, "Der Krieg hat kein weibliches Gesicht," 344.

This gendered narrative is also visible in the photographs of the commemorative events in the Ninth Fort. Even though three women from the Kaunas ghetto and one Polish woman were among the escapees, they remained invisible during the commemoration process. Their main role was to lay flowers next to the monuments of the new museum. Similarly, the voices of female Lithuanian Jewish partisans from the ghettos in Vilnius and Kaunas were also silenced in Soviet Lithuania. They, in contrast to their male comrades, have never published memoirs or publicly witnessed in Soviet times, despite the fact that they actively took part in the resistance. For example, Lithuanian Jewish partisan Fania Brantsovskaya from the Vilnius ghetto remembered in 2005: "we blasted trains and placed explosives in the enemy's equipment. We shot and killed them. Yes, I did, I killed them and did so with ease. I knew that my dear ones were dead and I took revenge for them and thousands others with each and every shot."[73] Despite their active participation in the war, female combatants were denied their role as heroic fighters of World War II and instead were often used in the Soviet Union, including Soviet Lithuania, solely to construct the "identity of masculinity" after the war.[74]

Therefore, it is not surprising that female partisan fighters and female escapees from the Ninth Fort in Soviet Lithuania did not have a possibility to express their memories of the war and were sacrificed for the masculinization of the war's narrative. Even though communist ideology supposedly sought to emancipate women from their traditional role, gender-based discrimination did exist within the Soviet partisan units in the forest. Sara Ginaitė-Rubinson, who fought with "Death to the Occupiers," the partisan battalion of the Kovno ghetto led by Chaim Yellin, remembers: "The women were regarded as weak, frail, and unfit to play a part in difficult and dangerous missions. Their participation in combat was often not appreciated. Even the Jewish partisans were not eager to take women along on dangerous missions far from our base."[75] This gender-based discrimination also remained after the war. Lithuanian literary scholar Solveiga Daugirdaitė, who analyses the situation of women in Soviet Lithuania in her work, observed that: "The Soviet system proclaimed women as equal only on paper but in reality, women's second-class status was very obvious,"

73 Zhanna Litinskaya, "Interview with Fania Brantsovskaya," *Centropa*, February 2005, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.centropa.org/biography/fania-brantsovskaya.

74 Gradinari, "'Der Krieg hat kein weibliches Gesicht," 346.

75 Sara Ginaitė-Rubinson, *Resistance and Survival: The Jewish Community in Kaunas 1941–1944* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 2005), 175.

as women could not attain high political positions and even the wives of the renowned Soviet functionaries did not appear publicly.[76]

Conclusions

The Ninth Fort Museum, which was created by the Soviet Lithuanian elite itself, presented the commemorative idiom of the antifascist ideology. Nevertheless, the commemoration of World War II in the Ninth Fort Museum during the communist period revealed that despite ideological aspects of its exhibitions and their publicization, Jewish victimhood was not entirely erased, and they could commemorate the Holocaust. The museum included Lithuanian Jewish narratives, especially focusing on the heroic fight of the Lithuanian Jewish partisans against the Nazi regime. Jewish narratives were voiced by the survivors themselves during the commemorative events taking place on the ground of the Ninth Fort's site. Their experiences, even if partly censored, also appeared in media and their memoirs were published by the state publishing house. Even if they were aware that they were serving as witnesses to the ideological Soviet narrative of the war, still, they saw it as a possibility to transmit their specific Jewish memories of the historical events and to leave their mark in history. However, this paper has also revealed that the war memory in the Ninth Fort Museum was mostly a narrative of male martyrdom, despite Soviet ideology which presented itself as attempting to liberate women from their traditional roles. During the war, female Jewish combatants were not always welcomed as active fighters either and were regarded as weak and not ready to take part in combat missions. After the war, this discrimination based on gender did not disappear. The memories of the female survivors from the Ninth Fort were neglected and they were excluded as active transmitters of memory during the public commemorative events at this site.

Post Scriptum: Changes in the Memorialization in the 1980s

The narratives presented in the Ninth Fort Museum remained unchanged until the late 1980s, when the fascist-centered narrative was changed to a new nationalist one. This new perception of history focused on the crimes of the commu-

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76 Solveiga Daugirdaitė, *Švystelėjo kaip meteoras: 1965-ieji su Simone de Beauvoir ir Jeanu Pauliu Sartre'u* [It flew like a shooting star: Glimpses from the 1965 visit of Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir] (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2015), 249.

nist regime, and as Lithuanian philosopher Leonidas Donskis observes, the idea that "the Nazis were a lesser evil" prevailed in Lithuania at that time. Communism, on the other hand, was seen as "the only form of real evil for Lithuania."[77]

Thus, after 1984, with the opening of the new memorial complex, the focus of the memorialization in the Ninth Fort shifted from the victims of World War II to the victims of the Stalinist regime. The museum was now composed of two main parts, the Ninth Fort and the Exhibition of Occupations. The Jewish victims were now overshadowed by the memory of the Lithuanian deportees and partisans, which was presented in the Exhibition of Occupations. This exhibition introduces the visitors to the first Soviet occupation in 1940 and the Soviet repressions carried out from 1944 to 1990. The focus of this historical narration lies on the Soviet deportations and the history of Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance. Partisan activities are presented in a very positive light, neglecting the fact that among some of the partisans there were also people responsible for the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews, Poles, and Russians during World War II. Historian Makhotina observes that this historical site, "which had witnessed the suffering of Jews ... had been transformed into a 'temple' of Lithuanian martyrdom."[78]

Today the Ninth Fort Museum is a place with two competing memories. These historical narratives are represented separately, one within the exposition in the cells of the Ninth Fort, which retells the history of the Kaunas fortresses in the interwar period and World War II, including the Holocaust, and the other within the exhibition of Soviet occupations and terror, which actually did not occur directly on the site of the Ninth Fort. This new conceptualization of the Ninth Fort Museum is similar to other Lithuanian history museums today, which "offer a very nationalistic interpretation of recent Lithuanian history" and where "guidelines developed in the late 1980s are still framing the musealization of the Soviet era."[79]

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77 Helena Gindi and Roberta Newman, "The Painful Dilemma of Memory Politics: Interview with Leonidas Donskis [Part II]," YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 7 February 2014, https://www.yivo.org/the-painful-dilemma-of-memory-politics-interview-with-leonidas-donskis-part-ii.

78 Makhotina, "Staging Soviet (Hi)Story in Lithuania."

79 Makhotina, "Staging Soviet (Hi)Story in Lithuania."

Yechiel Weizman

Memory Incarnate: Jewish Sites in Communist Poland and the Perception of the Shoah

In 1952, Maria Kozaczkowa, a local poet from the town of Dąbrowa Tarnowska in southern Poland, composed a poem, titled: *Stara bożnica* (The old synagogue):

In a small town across from the cemetery
An old synagogue stands desolate:
The mere sight of it strikes one with grief and dismay,
....
It still remembers the insane cry of mothers
Who carried their children to their death,
And the scream that returned in a multi-mouthed echo
From the empty houses of the ruined ghetto,
And it cries now with its blind windows
Gazing at the cemetery of those murdered.

W małym miasteczku naprzeciw cmentarza
Stara bóżnica stoi spustoszała:
Już sam jej widok smuci i przeraża,
....
Ona pamięta dotąd płacz obłędny
Matek, co na śmierć niosły swoje dzieci,
I krzyk, co echem powracał stugębnym
Z pustych już domów, w zrujnowanym Getcie,
I teraz płacze ślepymi oknami
Wpatrzona w cmentarz tych—pomordowanych.[1]

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1   Maria Kozaczkowa, *Kwiaty na śniegu* [Flowers in the snow] (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1980), 94–96. I thank Adam Musiał for the English translation.

Figure 6.1. The synagogue in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 2007. The synagogue was renovated in 2012 thanks to a seven million euro grant from the EU. It functions today as a historical museum and cultural center. Photo by Anna Hudyka. Courtesy of the photographer.

Published only in 1980, the poem personifies the old synagogue as an intimate witness to the suffering of its resident Jews as it cries, gazes, and remembers. Kozaczkowa also depicted the synagogue as a victim, its body wounded and mutilated, with blind windows. The building's ruined state only emphasizes its melancholic ambiance and buttresses the place's capacity to bear witness to the murder of its Jews. More than merely a "site of memory" (Lieu de Mémoire) according to the well-known definition of the historian Pierre Nora,[2] the old synagogue of Kozaczkowa's poem seems to function as one of the theorist Françoise Choay's "historic monuments," which unlike planned, intentional memorials are witnesses to the past accidentally, by virtue of their existence.[3] This landmark functions not only as a symbolic representation of the past, but also concretely registers the past by recording through an act of projection by the poet, the murder of Dąbrowa Tarnowska's Jews (more than sixty percent of the local population) in the abutting Jewish cemetery. The synagogue functions as a daily reminder of Jewish fate, in which the nearby local communities were

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2   Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

3   Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, trans. Lauren M. O'Connell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

intimately implicated.[4] It becomes what Dylan Trigg defines as "a place of trauma," a space that "gathers the nightmare of trauma through its own materiality."[5]

Drawing on rare personal accounts, this article elucidates the ways in which the material Jewish remnants, mainly deserted cemeteries and ruined synagogues, harbored concrete recollections of the Jews' murder and acquired a unique social function in mediating and negotiating the perception of the Holocaust in communist Poland. Whereas the events of the Shoah were scarcely discussed publicly by local Polish communities, the daily interaction of Poles with abandoned Jewish cemeteries and crumbling synagogues, and the discussions of these sites' future, revealed the endurance of the unsettling aftermath of the violent disappearance of the Jews. Focusing on small provincial towns—where Jews often constituted around half or even more of the local population until 1939—the sources analyzed herein demonstrate the extent to which Jewish sites became strongly identified with memories of the extermination of the local Jews, becoming evocative metonyms of their fate for their former neighbors. Through their mere presence, these forsaken spaces were daily and vivid (often unwanted) reminders of what had happened to the absent Jewish community, and their gradual neglect and obliteration facilitated the intrusion of the wartime past into the present.[6]

"The Ground is Burning Beneath My Feet"

From the early days of the war, Jewish religious sites became bound with violent connotations. Jewish cemeteries were not only targeted and desecrated by the German occupation forces, who frequently used *matzevot* (Jewish headstones) for construction, but also became preferred places for extermination. In numerous towns, Jews were shot to death in the cemetery and buried there in mass graves, together with those who died in the ghettos. Right after the war, bodies

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4   Jan Grabowski describes the murder of Dąbrowa Tarnowska's Jews, showing the substantial involvement of the local Polish population from the nearby villages in the murder and tracking down of Jews who survived the liquidation of the ghetto and sought shelter in the countryside. See Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

5   Dylan Trigg, "The Place of Trauma: Memory, Hauntings, and the Temporality of Ruins," *Memory Studies* 2 no. 87 (2009): 99.

6   For an extensive analysis of the social function, perception, and symbolic status of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in communist Poland, see Yechiel Weizman, *Unsettled Heritage: Living Next to Poland's Material Jewish Traces after the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).

of Jews exhumed from mass graves in forests and roadsides were often reburied in designated sections inside Jewish cemeteries. Thus, the sites that prior to the war had reflected the continuity and rootedness of the community were now marked with mass murder and became contaminated, in the most tangible sense of the word.

Already during the war and especially after, abandoned Jewish cemeteries all over Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe were being regularly plundered and damaged by local non-Jewish residents, who were stealing *matzevot*, digging up the graves in search of gold, and using the sites as garbage dumps or pasture places for livestock.[7] The widespread extent of this phenomenon instigated protests from Jews and was officially condemned by the temporary communist-led government, which constantly urged mayors to secure Jewish cemeteries against what were considered acts of "profanation."[8] Nevertheless, most of the local authorities were reluctant to do so and even took an active part in the exploitation of the cemeteries for municipal needs. The ability and commitment of state officials to supervise the protection of Jewish burial sites were limited and could not have challenged the gradual effacement of the Jewish burial sites in the long run.[9]

The fate of the thousands of synagogues in Poland also reflected the rupture of Jewish life in the country. Many of them were severely damaged already during the war and converted by the Nazi German occupiers into warehouses, stables, and other facilities. The Germans also deliberately demolished or burned down other synagogues, including all the hundreds of ancient wooden syna-

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7   Eleonora Bergman and Jan Jagielski, "Traces of Jewish Presence: Synagogues and Cemeteries from 1944 to 1997," in *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944–2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014), 547–49; Kazimierz Urban, "The Problem of Jewish Cemeteries after World War II," *Argumenta Oeconomica Cracoviensia* 4 (2005): 127. For a thorough examination of the destruction of Jewish cemeteries in Poland during and after the war, see Krzysztof Bielawski, *Zagłada cmentarzy żydowskich* [The extinction of Jewish cemeteries] (Warsaw: Biblioteka Więzi, 2020).

8   For example, in May 1948, following reports of the widespread desecration and plundering of Jewish cemeteries in many towns in the Kraków province by the local populace, the governor's office circulated a letter to all the districts under its jurisdiction requiring that they ensure action was taken to prevent such "barbaric profanation" by fencing off the cemeteries and/or placing a guard at the gate, warning that failure to comply would be punished. State Archive in Katowice (Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach), starostwo powiatowe w Olkuszu, file 1/121, Kraków voivodeship to all districts, May 31, 1948.

9   In a few large cities and towns Jewish congregations resumed their normal activities after the war and continued to use Jewish cemeteries for burial. Although the task of preserving the cemeteries was difficult, congregations did receive some funding for their maintenance from the authorities and Jewish organizations such as the Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) from time to time.

gogues in Poland. After the war, very few synagogues were reused for communal purposes by returning Jews. The majority of the remaining synagogues were soon converted by local authorities and organizations, in many cases without approval from the state, into stores, firefighting stations, and even swimming pools. The repurposing of synagogues, their general neglect, and the inability of the Jewish organizations to take care of them led to their gradual dilapidation and destruction. In several cases, local authorities took action to demolish partly ruined and crumbling synagogues in order to clear space for new construction. Only a few synagogues were officially recognized as historical monuments and thus were preserved by the state. They were usually designated as libraries, archives, museums, and cultural centers and kept some of their original Jewish features.[10]

For Jews returning to their hometowns immediately after the war, the sight of the desecrated cemetery or the ruined synagogue often concretized the feeling of loss and crystallized their understanding that the basic notion of "home" had become shattered.[11] Returning in December 1944 to his hometown Sokółka, close to Białystok, Nissan Tikochinski was struck to see the synagogue where he used to pray, now devastated and used as a grain warehouse. After visiting the destroyed cemetery and locating the broken *matzevot* of his relatives, he wrote: "The ground is burning beneath my feet. I cannot go on anymore, I must get out of here as soon as possible.[12]

New Legal Framework

The new legal reality regarding Jewish property, shaped since the beginning of 1945 by the communist-led Polish provisional government, also contributed to the gradual obliteration of Jewish sites. According to a series of decrees and regulations, culminating in a law from March 8, 1946, all Jewish property, private and communal, came under the category of "abandoned property" (*mienie opuszczone*). Although postwar legislation never specified Jewish assets as a distinct

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10 Bergman and Jagielski, "Traces of Jewish Presence," 562—65; See also Wojciech Wilczyk, *Niewinne oko nie istnieje* [There is no such thing as an innocent eye] (Łódź and Kraków: Atlas Sztuki and Korporacja Ha!Art, 2009).

11 Gabriel N. Finder and Judith R. Cohen, "Memento Mori: Photographs from the Grave," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 20 (2007): 57. On the return of the Jewish survivors to Poland after the war, see Lukasz Krzyzanowski, *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

12 Nissan Tikochinski, "Sokółka—without Jews," in *Sefer Sokółka* [Sokółka memorial book], ed. Ester Mishkinski (Jerusalem: Encyclopedia of Exiles, 1968), 364.

category, the formulation of the law and its applicability made it clear that "abandoned property" was in fact a code name for Jewish property.[13] Jewish houses and other private property, which to a large extent had already been spontaneously appropriated by Poles, were usually allocated to Polish citizens by local authorities, who had to deal with the lack of housing as the result of the war.[14] Communal property (cemeteries, synagogues, and other objects that belonged to the Jewish communities) were for the most part nationalized and moved to the possession of local authorities.[15] No Jewish organization in communist Poland could claim restitution for communal properties, as these organizations were regarded as new entities without any legal connection to prewar Jewish communities.

At the same time, in line with the relatively tolerant policy of the provisional regime toward the Jewish minority during the early postwar years, Jewish congregations could receive a limited right to "use and manage" cemeteries and synagogues for religious and communal needs. By the end of 1946, however, many of the returning Jews were leaving the country *en masse*, discouraged by the atmosphere of insecurity and chaos that reigned in the war-torn country and in particular by the numerous cases of anti-Jewish violence from 1944 to 1947, which peaked with the Kielce pogrom in July 1946.[16] This, and the following waves of Jewish emigration in the late 1940s and mid-1950s have led to the dissolution of dozens of Jewish congregations and to the abandonment of more Jewish sites, which now stood at the disposal of local authorities.

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13   For the legal status of Jewish property after World War II, see Monika Krawczyk, "The Effect of the Legal Status of Jewish Property in Post-War Poland on Polish-Jewish Relations," in *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 791–821. See also Dariusz Stola, "The Polish Debate on the Holocaust and the Restitution of Property," in *Robbery and Restitution: The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe*, ed. Martin Dean, Constantin Goschler, and Philipp Ther (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 240–59.

14   For the fate of primarily private Jewish property in Poland during the war and early postwar years, see Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i Kasa: O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych, 1939–1950* [Keys and cashbox: On Jewish property in Poland under the German occupation and during the early post-war years, 1939–1950] (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2014).

15   For the legal status of Jewish cemeteries in Poland since 1945, see Małgorzata Bednarek, *Sytuacja prawna cmentarzy żydowskich w Polsce 1944–2019* [The legal status of Jewish cemeteries in Poland 1944–2019] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2020).

16   On postwar anti-Jewish violence, see Andrzej Żbikowski, "The Post-War Wave of Pogroms and Killings," in *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 67–94; David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26 (1998): 43–85. On the Kielce pogrom, see Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą: Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* [Under the curse: A social portrait of the Kielce pogrom] (Warsaw: Czarna Owca, 2018). On the general atmosphere of fear and terror in Poland during the early postwar years, see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga: Polska 1944–1947* [The great terror: Poland 1944–1947] (Kraków: Znak, 2012).

Such Profanation is Unacceptable

The plunder of Jewish cemeteries by the local population and the attempts by local authorities and firms to use them for various purposes occasionally provoked moral condemnations from non-Jewish Polish citizens. In October 1946, a local physician from Chmielnik, a town close to Kielce where Jews constituted the majority until their deportation, wrote to the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Warsaw (Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, CKŻP[17]), informing them about the destruction of the Jewish cemetery. He reported that local peasants were removing headstones and dismantling the wall of the cemetery in order to use the materials for their private purposes. What bothered him the most, however, was the damage to the mass grave of Jews murdered by the Germans: "At this cemetery, among others, there are three common graves of those murdered during the deportation of Jews from Chmielnik in October 1942."[18]

Explicit recollection of the fate of the local Jewish community appears also in a letter by a group of residents from the nearby village of Iwaniska, who in 1951 addressed the Jewish congregation in Łódź. During the war, the entire Jewish community—more than half of the village—had been murdered by the Germans. The letter wished to alert the Łódź Jewish community of the "shameful and barbaric desecration of the Jewish cemetery" by local residents ("Hyenas" according to the writers), who were plundering the graves and pilfering the *matzevot*: "the cemetery has existed for hundreds of years and it has been in use until the deportation (*wysiedlenie)* of the Jews."[19] The petitioners mentioned the names of the people responsible for these acts and urged the Jews to take actions against them. "We call upon the Jewish congregation to take legal action in order to punish these people. . . . We cannot tolerate such damage to the sanctity of the dead." Apart from the rarity of this moral outcry and attempt to defend a Jewish resting place, the letter is also unique for its reference to the fate of the village's Jews during the war with the term *wysiedlenie*. While *wysiedlenie* (which could also be translated literally as "resettlement") does not wholly encapsulate the horrors of the Jews' final journey, the mere mentioning of the Jew-

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17   The central committee was the official political and social representative of the Jews in the country between 1944–1950 and was active in rehabilitating Jewish private and communal life after the Holocaust.

18   Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereafter AŻIH), CKŻP XVI, file130, October 22, 1948.

19   Archiwum akt nowych, Urząd do Spraw Wyznań (Archive of Modern Records, Ministry of Religious Affairs, hereafter AAN, UdW), file 9/357, August 20, 1951.

ish tragedy is noteworthy and appears to underpin the moral injustice of vandalizing the resting place of the dead.

Although rare, such overt references to the fate of local Jews periodically appeared in similar protest letters, like those accompanying reports of local, failing Jewish cemeteries, which in the course of several years after the war continued to deteriorate and were systematically obliterated and losing their original characteristics.

Such was the fate of the Jewish cemetery in Parczew, in eastern Poland. Until the outbreak of World War II, fifty percent of the population of Parczew were Jews. Most of them were killed at the extermination site Treblinka, and around 500 were shot to death by the Germans and buried inside the Jewish cemetery. Some 200 Jews returned to Parczew after the war, but almost all of them soon left after the pogrom of February 5, 1946, when Polish partisans from the anti-communist underground, the "Organization for Freedom and Independence" (Zrzeszenie Wolność i Niezawisłość, WiN) murdered three Jews in the town.[20] A few years later, at the beginning of the 1950s, the partly destroyed cemetery was used by local peasants as a pasture place for cows and horses while the municipality installed public toilets on the site of the cemetery. After complaints by Jewish representatives from Lublin, the town was ordered to dismantle the toilets and to keep the animals from pasturing inside, but the place continued to be used for other purposes.[21] On April 26, 1955, Stanisław Dowidziuk, a peasant from a village close to Parczew wrote a letter to the popular radio program *Fala 49*, in which he protested against the recent installment of a marketplace on the site of the cemetery:

> I would like to bring to your attention, that here in Parczew—they built a marketplace on the Jewish cemetery in a very shameful way . . . there in the cemetery, many Jews were killed by the Germans, maybe even thousands, and today people place wagons there. Everybody is saying that they shouldn't do it. It doesn't matter if someone is Jewish or not, he is still a human being. . . . I apologize for my spelling mistakes. I'm a peasant from the village.[22]

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20 Alina Cała and Helena Datner-Śpiewak, eds., *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce, 1944–1968: Teksty źródłowe* [History of the Jews in Poland, 1944–1968: Primary sources] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1997), 39–40.

21 State Archive in Lublin (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie), Presidium of the Voivodeship National Council (Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w Lublinie), file 43, voivodeship to district, May 14, 1953.

22 AAN, UdW, file 22/447, April, 26, 1948. The letter and the ensuing correspondence can also be found in Kazimierz Urban, *Cmentarze żydowskie, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944–1966: Wybór materiałów* (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos," 2006)*, 490–91.

The identification of the cemetery as a murder site appears also in another letter addressed to the national radio station a year earlier by a group of anonymous citizens from Warta, a town not far from Łódź, whose Jewish community was half of what it used to be before the war. Unlike the previous letter, which was written in very simple language, this one was written in a much more sophisticated Polish. It also expressed concern regarding "disrespect towards the Jewish cemetery."

> The fence was dismantled almost completely by several citizens who should be brought to justice for doing that. And even worse than that: cows, horses, goats, and pigs are taken to graze there. Such profanation is unacceptable. . . . In this cemetery lay Jews who were hanged during the Nazi occupation. . . . Those citizens have no compassion to let them rest in peace.[23]

The writers of these letters were not just directing their anger against the violation of the universal taboo of harming the place of the dead. Rather, it was the damage done to the resting place of Jewish victims and the memory of their murder that triggered their emotional reaction. The imprinting of the cemetery with the concrete events of the Shoah strengthened the moral imperative felt by the writers about its desecration and turned the destruction of the cemetery as tantamount to the obliteration of the memory of the murdered Jews.

Poles from every region, social class, and age group addressed these letters to Polish authorities, media organs, and Jewish organizations.[24] As openly discussing such issues was considered sensitive, some letters were penned anonymously, though most writers were unafraid to identify themselves by name. It should be noted that, statistically speaking, these texts cannot be seen as examples of a wider phenomenon. Nevertheless, while these few letters did not represent a broad reaction in Polish society, they had a deep significance. Such individual voices function as "indictors of meaning which can potentially assume general dimensions," according to the Italian historian Edoardo Grendi.[25] As Carlo Ginzburg, another Italian historian, writes, "Even a limited case can be representative." According to Ginzburg, a limited case "permits us to

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23 AAN, UdW, file 19/482, August 17, 1954.

24 On the phenomenon of citizens' letters protesting the misuse of Jewish cemeteries, see also Bielawski, *Zagłada cmentarzy żydowskich*, 177–88.

25 Quoted in Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 109.

define the latent possibilities" of a larger phenomenon and to disclose its historical potentiality.[26]

The significance of recalling the murder of the local Jews in the above letters is noteworthy given the level of political and psycho-social censorship and the silencing mechanisms that did not encourage any unsupervised public discourse on the Shoah.[27] "After the war," writes Jan Tomasz Gross, "a quiet social agreement was achieved—of course, it was never manifested explicitly, but it was affirmed by experience, daily practices, language of simple people and representative of the authorities and pejorative common views regarding Jews . . . to put aside the whole 'Jewish issue' in the very general sense."[28] Openly discussing the fate of the Jews was understood to be undesired and dangerous.[29] It had the potential to open up debate over the behavior and morality of Poles towards their Jewish neighbors during the war, to emphasize their material gains from seizing Jewish property, and to undermine the supremacy of Polish suffering—a central myth in the country's national narrative. While the Shoah was not completely absent from public discussions in communist Poland, it was almost never dealt with outside of certain cultural and intellectual circles, and especially not in those small provincial towns where Jews had previously often formed more than half of the local population.[30] Given this context, the above letters, however scarce, provided a unique and alternative channel to engage with the silenced wartime past, revealing how people recognized the history of the Shoah in the physical traces Jews had left behind.

While local initiatives to commemorate the Shoah were rare until the 1980s, the few grassroot memorialization projects undertaken by Polish communities usually centered on Jewish cemeteries, being both the most tangible traces of

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26 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxi.

27 Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, "Holocaust Consciousness among Polish Youth after the 1989 Collapse of Communism," in *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 722.

28 Jan Tomasz Gross, *Strach: Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie, Historia moralnej zapaści* (Krakow: Znak, 2006), 304. This quote doesn't appear in the English translation of the book: Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006).

29 Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, "Melancholic Nationalism and the Pathologies of Commemorating the Holocaust in Poland," in *Imaginary Neighbors: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust,* ed. Dorota Glowacka and Joanna Zylinska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 302.

30 On Polish historiography of the Holocaust during communism, see Natalia Aleksiun, "Polish Historiography of the Holocaust: Between Silence and Public Debate," *German History* 22, no. 3 (2004): 406–32; Stephan Stach, "'The Spirit of the Time Left its Stamp on these Works': Writing the History of the Shoah at the Jewish Historical Institute in Stalinist Poland," *Remembrance and Solidarity Studies: Studies in 20th Century European History*, no. 5 (2017): 185–212.

Jews and often former killing sites. In 1958 in Kolbuszowa, a small town in southeast Poland where Jews had made up forty percent of the population before the war, townspeople erected a monument inside the Jewish cemetery on the place where more than a thousand Jews had been shot to death and buried in mass graves by the Germans between 1942 and 1943. The monument clearly states what the fate of the Jewish townsfolk was, while at the same time integrating the Jews into Polish martyrology. The inscription on the monument honors the "Polish citizens of Jewish nationality, victims of the fascist terror of 1943.

Figure 6.2. A memorial for the Jewish victims, erected in 1958 in the Jewish cemetery in Kolbuszowa, 2016. Photo by the author.

1958, the people of Kolbuszowa"[31] (see figure 6.2). Similarly in 1967, local inhabitants in Bielsk-Podlaski (close to Białystok) erected a memorial inside the Jewish cemetery, honoring the "Polish citizens of Jewish nationality" who were shot to death and buried in unmarked graves by the Germans. In the same year, local authorities in Szydłowiec—once a predominantly Jewish town close to Radom—built a large monument decorated with a Star of David in the Jewish cemetery on top of the mass grave of hundreds of Jews murdered by the Germans. The writing on the monument read:[32]

> On the 42nd anniversary of the mass murder of 150 Jews, the townspeople of Szydłowiec and the county pay tribute to around 16,000 Polish citizens of Jewish origin from Szydłowiec and its area executed in the extermination camps and murdered by the Nazi criminals, between the years 1939–1943. Szydłowiec, March 21, 1967.

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31 I became aware of this memorial thanks to a local drunken man who guided me to the cemetery during my visit to Kolbuszowa in 2017.

32 A year after the establishment of the memorial in Szydłowiec, it was smashed to pieces by unknown perpetrators, and later rebuilt in 1969.

These exceptional local initiatives stood in contrast to the common commemorative language of those years that blurred the specificity of the Jewish fate. These memorials also challenged the prevailing nationalistic discourse in 1960s Poland that tended to polonize the Holocaust and emphasize the sacrifice and victimhood of the Polish nation. While exceeding the normative perceptions of the war at the time, these acts perhaps more than anything reflected the limitations of any official commemorative policy to dictate a unified mnemonic narrative and to control the ways in which local communities remembered their past.

Open Door to the Abyss

The ravages of time and nature, a general lack of interest by the authorities, and the inability of the dwindling Jewish communities to protect their cemeteries and synagogues all led to the disappearance of the material remnants of the Jews from the Polish landscape. While many of them were demolished and erased by the authorities or due to plunder, others were slowly encircled by thickets of trees and bushes, turning into wild urban enclaves (see figure 6.3). The reduction of Jewish space to the physical and symbolic periphery of society in many ways reflected the remote presence of the memory of the Holocaust and the former Jewish communities in the local consciousness. It was "a sort of Hole, an illegible stain on the towns' map," wrote Adam Bartosz from Tarnów, describing the symbolic status of the local Jewish cemetery.[33] Many Poles who grew up in former "Jewish towns" after the war were simply unaware that the majority of the town's inhabitants had recently been exterminated. Often they were only aware of their former Jewish neighbors and their tragic end to the extent that they encountered their few physical traces, mainly cemeteries. Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, born in Biłgoraj in eastern Poland in the late 1950s described this relationship:

> The Jewish cemetery remained abandoned, nobody's—in other words unneeded. . . . As children we rode there several times a year on our bicycles to experience an unusual, slightly thrilling feeling. . . . We stood at the border of the cemetery looking down into that melancholy, rubble-strewn ground. Each of us felt the tension: the antechamber of a mystery stood open

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33 Adam Bartosz, "This was the Tarnów Shtetl," in *Reclaiming Memory: Urban Regeneration in the Historic Jewish Quarters of Central European Cities*, ed. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jacek Purchla (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2009), 353–54.

Figure 6.3. The Jewish cemetery in Sokółka, 2014. Photo by the author.

> before us. From that place, everything led to the unknown. . . . We entered
> it solemnly, with gravity and with something like fear. . . . The Jewish cem-
> etery was like an open door to the abyss.[34]

The description of the cemetery is absorbed with an enchanting and haunting
ambience. The encounter of the children with this intimidating and exotic lost
world in the middle of the forest seems to evoke a sensation of an untold somber
secret. Already before the war, the perception of Jewish cemeteries by their non-
Jewish neighbors in the provinces was often a combination of fear and respect,
fascination and awe, but with the absence of the Jews, this ambivalent percep-
tion seemed to be all the more charged and mysterious.[35] The encounters with
the cemetery led Kwiatkowski and his friends to dig out scarce fragmentary
memories from their families about the extermination of sixty percent of the
town's citizens. Their fate appeared to them as "some unfamiliar catastrophe"
and as a "hasty death that passed into total oblivion."[36]

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34 Piotr Kwiatkowski, "The Jewish Cemetery," in *Under One Heaven: Poles and Jews*, ed. Cezary Gawryś and
    Piotr Dumala (Warsaw: Więź, 1998) 254–55.

35 Alina Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 141–42.

36 Kwiatkowski, "The Jewish Cemetery," 255.

A Turning Point

During the different epochs of the communist years, the official policy regarding the status of Jewish religious sites was undergoing significant changes. While in the first postwar years the regime occasionally blocked attempts by local bodies to designate Jewish sites for everyday purposes, after the political events of 1956 and the de-Stalinization of the political system, government officials were more inclined to approve such requests. During those years, many synagogues were demolished and cemeteries liquidated.[37] This trend was accompanied by a growing number of antisemitic incidents in the 1960s, that manifested also in a rise in the number of vandalization of Jewish cemeteries.[38] Most remaining Jewish sites were left crumbling and neglected.

It was precisely the peak of the anti-Jewish policies of the authorities, however, that marked some turning point in the perception of Jewish sites and the development of Holocaust awareness in Poland. Inspired by the worsening relations between Israel and the Soviet Union following the 1967 Six-Day War and attempting to calm social unrest and student protests against the imposed censures and restrictions, the regime launched the orchestrated "Anti-Zionist" campaign, which targeted Jews in the Party and state apparatus. These events were accompanied by an outburst of antisemitism and the denunciation of Jewish citizens as a "fifth column." In an attempt to "cleanse the ranks" and re-legitimize the regime, thousands of Jews were publicly expelled from their workplaces. Eventually around 13,000 emigrated from Poland to Israel and other countries, forced to give up their Polish citizenship. These events have further diminished the size of the Jewish population and severely impaired the communal structures and strength of the remaining Polish Jews.[39]

While the events of 1968 were followed by a hardening of the tone concerning Jewish issues and the strengthening of nationalistic tendencies, it also gener-

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37 Urban, *Cmentarze żydowskie*, 383; For the effects of the events of 1956 on Polish Jewry, see Audrey Kichelewski, "A Community under Pressure: Jews in Poland, 1957–1967," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 21 (2008): 162; Grzegorz Berendt, "The impact of the 1956 Liberalization of Poland's Political System on the Jewish Population," in *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 419–50.

38 Kichelewski, "A Community under Pressure," 176–77.

39 On the events of March 1968 and their implications for Polish Jews, see Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 75–88; Dariusz Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967–1968* [The anti-Zionist campaign in Poland 1967–1968] (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2000). See also Leszek W. Gluchowski and Antony Polonsky, eds., "1968: Forty Years After," special issue, *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 21 (2008).

ated a growing interest and preoccupation with Jewish issues, the Holocaust, and the situation of Jewish sites.[40] The sight of yet another mass wave of Jewish emigrants leaving Poland and the public expression of antisemitism received international criticism and attracted worldwide attention to the poor situation of the Jewish community and its material vestiges in the country.[41] Disturbed by these events and motivated by a growing concern for the remaining Polish Jews, Jewish organizations and Jews from Western countries became preoccupied with the issue.[42] They wrote urgent letters to Polish authorities, either directly or through Western diplomats and politicians, in which they frequently argued that the neglect of Jewish sites constituted an insult to the victims of the Holocaust. The regime, weakened by a struggling economy and ongoing social unrest, reacted to those voices very seriously. Strongly believing in the influence of Jewish organizations on Western governments and fearing the "negative effect on the political and economic interests of our country,"[43] Polish authorities began to show some interest in the commemoration of the Holocaust and the situation of the Jewish sites. In 1976, the Ministry of Religious Affairs published a binding regulation prohibiting any use of Jewish cemeteries for anything other than their intended purpose and stressed that the state's official policy was now to preserve those sites.[44]

This awareness of the problematic state of Jewish sites in politics coincided with another phenomenon that was taking shape at the same time on a grassroots level. In the aftermath of the violence of the 1968 events and the growing disillusionment with the Communist Party, the opposition to the regime intensified among circles within society and was expressed, among other things, in a collective "rediscovering" of traces of Poland's multi-religious and multi-national past.[45] Dealing with Jewish culture, in particular, was perceived by parts of society as a political act and as an attempt to contend with the communist

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40 The aftermath of the events of 1968 has also led to some revival of Jewish awareness and identity among the younger generations of Poles of Jewish origins. See Rachel Rothstein, "'Am I Jewish?' and 'What Does it Mean?': The Jewish Flying University and the Creation of a Polish-Jewish Counterculture in Late 1970s Warsaw," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 8, no. 2 (July 2015): 85–111.

41 Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 92–93.

42 Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 174.

43 Quoted in Meng, *Shattered Spaces*, 175.

44 AAN, UdW, file 132/268, November 12, 1976.

45 Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 65.

version of national heritage and martyrology.[46] As part of these emerging cultural sensibilities, Polish intellectuals, social activists, and ordinary citizens were becoming interested in the situation of Jewish heritage sites in the former shtetls and were trying to raise awareness of their deteriorating conditions. In 1974, while visiting Łańcut (South-East Poland) on All Saints' Day (November 1), the journalist Barbara Nawrocka-Dońska was disturbed by the sight of the town's Jewish necropolises and wrote a long letter of complaint to the authorities.[47] "When Poland glows with candlelight," she asked, "this is how we pay homage to the place of mass murder of Polish Jews in Łańcut—with a void, neglect and oblivion?" She suggested involving local high school students in cleaning up and taking care of the mass graves of Jews located in the Jewish cemetery in order to give the students a "painful example on the dangers of nationalism" and to combat antisemitic views that she herself had encountered in Łańcut.[48]

These initiatives to reconstruct Jewish spaces were part of a larger project of social reform that became increasingly common towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, as the regime was continuing to lose public support. The dramatic developments in Poland, like the rise of the Solidarity movement and the development of a social and political opposition, could be seen as yet another turning point in the development of popular discourse regarding Poland's Jewish issue. What started as occasional voices during the 1950s protesting the profanation of Jewish cemeteries gained momentum following the 1968 events. In the 1980s, they became a major social phenomenon that included both intellectuals from the city and ordinary Poles from the countryside.[49] Raising awareness of the state of Jewish sites was perceived as part of the broader project to incorporate Jews as a unique yet cohesive part of "real" Polish history and culture, repressed under communist manipulations and censorship.[50] An ad that appeared in 1981 in the official newspaper of the Solidarity movement *Tygodnik Solidarność*, called on citizens to provide information on the physical state of Jewish burial sites across the country. The initiators of the project were activists in the newly founded Warsaw-based Committee for the Care of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments in Poland,

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46   Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 93–94.

47   In Poland, as well as in other Catholic countries, there is a strong tradition of visiting cemeteries on All Saint's Day and placing candles on family graves.

48   State Archive in Rzeszów (Archiwum Państwowe w Rzeszowie), Urząd Wojwódzki w Rzeszowie, file 58, November 9, 1974.

49   Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 97.

50   Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*, 18.

headed by Jan Jagielski and Eleonora Bergman from the Jewish Historical Institute. The committee received around 800 letters from all over the country, which painted a grim picture of the advanced neglect and destruction of most of Poland's Jewish cemeteries.[51]

Apart from providing factual information regarding the largely poor physical state of Jewish cemeteries, these letters created a collective platform for openly contemplating the fate of the Jews at a very local level, demonstrating how Jewish cemeteries had become "historical memorials" of the Shoah. Many of the letter writers were clearly motivated by a wish to commemorate the local Jewish community and recalled in detail the murder of their neighbors. The feeling of moral injustice caused by the desecration and lack of care of Jewish resting places was intensified by the stirring up of horrifying memories. Thus, the call for the preservation of Jewish sites was understood to be a symbolic act of laying to rest—that was denied to the victims. On October 17, 1981, for example, a letter was sent to the committee by a certain Halina Z., a resident of Kolno, a small town in north-eastern Poland, whose population before the war had been seventy percent Jewish. She described the situation of the neglected Jewish cemetery, which was being used by local peasants as a cattle pasture, but most of her text concerns the mass grave in the nearby forest where dozens of Jews had been buried together after being executed by the Germans during World War II.[52]

> There is a mass grave here ... nobody ever lights there a single candle. There are no flowers there either. When I was a little girl I used to go there and leave wildflowers on the grave. I used to be mocked very often because of that. . . . My mom told me that the people who are buried there were forced to dig the grave themselves. Many people who were still alive were covered with ground. You could hear at night moans of people trying to get out of the grave. Therefore, I think that someone should please look after this grave.[53]

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51 Bergman and Jagielski, "Traces of Jewish Presence," 551.

52 The letter fails to mention the participation of the local population in the murder of the Jews. In July 1941, as part of the wave of pogroms in North-East Poland following Operation Barbarossa, around thirty Jews from Kolno were brutally killed by their neighbors after being forced to dismantle the statue of Lenin and bury it in the Jewish cemetery. See Sara Bender, "Not Only in Jedwabne: Accounts of the Annihilation of the Jewish Shtetlach in North-eastern Poland in the Summer of 1941," *Holocaust Studies* 19, no. 1 (2013): 16.

53 AŻIH, Historical Monuments Documentation Center (Dział Dokumentacji Zabytków, henceforth DDZ), "Kolno," Letter of Halina Z., September 17, 1981.

Halina Z., like many of the letter-writers, grew up after the Holocaust in a town emptied of its Jews. Yet, she seems to adopt the memories of her mother and projects them onto the cemetery. Although almost forty years have passed since the events of the Shoah, the cemetery continues to serve as a "post-memorial" site, harboring the fate of the Jews, and also functioning as a repository of hostile and antagonist reactions from its locals.[54] The coupling of the call for action and the evocation of the Jews' death appears also in the next letter, written by a citizen from the town of Frampol, close to Lublin, in which he describes the dilapidated Jewish cemetery in his town.

> I would like to inform you about a totally neglected Jewish cemetery in Frampol where there are mass graves of Jews murdered during the occupation. . . . I feel it is the moral obligation of the people of Frampol to take care of the resting place of their murdered co-citizens.[55]

The reference to the murdered Jews as "co-citizens" is significant, perhaps echoing Solidarity's ethos of civil-society and reflecting how an inclusive and pluralist understanding of Polish history and culture, advanced by some fractions of the movement, was filtering down to the periphery. While the growing centrality of the Shoah in the international realms in the 1980s has reinforced nationalist concerns regarding the primacy of Polish-Catholic suffering, at the same time the Jewish wartime tragedy was being gradually integrated into the national canon. In the final decade of communist Poland's existence, the phenomenon of engagement with Jewish issues and the memory of the Jewish victims widened and took on an even more oppositional character.[56] For a growing segment among the Polish public, dealing with Jewish culture and history became a key trope in the project of re-imagining an alternative political and cultural vision and establishing a new sense of Polishness, as the final days of the regime seemed near.

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54 The notion of "post-memory" was coined by literary scholar Marianne Hirsch to describe the phenomenon of cross-generational adoption of traumatic memories. See Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 103–28.

55 AŻIH, DDZ, "Frampol," Letter of Jerzy M., September 8, 1981.

56 In 1983, protesting the government's attempts to use the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising for propaganda purposes, some of the leading members of Solidarity boycotted the official ceremonies and organized an underground commemoration next to Nathan Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, leading to clashes with the police. See Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*, 106–7.

The Final Years

The changing political and cultural circumstances of late communism seemed also to motivate individual activists from the periphery to adopt the reconstruction of Jewish spaces as a personal mission. While already in the early postwar years Polish citizens were trying to preserve Jewish heritage spaces, some as voluntary cemetery caretakers, by the late 1980s their numbers had increased substantially and, unlike earlier activists who personally remembered their Jewish neighbors and witnessed their deportation, for the most part, this new generation grew up after the war and had little to no direct memory of their towns' Jews. Many of them worked alone, but they nevertheless reflected a growing recognition in Poland, for some moral and for others political, that "something must be done" in order to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust—an effort in which the physical and symbolic preservation of Jewish cemeteries and other sites was a key part.

One of those individuals was Ireneusz Ślipek from Warta, who moved to the town as a young child right after the war. In the mid-1980s he started, on his own, to look after the Jewish cemetery that until then was used as a garbage dump and a grazing site (see figure 6.4). He became the unofficial custodian of

Figure 6.4. Warta, the Jewish Cemetery, 1986. Photo by Ireneusz Ślipek. Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum archive, Israel.

the site and literally dedicated his entire life to its protection and reconstruction. In 1986 he was active in foiling the town's attempts to clear the cemetery and to build a symbolic monument instead. One of his protest letters to the mayor reflects how the Shoah functioned as the main impetus of his lifelong project and was embedded in his perception of the cemetery.

> After the horrible massacre of the Jews in the Second World War, the cemetery became a unique memorial that must be protected at any price. Although it was heavily destroyed, it is nevertheless the only testimony to the madness of the occupiers. It is a place of national memory, because here lay the ashes of the victims of the Hitlerite terror. The cemetery, in its current borders, will be a symbolic grave for all of Warta's Jews, around 2,000, who were murdered in Chełmno death camp and in other places. As *corpus delicti* [body of the crime] of a crime against innocent people and their culture, it should never be destroyed, but cherished.[57]

Finally, with the help of Jewish organizations, the office of religious affairs prevented the mayor from advancing his plans and the cemetery remained intact. Ślipek, however, was often mocked due to his actions and was considered a controversial and problematic person in town.[58] His neighbors harassed him and placed dead rats next to his door.[59] Ślipek was not the only activist to be isolated because of his involvement in the commemoration of the Jews and the Holocaust. The growing engagement with the Jewish past and the increasing centrality of the Holocaust in the public sphere in the late 1980s seemed to arouse antagonism and tensions at the local and national level. The screening of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* in 1985 and the publication of Jan Błonski's ground-breaking essay "The Poor Poles look at the Ghetto" in 1987 brought forward the question of responsibility of Poles for the fate of the Jews during the war, and aroused both a collective soul-searching but also defensive and hostile reactions.[60]

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57   AAN, UdW, file 132/312, July 19, 1986.
58   AAN, UdW, file 132/312, April 20, 1988.
59   Ada Holtzman, *The Jewish Cemetery of Warta* (Tel-Aviv: Cemeteries' Documentation Press, 2006), 18, 58.
60   Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 110–16; Błonski's essay, which was printed in the weekly Catholic magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*, is an interpretation of the poem "Poor Christians look at the Ghetto" written in 1943 by the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz. For an English translation of the essay, see Jan Błonski, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto," in *"My Brother's Keeper?" Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, ed. Antony Polonski (London: Routledge, 1990), 34–52.

Figure 6.5. Ireneusz Ślipek (first from the left) during preservation works in the Jewish Cemetery of Warta, 1987. Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum archive, Israel.

Against this backdrop of heated discussions and democratization at the end of communist rule, local attempts to protect Jewish spaces threatened to evoke issues that were still considered unthinkable at the time, such as the direct participation of Poles in the murder of their neighbors. On September 21, 1986, Halina Masztalerz wrote a long and emotional letter addressed to the Jewish theater in Warsaw, trying to inform the Jewish community of the poor situation of a mass grave of Jews in a forest near Rajgród, a village in the north-eastern corner of the country.[61] The grave, she wrote, was systematically and constantly being trashed and devastated by local firms and citizens, who were using the site as a garbage dump. The significance of this exceptional letter, however, lies in its recollection of the Jews' murder, in the summer of 1941.[62]

> The crime was committed by Germans, but in a cooperation with criminals
> from Rajgród—Poles. It is hard for me to write it, but unfortunately this is
> how it was. I was eleven years old at that time and I saw one group of men

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61 The woman apologized for addressing the letter to the theater, saying that this was the only Jewish institute she knew.

62 On the pogrom in Rajgród, see Bender, "Not Only in Jedwabne," 22.

being led to their death. Later, I heard from the elderly people how they died. Their heads had been chopped with spades. I saw the holes in which they were buried. When the criminals returned to the village after the execution, they came to us . . . and they warned my mother that if she would tell who murdered the Jews they would do the same to all of us. . . . My mother was always frightened to say anything about it. . . . But I always tried to defend that place. I am constantly thinking about the monument that would rise there one day. This forest is a living history page that ought to be passed to the next generations, so a brother will never kill his own brother again. . . . No garbage dump should be there.[63]

Following the letter, the matter was brought to the attention of the Main Commission for the Persecution of Nazi Crimes, but a full-scale investigation was never opened and the story of the Polish pogrom in Rajgród remained unknown for the time. Only much later, after communism, did the issue of the direct participation of Poles in the killing of Jews become a matter of public discussion.[64] The above letter was, in many ways, ahead of its time, but it did expose the explosive potential of the material Jewish remnants and burial spaces to reveal well-known but unspoken haunting local episodes.[65] In the years to come, with the disclosure of more cases of involvement of Poles in the Shoah, the dual function of Jewish sites would only become more polarized—as manifestations of a

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63   AAN, UdW, file 132/238, September 21, 1986.

64   In recent years, Polish scholars have revealed many incidents during the war in which the local Polish population was involved in the murder, persecution, and robbery of Jews. Their research has shown that a substantial number of these incidents occurred in small peripheral towns where the killers often knew their victims beforehand. See Jan Grabowski, *Na posterunku: Udział polskiej policji granatowej i kryminalnej w zagładzie Żydów* [On the post: The participation of the Polish blue and criminal police in the Holocaust] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2020); Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* [Night without end: The fate of Jews in selected counties of occupied Poland] (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001); Barbara Engelking-Boni, "Murdering and Denouncing Jews in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (2011): 433–56; Barbara Engelking-Boni and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Zarys krajobrazu: Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów, 1942–1945* [Outline of the landscape: The Polish countryside and the Holocaust, 1942–1945] (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews.*

65   In September 2014, a memorial stone was erected in the site of the Jewish cemetery in Rajgród by the descendants of Rajgród's Jews and Jewish organizations in Poland. Only two months later it was defaced by unknown perpetrators. After it was renovated, it was again vandalized on several occasions in 2015–16. See "Pomnik upamiętniający Żydów w Rajgrodzie zdewastowany: Znowu [A monument commemorating the Jews in Rajgród was devastated]," *Gazeta Wyborcza Białystok*, May 27, 2016, http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/1,35241,20143961,pomnik-upamietniajacy-zydow-w-rajgrodzie-zdewastowany-znowu.html.

pressing ethical imperative in the present on the one hand, and on the other, as repositories of a dissonant heritage and deeply disturbing past.

The sudden and violent disappearance of Jews from towns where they had once been an integral part of the landscape, the different reactions of Poles to the persecution of their neighbors, and the question of Jewish property after the war aroused a "profound moral disturbance" and did not encourage open discussions on the Shoah.[66] Jewish material remnants, however, in some sense preserved the ambivalent memory of the Shoah at the local level, their dilapidated state reminding of the extreme circumstances by which the Jews had disappeared. The encounter with these neglected relics evoked a sense of antagonism and denial but also, as the above examples showed, triggered rare recollections of the fate of the local Jewish community. Into the late communist years, Jewish ruins continued increasingly to generate and mediate this alternative commemorative discourse on a local level, the beginnings of a much broader and more public and contested reckoning with the Shoah that would take place in the decades since the end of the communist regime.

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66   Michael C. Steinlauf, "Teaching about the Holocaust in Poland," in *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua Zimmerman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 263.

Part Three

Artistic Representations

Anja Tippner

Writing a Soviet Holocaust Novel: Traumatic Memory, the Search for Documents, and the Soviet War Narrative in Anatolii Rybakov's *Heavy Sand*

Literature and the Holocaust in the Soviet Union: The Example of Rybakov

Literature came to play a significant role in establishing the collective memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, since historical writings on the subject were scarce. Soviet Jewish writers like Vasily Grossman, Ilya Ehrenburg, Anatolii Kuznetsov, Boris Slutskii, Masha Rol'nikaite, and Anatolii Rybakov succeeded in keeping alive a public conversation about the death of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews in the Soviet Union and abroad in the face of an official discourse that mostly remained silent on the topic. As Timothy Snyder writes, "the Holocaust could never become part of the Soviet history of the war."[1] The reasons for this complicated attitude were manifold: Writing about the Holocaust was difficult because public collective memories of the Holocaust were in short supply and public discussion of the killing of Jews was inhibited by many restraints and ideological assumptions. In addition, after the war Russian writers had to contend with a strong antisemitic undercurrent in the Soviet Union, the predominance of a "heroic" war narrative, and the fact that most of the Jewish victims were not exactly "Soviet," as they stemmed from the newly annexed Soviet lands in Western Ukraine, the Baltics, and Belorussia.[2] The subject of the Holocaust, therefore, veered dangerously far from the safe and powerful domain of approved topics of Soviet literature. With regard to World War II, the most prominent

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1   Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Basic Books, 2010), 342.
2   See Maria Ferretti, "The Shoah and the Gulag in Russian Memory," in *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust,* ed. Muriel Blaive, Christian Gerbel, and Thomas Lindenberger (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2011), 32–33.

focus, of course, was that of "heroism" and "sacrifice," never one of victimhood or even a specific "Jewish" fight that transcended the overall Soviet struggle.[3] After the war, a series of wartime memoirs appeared that were based on accounts by members of different nationalities involved in military campaigns on the front. These included collections dedicated to Georgians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, and others, but never to Jews.[4] Histories of Jews who fought in the war and Jewish partisans were suppressed and could only be published after *perestroika*. The Holocaust proved to be a complicated and dangerous topic not only in itself, but also because it was difficult to write about it without mentioning the failure of Soviet citizens to protect their Jewish neighbors, without addressing denunciations and collaboration with the Germans by Soviet citizens, and without stressing German war crimes at a time when socialist Germany had become an ally. Soviet writers tackling the subject thus had to tread lightly and observe the rules of Soviet memorial culture.

These problems notwithstanding, Jewish victims were memorialized in literature, and the ways of memorialization devised by authors like Grossman, Rol'nikaite, and Rybakov should be acknowledged. Importantly, they should be discussed within a framework of Soviet war literature and in the context of changing cultural and political attitudes towards Jews in the Soviet Union, not solely within that of Western Holocaust literature. Rybakov is a fairly typical example of a palimpsestic writing style that fuses public Soviet discourse and private Jewish Holocaust remembrance. Taking this into account, the situation calls for a reassessment of how Rybakov's novel addresses the Holocaust and a need to discuss it within the context of Soviet discourse, as opposed to the Western poetics of Holocaust writing. The way the Holocaust is rendered in literature depends heavily on the way a historical event is itself remembered, which—in the case of the Soviet Union—happened mostly in a circumstantial way. This article, then, argues that Rybakov makes use of tried and tested representations of the war, employing them to promote less approved and critical subjects, such as Jewish life in the shtetl and the Holocaust. His writing style functions very

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3   In particular, the all-inclusive Soviet war narrative made Jews disappear as soldiers, civilians, and most of all as victims, as Amir Weiner has pointed out. See Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 231–32.

4   The topic has been presented most extensively in a collection of essays and testimonies by Gennady Estraikh and Harriet Murav, eds., *Soviet Jews in World War II: Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2014). See also the project *Jews in the Red Army, 1941–1945*, Yad Vashem, The International Institute for Holocaust Research, last accessed March 2022, https://www.yadvashem.org/research/research-projects/soldiers.html.

much in the fashion of Michael Rothberg's "multidirectional memory," that is, by way of "cross-referencing" and borrowing elements of an established memorial discourse[5]—in the case of Rybakov, those of socialist realist narratives—and combining them with representations of Jewish life and death. In this way, he is able to represent topics and memorialize events that are otherwise excluded from public memory. It will be furthermore argued that it is more enlightening to look at Rybakov's achievements rather than to voice more discontent, given that the text can be regarded as a case study in the workings of literary historiography in the USSR. Thus, the guiding questions that are addressed here are: How was the murder of Soviet Jews represented and fictionalized in a discursive environment that did not lend itself to commemorations of the Holocaust? How did Rybakov make use of the aesthetics of late socialist realism to introduce a topic that was hitherto only marginally present among Soviet reading audiences? How was victimhood represented in a culture that favored heroism? How does one write historical fiction if one lacks historiographies and testimonies of the "sayable"[6] that serve as a factual background? How did Rybakov support his claim to facticity? And which events, dates, and texts does he refer to in order to write a Holocaust novel?

Heavy Sand: Finding Facts and Making Use of Soviet Realist Templates

By the time in the 1970s when Rybakov began to write about the Holocaust and the fate of his extended family before and after the war, he had already become a well-known and established writer. Among his achievements were a successful production novel *Voditeli* (The Drivers, 1951) and several very popular children's books, such as *Kortik* (The Dagger, 1948) and *Bronzovaia ptitsa* (The Bronze Bird, 1956), which were turned into films. His early works were well written and firmly rooted in Soviet literary aesthetics and ideology, and he was even awarded the Stalin prize for *The Drivers*. He had honed his writing style and was well aware of what was "sayable," that is, what was and was not permissible for a writer in the Soviet Union. While he deviated thematically from the template of

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5   Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

6   The concept of the sayable/unsayable is used here in a Foucauldian sense in order to describe the ideological practices and the discursive context that characterized Soviet literature. See Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), 48–79.

socialist realism when he chose to write about Jewish life, Jewish fate, and especially the Holocaust, he nevertheless clung to the writing style and socialist realistic aesthetics that he was accustomed to and that had made him popular. He embedded his description of the Holocaust in a family saga that covers several generations and is anchored in a love story. In his post-perestroika memoir, *Novel of Reminiscences*, Rybakov describes his extensive research to fill in the gaps of the Soviet narrative. He elaborates on how he tried to obtain more information concerning the fate of the Jews during the war and under German occupation, as well as his attempts to recreate the lost world of the Jewish shtetl.[7] As there were almost no published sources on these topics, he decided to talk directly to contemporary witnesses in his family and in his circle of friends and acquaintances. Most notably, he conducted an interview with his only surviving aunt, which he recorded on a total of eight tapes.[8] The role that oral history played in his research is mirrored in the incorporation of oral histories and discussions with eyewitnesses in the novel. Searching for information and historical data, he expanded his research by consulting archives and reading Soviet-Jewish dissident publications on Jewish life, such as *Evrei v SSSR (Jews in the USSR)*, which focused on the Holocaust. In many ways, his attempt to restore a place for the victims of the Holocaust in Russian memorial culture coincided with his like-minded efforts for the victims of Stalinist repression, documented in his famous trilogy *The Children of the Arbat*, published in the 1980s.

Rybakov turned the Holocaust into the center and culminating point of a family saga spanning the years 1909–1943 and covering many topics in Soviet Jewish history, such as emigration and return, involvement in the Communist Party, Stalinist persecutions, and life in the shtetl. In many ways, his novel followed the aesthetic patterns of his earlier texts, such as *The Drivers* (1950), and especially his highly popular works for young readers, such as *The Dagger* (1948), all of which adhered to the principles of socialist realist writing. He did so mostly by using the canonical features of the war narrative in socialist realism, including an emphasis on positive heroes (albeit Jewish ones), the incorporation of partisan narratives, and the employment of myths such as the great Soviet family and Party members as mentors. Another motif in line with So-

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7 Anatolii Rybakov, *Roman-vospominanie* [Novel of reminiscences] (Moscow: Vagrius, 1997), 231. The text has been partially translated as Anatolii Rybakov, "A Novel of Memoirs," in *Soviet Jews in World War II: Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering*, ed. Harriet Murav, et al. (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014). Citations are taken from the Russian original.

8 Rybakov, *Roman-vospominanie*, 231.

viet war writing was a focus on German perpetrators and Soviet solidarity, but without discussing Ukrainian collaboration or independent resistance movements during the war. Combining Holocaust writing with the Soviet war narrative, Rybakov produced a palimpsest of a text—i.e., a text that consists of different layers, but still subordinates the Jewish narrative to the Soviet one. In facing the problem of writing a Holocaust novel for an audience that knew almost nothing about the Holocaust, Rybakov inscribed different addressees into his text. He tried to enlighten the majority of non-Jewish Soviet readers and provide them with basic information, but he also addressed the minority of Soviet Jewish readers, who could fill in the gaps from personal memory and family history. This dual audience effect runs through the text and is an inherent part of its structure.

In particular, the inherent Jewish addressee is one who knows and at the same time does not know about the mass killings of Soviet Jews, and Rybakov's text serves as a trigger to retrace this subliminal knowledge and to activate memory. The inherent addressee is a person who knew about the Nuremberg trials and could look up the relevant documents in the case files, a person who had read widely on the Holocaust, and thus a person who still existed in the private realm—even though the genocide of the Jews was not featured in the public discourse of the USSR in the 1970s. In Jewish families, some of this knowledge was available through oral histories and personal memories, though mostly in a fragmented and partially suppressed way. Rybakov foreshadows a memorial culture that has not yet been put into place by alluding to memorials, hundreds of books on the topic, and a community of mourners as a source of consolation. It meant that Rybakov wrote as if the reader knew the facts surrounding the Holocaust, thus depriving especially non-Jewish readers for a second time of further insight into the genocidal killing of Soviet Jews, in order to conform to politics of remembrance. Because of this accommodation of ideological demands, his text offers the reader the possibility of dealing with traumatic history in a form that is neither intimidating, nor overwhelming.[9] It is only in the epilogue and as an afterthought that the author allows for a rupture in the phantasmatic screen that his novel has created.

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9   As Levy and Sznaider have shown with regard to Anne Frank, Holocaust memoirs and texts had to conform to overall ideological concepts in the US and Europe as well. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 62–63. They have also put forth the argument that Anne Frank became a postwar icon of the Holocaust because her diary was almost entirely devoid of Jewishness.

Due to the discursive assumptions of Rybakov's novel, the few Western literary critics who concern themselves with Russian texts on the Holocaust are mostly critical of *Heavy Sand*. Annie Epelboin and Assia Kovriguina's survey of Holocaust literature in the USSR, which is the most extensive study on the topic to date, is no exception. The authors take a passing glance at Rybakov's novel only to largely dismiss it, because they consider the novel an example of "self-censorship" or "self-mutilation." They claim his novel conforms so rigorously to socialist realism that it cannibalizes itself due to its anticipation and forced circumvention of censorship that—especially in the second part of the novel that is devoted to the destruction of the Jews—has nothing new to say about the Holocaust.[10] Gary Rosenshield states that the novel "undermine[s] the notion of a special Jewish rehabilitation" by relying too heavily on "an aesthetics and an ideology of concealment"[11] and that it neither succeeds in its representation of the Holocaust, nor in its rejection of negative stereotypes about Jews. Furthermore, he accuses Rybakov of a "de-Judaization" of the Holocaust.[12] Olaf Terpitz devotes a whole chapter to Rybakov in his thesis on Russian-Jewish literature and, all in all, takes a more benevolent stance, pointing out that the text caused a small sensation among Russian readers when it was published. While underlining the ways in which it shaped Holocaust memorial culture in the USSR, Terpitz remains critical of the novel's style and aesthetics.[13] Western European and American critics especially tend to judge the book according to the standards set by authors like James E. Young or Lawrence Langer in their studies of Holocaust literature.

The lost world of the shtetl and Jewish life in the Chernihiv area form the backdrop of the first part of the novel (chapters 1–13). The first part merges elements of Rybakov's family history with the unlikely love story of his friend Robert Kupchik's parents.[14] The heart of the first part is comprised of the love story of Rakhil, a girl from the shtetl, and Jakob, the descendant of a Russian Jewish

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10   Annie Epelboin and Assia Kovriguina, *La littérature des ravins: Écrire sur la Shoah en URSS* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2013), 249, 250.

11   Gary Rosenshield, "Socialist Realism and the Holocaust: Jewish Life and Death in Anatoly Rybakov's *Heavy Sand*," *PMLA* 111, no. 2 (1996): 240. See also Rosenshield's statement: "The attempt to remember, to say what has not been said before in the Soviet Union, ironically suppresses the truth, passing off the horror of the Holocaust as a Soviet morality play."

12   Rosenshield, "Socialist Realism and the Holocaust," 248, 249.

13   Olaf Terpitz, *Die Rückkehr des Štetl: Russisch-jüdische Literatur der späten Sowjetzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 116.

14   Rybakov, *Roman-vospominanie*, 226. See also Anatolii Rybakov, "Roman-Vospominanie," in *Ogonek*, October 8, 1997.

émigré from Basel, who fall in love with each other when Jakob visits his father's place of birth. The depiction of their peaceful family life is enriched by elements of Jewish folklore and Soviet history. Chapter 14 serves as a turning point, introducing the subject of the 1930s' terror. The last ten chapters are devoted to the fate of the Jewish family during the war. The elements of Soviet-Jewish history in the twentieth century that Rybakov integrates into his family saga are numerous—there is a *Rabfak*, *alfabetisatsiia*, collectivization, show trials, Party functionaries—but they remain selective nevertheless, as there is no mention of the Holodomor, the civil war, and only fleeting allusions to Ukrainian antisemitism or pogroms, all of which were decisive for the Jewish experience during the first two decades of Soviet rule in the former pale of settlement. Jewish life is depicted in an almost anecdotal way (he mentions *gefilte fish* and *talles*), but there is no mention of religious practices, beliefs, or theological wisdom, and as noted earlier, no persecution, antisemitism, or discrimination. Rybakov effectively creates a happy and joyous world of the Jewish shtetl that serves as a backdrop for his tale of murder and annihilation, accentuating the cruelty of the Holocaust, as well as the preciousness of a world lost.

The narrator of the family saga is Rakhil and Jakob's second son, Boris, who speaks to an anonymous interlocutor. As Olaf Terpitz has noted, Boris is the prototypical Soviet citizen whose worldview and attitude reflect the Soviet mentality.[15] In many ways, Rybakov's narrator represents ordinary Soviet citizens not only in terms of this mentality, but also their knowledge of the Holocaust. Like most Soviet citizens, he had to rely on the stories of others, namely neighbors and a small number of survivors. And like the author himself, he is not a very "Jewish Jew," since his Jewish identity is rooted not so much in religious belief or extensive knowledge of the Jewish way of life, but rather in family customs, food preferences, and family lore. While he is in possession of first-hand knowledge when it comes to the prewar years, he has to make do with hearsay when it comes to the war and the Holocaust.[16] As he was away on the front fighting the Germans when the SS *Einsatzgruppen* killed his aging parents and younger siblings, he has to rely on the accounts of these events given by his only surviving relative, as well as his gentile neighbors. Thus, Boris is the only one who can tell this story, because he is Soviet *and* Jewish, has a

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15 Terpitz, *Die Rückkehr des Štetl*, 147.

16 Deviations from the position of Boris as the internal focalizer of the narrative and his limited scope of knowledge are explained, for example, by his claim that he is able to relay the dying thoughts of his uncle in front of a firing squad, because he knew his uncle very well.

Russian wife, is a war hero and a Party member, and still has not forgotten or suppressed his Jewish roots in the shtetl. This inherent structure and the opposition of happy prewar days and grim wartime events conform to Soviet narrative practices. All in all, Rybakov's depiction of shtetl life is thus pure ideology in a Žižekian sense: "The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel."[17] However, as mentioned earlier, the style changes notably when Rybakov narrates the events that surround the killing of the Jews of Ivanivka.

Heavy Sand: The Soviet Holocaust Narrative and Its Discontents

In many ways, Rybakov followed socialist realist formulas and relied on the Soviet master narrative of World War II when he wrote his Holocaust novel. As stated above, the Soviet narrative was based on a fixed set of motifs and templates, mainly the idea that all death was heroic, and that Soviet soldiers and Soviet citizens were one big family. Accommodating this discursive set of rules, the texts of Anatolii Rybakov and his contemporary Masha Rol'nikaite were thus presented foremost as texts about the war. The Holocaust was only a secondary theme, even if their main agenda was to inscribe the Holocaust into the Soviet literary canon. The fact that their texts could be read as an extension of the war narrative placed them firmly within the Soviet canon and made publication possible, but it also called for adapting to the established aesthetics of the war narrative. From the start, texts dealing with the Holocaust on Soviet soil encountered difficulties, since discussing the mass killing of Soviet Jews already veered between the permissible and the forbidden during the war. The fact that these killings were part of Soviet war history as well as part of a solely Jewish history complicated matters further. In what should have been a shared narrative, Jewish suffering was mostly overwritten by Soviet suffering as a whole. Historians have shown that while the Holocaust was mentioned and discussed during the war, the subject was rarely broached in the 1950s, only to slowly reemerge in Soviet discourse starting in the 1960s, when a new type of war narrative was being forged. This reformed war narrative gave rise to de-homogenized war accounts, in which hitherto prohibited topics—like Soviet prisoners of war in Germany,

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17   Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 45.

collaboration, or the Holocaust—became accessible to Soviet readers. Because of these factors, Rybakov's *Heavy Sand*[18] is one of the few Soviet works that can be properly called a Soviet Holocaust novel.[19] Epelboin and Kovriguina call it the "only" Soviet novel that has made the genocide of the Jews its main subject. It is true that Rybakov's is one of these very rare novels, but it is certainly not the only one. At the same time, Masha Rol'nikaite wrote several fictional as well as auto-biographical texts that deal with the Holocaust.[20] Thus, the novel owes its distinctive aesthetic shape as much to individual private memories of the Holocaust in circulation among Rybakov's family and friends, as it does to public memories of the war inscribed in the poetics of socialist realism and in Soviet war discourse.[21] Viewed in comparison with the criteria established by Berel Lang's influential study on writing Holocaust literature, for example, Rybakov's book falls short, as it relies heavily on personalization and figurative discourse.[22] But viewed within the context of Soviet writing about the Holocaust, Rybakov's novel is the "greatest surprise,"[23] with its Jewish cast, Jewish theme, and description of the extermination of the Jews in the Ukrainian-Belorussian border region.

However, focusing solely on Jewish experiences and singling out the special Jewish fate meant deviating from the established perception of the war. As Gregory Carleton has stated, the Great Patriotic War and the artifacts that surrounded it became the "supreme unifying myth, masking discontent (particularly among the recently annexed Baltic states) and other internal fractures"[24] in the Soviet Union. This myth did not allow for other stories or voices to be heard. Rybakov was thus confronted with a conundrum: if he wanted to present the reader with a Jewish war narrative, especially one that included the Holocaust, he had to adapt it to the templates of the greater Soviet war narrative. This be-

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18 Anatolii Rybakov, *Tyazhelyi pesok* [Heavy sand] (St. Peterburg: Azbuka, 2014). English translation: Anatoli Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, trans. Harold Shukman (New York: Viking Press, 1981). Quotations are taken from the English edition unless otherwise indicated.

19 Epelboin and Kovriguina, *Littérature des ravines*, 246.

20 Anja Tippner, "Conflicting Memories, Conflicting Stories: Masha Rol'nikaite's Novels and the Soviet Culture of Holocaust Remembrance," *Journal of East European Jewish Affairs* 48, no. 3 (2019): 372–90.

21 For a description of the Soviet war narrative, see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

22 Berel Lang, "The Moral Space of Figurative Discourse," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 330.

23 Shalom Cholawski, "The Holocaust and the Armed Struggle in Belorussia as Reflected in Soviet Literature and Works by Emigres in the West," in *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 218.

24 Gregory Carleton, "Victory in Death: Annihilation Narratives in Russia Today," *History & Memory* 22, no. 1 (2010): 135–68.

comes most visible in the way he deals with the actual killing and dying of the Jewish inhabitants of Ivanivka.

Rybakov incorporates into his text stories about partisan heroism and self-sacrifice,[25] as well as Soviet solidarity between neighbors of different ethnicities. In some respects, the death of his sister Dina resembles the fictionalized death of the young partisan heroine, Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia. Like Zoia, Dina is beaten and hanged naked, and, like Zoia, her last words under the gallows are an act of defiance: she starts to sing "maybe a Jewish, Ukrainian or Russian song, or perhaps the 'Internationale,' the hymn of our youth and our hopes."[26] Even the little brother of the narrator, Igor, dies like one of the child partisan heroes, who were so popular among children and adults in the Soviet Union. Eight-year-old Igor, who serves as a courier between the inhabitants of the ghetto and partisan units in the forest, is captured by the Germans, tortured, and hanged—never betraying his folks. Not only do all members of the Rakhlenko and Ivanovsky families act in accordance with Soviet ideology, they actively declare their allegiance to it and are extremely courageous. Because they are putting the welfare of the state and the collective first, they are willing to sacrifice themselves and the welfare of their families,[27] instead of saving their own skin. The neighbors, too, are willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to help their persecuted and starving Jewish friends and, in the end, are even willing to die for them. Rybakov's description of Soviet solidarity reads as follows: "but the Stashenoks were true human beings, they didn't stoop before the Germans, they put human obligation above fear." And when the Stashenok family is arrested because of its "links with the ghetto" and subjected to torture, they "stand firm" and do not denounce their Jewish neighbors.[28] The narrator concludes the pages devoted to the solidarity among the Soviet people with a description of the execution of the Belorussian Stashenok family with the following words: "Long live their memory! Eternal glory to those brave sons and daughters of the Belorussian nation!"[29] This declaration resembles war memorials all over the Soviet

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25 For the child hero narrative, see Anja Tippner, "Girls in Combat: Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia and the Image of Young Soviet Wartime Heroines," *Russian Review* 73, no. 3 (2014): 371–89. The name of the sister also evokes the name of Kuznetsov's source, Dina Pronicheva, one of the few survivors of Babyn Yar (in Russian Babi Yar).

26 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 348–49. The speculations of the narrator with regard to the song are a good example of the way in which he introduces Jewish themes into a Soviet template.

27 Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 115.

28 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 359, 326.

29 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 362.

Union, but it is even more astonishing, because we find nothing similar regarding the "Jewish nation" in the text. Here, as in other areas, Rybakov does not falsify historical facts, he merely adjusts them to preexisting Soviet templates and represses other historical experiences, such as denunciations by greedy, antisemitic, or frightened neighbors.[30]

While Rybakov effectively inscribes aspects of the ghetto story into the standard war narrative by describing how part of the Jewish population joins the partisans in the Bryansk woods in order to evade the killings and defend the motherland, he jettisons the prescribed formula in other aspects. For example, when turning the reader's attention to the way most of the Jews in the Ukraine died, he singles out Jewish victims, instead of subsuming them as usual under the umbrella term "peaceful Soviet citizens" (*myrnye sovetskie zhiteli*). Confronted with the accusation that the remaining Jews in the ghetto locked themselves inside their houses and then went to their deaths "like sheep to the slaughter," the narrator points out that it was not only Jews who were captured and victimized, but also Soviet soldiers who were captured and killed as prisoners of war, thus dismissing the common accusation and turning the war narrative on its head. The lines evoking a sheep-like death contain another layer of meaning, as they resonate with the slogan of the United Partisan Organization (Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye, FPO), the Jewish resistance movement in the Vilna ghetto, which urged Jews to join the partisans and not go to death "like sheep to the slaughter." The novel does not take an easy stance on the question of resistance vs. compliance, pointing out that either way, the Jews were doomed:

> The question was insoluble, so was the problem. An uprising? . . . Make a break for the forest? . . . The alternative was to resign yourself to your fate, to lie down in the ditch next to your son and daughter, and expose the back of your neck to a German bullet, without putting up any righteous resistance, however hopeless, without raising your hand against your murderers. This was the least acceptable of all options. They all offered death, only resistance offered death with honor.[31]

The narrator's sister Dina is confronted with the same choice: either resist and probably die or give in and probably die as well. However, the narrator points

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30 Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 277–97.
31 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 366–67.

out: "Of course, it's easy for us to reason on Dina's behalf, to put forth the arguments and counter-arguments, and to make this or that decision. It was harder for her. She didn't know the true situation."[32] Here as well as elsewhere in the novel, the reasoning of the protagonists—in this case Grisha, the narrator's uncle—conforms to the Soviet credo. It is only the negative characters, mainly the members of the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council), who opt out of heroism for the sake of self-preservation. The case of the *Judenrat* was not only fraught with ethical questions as in Western literature but was also viewed within a framework of class divisions, which called for an unfavorable depiction of members of the Jewish bourgeoisie and upper-class.[33]

In his attempt to tell a story about the Holocaust, Rybakov makes use of three narrative devices usually not found in a traditional war narrative: voids, foreshadowing, and the refusal of closure. First, voids are the result of the set-up of the chapters dealing with the Holocaust, since the narrator, Boris, is not an eyewitness. So there are many things he either does not know or cannot be sure of because he could not find informants. Boris thus systematically imposes and narrates voids, remarking:

> I don't intend to tell you the story of this ghetto, I do not know it, nobody does. It was a little one, and it was short-lived. No written accounts of it have survived; it doesn't figure in official documents, it was simply wiped off the face of the earth. Anyway, what else is there to be added to the stories about ghettos, they have all been described in hundreds of books. It was the same everywhere, they tormented and tortured the people, then they killed them. What can you add to that?[34]

The paradoxical rhetoric of telling and not telling, knowing and not knowing, pervades the chapters about the ghetto and the killing of the Jews in Ivanivka. Here, as well as elsewhere, the narrator configures the Holocaust as a fact that is simultaneously known and unknown. He presents the reader with facts and stories that he has gathered, implying that these are already firmly established in So-

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32 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 343.

33 Masha Rol'nikaite recalls the way in which the censor of her memoir, *I Have to Tell*, criticized her account of the *Judenrat* in the Vilna ghetto and demanded an unfavorable depiction of its members. See Anja Tippner, "The Writings of a Soviet Anne Frank: Masha Rol'nikaite's Holocaust Memoir *I Have to Tell* and Its Place in Soviet Literature," in *Search and Research: Lectures and Series, Volume 19: Representation of the Holocaust in Soviet Literature and Film* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 76.

34 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 232.

viet memory, although the author obviously knows this not to be true. Thus, he is not only sharing Holocaust history but also suggesting that it ought to be an integral part of the Soviet war narrative. As such, the novel is directed at those with knowledge of Jewish atrocities: they were the ones who could "restore" the rhetoric of (not) telling and those who wanted to know and were directed toward other sources. In suggesting the existence of hundreds of books on the topic, he points his readers toward the symbolic void that is Holocaust remembrance and Holocaust knowledge in the USSR. The most striking aspect of this passage is the contradictory way in which the past is constructed as a void when it comes to remembering the Jewish genocide. Adding another layer to his description is the fact that the void also represents a complex symbol of the killing sites in the Soviet Union—often unmarked pits, ravines, and shallow ditches in rural areas.

The narrator interprets his sister Dina's death as well as his father's death within this frame of uncertainty. At the same time, he makes use of Soviet certainties and convictions, such as the Soviet template of self-sacrifice for the collective and the greater good. Since the narrator is only in possession of the bare facts, but not of his father's motivations or thoughts, he starts to "imagine" a reason that made his father confess to a "crime" he never committed and sees this reason in his Soviet righteousness.[35] In its own specific way, the text thus makes its readers aware of the fact that eyewitness accounts, so crucial to Western Holocaust literature, are not available to the Soviet public. So, again and again, Rybakov's narrator resorts to Soviet thought patterns to produce a coherent narrative without completely erasing the voids and blank spaces created by the absence of witnesses. For secondary witnesses, such as Rybakov in particular, the absence of testimonies—be they written "from within the events" or afterwards as "interpretive" testimonies[36]—poses a great problem in their search for "truth." It is one of Rybakov's greatest achievements that he balances the urge to fill the void with passages that retain it on both the thematic and the textual plane, while retaining the fact that—where there ought to be testimony—we are confronted with a void.

The Holocaust emerges here simultaneously as both irretrievable past and a memory void, for example when the narrator discusses the fruitless search for the remains of his father, how he sifted through the sand at the riverbank. All he

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35   Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 360.
36   James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 32.

finds is the clean and "heavy sand" of the title.[37] While he knows, at least, when and where his father was killed, his mother has vanished into thin air, leaving behind not even the certainty of her death. After leading a group of Jews from the ghetto into the woods to escape destruction and to join the partisans, she dies from exhaustion and hunger in the woods: "And when people looked back, she was no longer there. Nobody heard the sound of her footsteps or the crunch of twigs under her feet, she simply dissolved into the forest amid the motionless pines, she melted into the air."[38] Her death and missing grave, as well as those of other family members, symbolize the emptiness and void that is felt by survivors and descendants alike. The uncertainties surrounding these deaths produce long-term effects and unarticulated trauma in the Soviet Union. Thus, describing the voids and the last surviving son's quest to fill them serves as a model for a possible Soviet way to remember the Holocaust. In the poetics of Rybakov, one has to remember by the *absence* of history, not its presence.

The second device can also be seen in the above-cited passage. Here, Rybakov's narrator refers his interlocutor to the "hundreds of books" that have been written about life and death in the ghettos. Elsewhere he points him toward the case records of the Nuremberg trials and quotes a statement by Hitler that was given as evidence by one of the prosecutors.[39] The narrator establishes a bond with his listener that is built on their shared knowledge of the Holocaust, while employing foreshadowing: "We know now that those who were left behind perished, but how could we have known then."[40] One could argue that Nuremberg is a point of reference because of the newsreels made immediately after the war and shown widely in the Soviet Union. Yet, the hundreds of books about the ghettos and the case files of the Nuremberg trials were not available to Soviet readers, just as the witness testimonies collected in Ehrenburg and Grossman's *Black Book of Russian Jewry* were suppressed and censored.[41] Thus, Rybakov's novel creates a somewhat paradoxical addressee, someone who both knows and does not know about the

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37   Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 379.
38   Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 376.
39   Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 249, 253.
40   Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 245.
41   Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry*, trans. and ed. David Patterson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002). Members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee helped to collect testimonies and legal documents for the publication. Due to changing politics and increasing antisemitism in the immediate postwar period, the book could not be published in the Soviet Union and the manuscript was confined to the archives for decades. The first Russian edition finally saw the light of day in Kyiv in 1991, that is, in the last months prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, published on the basis of a Russian version issued in Jerusalem in 1970.

Holocaust at the same time, just as his narrator knows and does not know. The implied reader of the novel is a foreshadowing of future Russian readers, who know about the Holocaust from documents, historical reports, oral histories, memorials, and literature, from cultural as well as communicative memory. The modes of looking back that are depicted in the parts of the book dealing with the Holocaust are an act of prefiguring desired future forms of remembrance, they are a certain form of futurity, as Amir Eshel has called this way of writing.[42]

Finally, Rybakov refuses closure—something that was essential to Soviet novels. The impossibility of closure and the permanence of grief pervade the last chapters of the book. The narrator begins his retelling of the extermination of the Ivanivka Jews and the tale of his quest for truth with the following remark: "A black night had fallen on the town. Many years I have wandered in that gloom, along the same streets, there and back and there again. And the ghosts of the tormented wander with me from house to house."[43] The novel presents itself as an unsuccessful search for these ghosts. In the end, the protagonist-narrator Boris visits the Jewish cemetery in the old shtetl together with his Russian friend, a former partisan and miner, named Sidorov. They are looking for Jewish graves, but fail to find any. While the little town once had a big and beautiful Jewish cemetery, now there are almost no headstones and no inscriptions to mourn the dead. So, while the deaths of his family members are described in an individualized manner that runs counter to the actual ways of killing by the German *Einsatzgruppen*, their afterlife is uniformly characterized by a lack of individual as well as collective remembrance, thus containing a critique of Soviet practices. In the cemetery, there is a memorial stone with a text in Russian and Hebrew. The miner Sidorov asks the protagonist if the Russian text that reads "To the eternal memory of the victims of the German Fascist invaders" is translated correctly from Russian into the Hebrew. The Hebrew text reads "Venikoisi domom loi nikoisi," which the narrator translates for himself as: "Everything is forgiven, but those who have spilled innocent blood shall never be forgiven." After some hesitation he answers, "yes . . . , it's right, it's exact."[44] The memorial stone not only functions as a memorial, but it is also a cenotaph for the dead who are buried elsewhere. Rybakov makes it clear that this memorial

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42 Eshel explores the idea that we always write the past with the idea of a certain future in mind. See Amir Eshel, *Futurity: Contemporary Literature and the Quest for the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1–25.

43 Rybakov, *Heavy Sand*, 253.

44 Eshel, *Futurity*, 381.

with its defective inscription does not provide closure, but instead calls for another mode of remembrance in the future.

These last passages of Rybakov's novel resonate with the first line of Evtushenko's famous poem "Babi Yar," which reads: "Over Babi Yar there are no memorials,"[45] as well as Ol'ga Berggolts's inscription on the memorial in Leningrad, which ends with the line: "Nobody is forgotten, nothing is forgotten,"[46] but also with the Torah, overwriting one text with the other. The epilogue also refers the reader to the fact that even this distorted, divergent Russian-Jewish memory does not yet exist and is only a projection into the future. The memorial plate is at once a foreshadowing of a future still to be attained: in 1972, the time of the epilogue, there were very few memorial plates at burial sites and even fewer with inscriptions in Hebrew, and the small number of memorials that existed were initiated by Jewish survivors or their family members and made the news in the Soviet Yiddish press. Rybakov's depictions of the lack of memorial practices are thus at once a critique of current Soviet practices of remembering the Holocaust, as well as a hint of what they could look like. And finally, this writing style corresponded to socialist realism in that it depicted reality not as it was, but as it should be. The memorial that is portrayed in the book stands in stark contrast to the killing sites that bear no trace of the dead. While the eponymous "heavy sand" is the only spatial remnant at this former killing site, it is not identifiable as such. For those who were witnesses this is a negative space, and for those who came after them this site is just another place, untouched by memorial practices or interventions. It is also an inverse allusion to the popular tombstone inscription "May the earth be light upon you." At the end of his novel, Rybakov combined all narrative devices—describing the voids, employing foreshadowing, and avoiding closure—in the narrator's unsuccessful search for his dead parents or at least their graves and the insufficient memorial that nevertheless foreshadows a glimpse of a possible memorial culture.

Conclusion: Remembering and Forgetting the Holocaust in the USSR

As this article has tried to demonstrate, Rybakov's text symptomatically moves between different modes of writing to inform Soviet readers about the Holo-

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45   Evgenii Evtushenko, "Babi Yar," in *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 82.
46   See Ol'ga Berggolts, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Selected Works] (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), 344.

caust and inscribe the fate of Soviet Jews into the greater fabric of World War II. Rybakov's novel, in my opinion, seems like a commentary *avant la lettre* to Michael Rothberg's theory of "multidirectional memory,"[47] in which different groups of victims do not necessarily compete for attention, but can enhance the visibility of each other in the public eye. In some ways, this is what Rybakov tries to achieve by making use of the Soviet war narrative and templates of socialist realist writing to further the remembrance of a different type of war story. This is not an easy feat to accomplish, since elements of the war narrative, especially the customary focus on heroism and active fighting, make stories of private, passive suffering, and death almost impossible to narrate. His text thus makes the limits of Rothberg's concept apparent, since the patterns and rhetoric of the war narrative tend to overshadow the depiction of the Jewish experience. In his capacity as both conformist and dissident writer Rybakov produces not so much a counter-history, but a narrative that challenges and revises parts of the Soviet collective remembrance of World War II, while firmly underlining others.[48]

If one agrees with Roman Jakobson's statement that literature is about selection and combination, then Rybakov's novel shows us a somewhat ambivalent picture: the events and characters he chooses point us not solely toward the Holocaust, but toward the Holocaust as a fact of war. Soviet authors like Rybakov found ways to remember the Holocaust through literature that did not and do not conform to a certain Holocaust aesthetic established in the US, Israel, and Western Europe since the 1970s, but it may well have been the only way to tell the story of the genocide of the Jews in the Soviet Union. From a Western point of view, it is exactly the "emotiveness" (*pafos*) Rybakov strove for that decreases the aesthetic value of the book, whereas, in Rybakov's opinion, it was very much needed to touch audiences and to convey the gravity of events.[49] *Heavy Sand* is an attempt to use established patterns, as well as to add new patterns of remembrance and new sites of commemoration that are in agreement with a shared memorial culture while still expanding it. The futility of these efforts infuses Rybakov's novel with a sense of melancholia that describes mourning without closure. The refusal of finality is especially poignant at the end of the novel. All

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47 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 1–33.
48 For a discussion of the concept of counter-history within the frame of Eastern European dissident culture, see the introduction by Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach, "Gegengeschichte—Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens," in *Gegengeschichte: Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens*, ed. Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015), 15.
49 Rybakov, *Novel of Memoirs*, 240.

in all, however, his specific way of "writing around" the Holocaust and his way of fusing conflicting histories within Soviet discourse did reach its Soviet audience and was perceived in a way intended by the author—as a novel of remembrance and as a textual memorial that prefigures the real ones to come.[50]

If one follows Jan Assmann, there are two distinct forms of memories: communicative memory, which is predominantly transmitted orally, and cultural memory, which is institutionalized.[51] Due to its heavily regulated nature, individual Jewish memories of the Holocaust and the war only rarely found their way into official Soviet cultural memory and the official discourse on the war. When it comes to those authors who attempted to write about the Holocaust, one can state that the majority of them were of Jewish descent or were biographically linked to the events.[52] The proximity of these authors to the events themselves differ widely: Some were survivors like Rol'nikaite, who wrote from her own experience, others like Grossman and Ehrenburg, who served in the Red Army as war correspondents, witnessed the atrocities firsthand in the liberated death camps and occupied territories and felt compelled very early on to document and make public the Holocaust on Soviet soil. Still others, like Rybakov, lost relatives, but turned to the Holocaust only later in life. Despite these efforts and the seminal testimonial and fictional texts they produced, as in the historiography of Soviet literary discourses, the Holocaust was not as present as it was in Western Europe. Zvi Gitelman points out that the topic of the Holocaust was not so much suppressed, as it was perceived as part of a "larger phenomenon—the murder of civilians—whether Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Gypsies, or other nationalities."[53] Or, as Harriet Murav notes, Soviet literature did not memorialize its millions of dead Jews in the way that became customary in the West.[54] In addition, as readers, we are usually confronted with a certain repertoire of "signs" when dealing with the Holocaust—the

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50 This need is not restricted to the Soviet period. It is clear from Oxane Leingang's study of life-writing on wartime childhoods that many of the restraints put into place during Soviet times still exist today, though Leingang does not discuss this or puts that thesis forward. Rather it becomes apparent in her analysis of two Jewish children's memoirs. Oxane Leingang, *Sowjetische Kindheit im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Generationsentwürfe im Kontext nationaler Erinnerungskultur* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2014).

51 Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2008), 109–18.

52 Russian literature is no exception here, as this is the case with most European literatures.

53 Zvi Gitelman, "Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union," in *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18.

54 Harriet Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 151–52.

camps, striped prison uniforms, acts of utmost cruelty. This repertoire for referencing Nazi atrocities against Jews has its foundations in survivors' memoirs and documentary footage from the camps, but most of all in fictional and visual accounts that have emerged since the 1970s. In the Soviet Union, this repertoire did not exist, mostly because the murder of Soviet Jews was carried out using a different method, that of mass shootings, which left almost no survivors. This made survivors' accounts scarce, and the events surrounding the mass killings were in most cases commemorated by so-called bystanders, such as neighbors or partisans.[55] The fact that the killings took place directly where people lived and not far away in the unknown territories of camps and deportation locations, also meant that survivors, as well as the next of kin and neighbors of the dead, would continue to live in close proximity to the killing sites. Rybakov mentions this fact in his memoir *Roman-vospominanie* (Novel of Memoirs, 1997), in which he describes the research process for *Heavy Sand*. He also addresses the way in which the censorship bureau and the editors of the journal *Oktiabr'* forced him to cut and re-write certain passages.[56] All this led to the impression that the Holocaust was not really addressed in Soviet literature and or only in narratives heavily distorted by ideology. As has been shown, Rybakov tries to find ways to use the Soviet template to tell the story of the genocide of the Jews on Soviet soil, to write around it. His goal to represent the Holocaust is also achieved by stressing storytelling within the family as a mode of transmission for traumatic histories that were deemed unsayable in public discourse, thus turning to individual, communicative memory as a counterweight to official collective history. The integration of oral histories into his novel presents itself as an ingenious way to address the scarcity of accessible witness accounts in Soviet public discourse.[57]

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55 Anatolii Kuznetsov has worked with these circumstances and used them for his novel *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*, trans. David Floyd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982). His text describes the experiences of a teenage boy in Kyiv under occupation by the Wehrmacht who witnesses the extermination of Kyiv's Jews in Babyn Yar as a member of Kyiv's non-Jewish population. In addition to his own wartime notebooks, Kuznetsov used testimonial material from Jewish witnesses such as Dina Pronicheva. See Anatolii Kuznetsov, *Babii Yar: Roman-Dokument* (Frankfurt am Main: Possev, 1970).

56 Rybakov, *Roman-Vospominanie*, 240.

57 For a discussion of Rybakov's approach within the larger frame of Russian literature on the Shoah, see Anja Tippner, "Addressing the Void: The Absence of Documents and the Difficulties of Representing the Shoah in Postcatastrophic Russian Jewish Literature," in *The Afterlife of the Shoah in Central and Eastern European Cultures: Concepts, Problems, and the Aesthetics of Postcatastrophic Narration*, ed. Anna Artwińska and Anja Tippner (London: Routledge, 2022), 135–56.

Confronting received notions of collective Soviet victimhood with the Jewish tragedy was by no means a small achievement on the part of Rybakov. In fact, it is where he was at his most successful: Like it or not, his victims are *Jewish*. By staying within a framework of collective remembrance, he fulfilled the task of putting Jewish suffering at the center of our attention. Without idealizing Rybakov's novel, one can state that *Heavy Sand* eclipses the traditional Soviet understanding of the Jewish fate and Jewish loss during the war. It does so by engaging the reader in a complex search to unearth individual memories and a quest to transform them into enduring collective memories.

Daniel Véri

Commissioned Memory: Official Representations of the Holocaust in Hungarian Art (1955–1965)*

Conflicting Narratives: Commissioned vs. Non-Commissioned Art

Holocaust-related art created in Hungary during the communist period fell into two distinct categories: state-commissioned or non-commissioned, i.e., initiated by the artists themselves without state involvement. (Lacking an art market, there were no private commissions.) This division goes deeper than the mere sponsorship of the works: it concerns the actors, their motivations and approach, as well as the meaning, scale, and material of the works. I have already analyzed non-commissioned works in depth elsewhere, therefore only a short characterization of the differences of the two groups of works will be provided here before examining the major state-funded projects in greater detail.[1]

Non-commissioned works exploring the theme of the Holocaust were almost exclusively created by Jewish survivors, whereas to my knowledge, none of the artists contracted for early state-funded art projects had a Jewish background. The personal experience and interest evident in the first group of artists was mostly lacking in the second, which had a clear effect on the works. It cannot be said for certain whether the choice of non-Jewish artists for the commis-

1   Daniel Véri, "The Holocaust and the Arts: Paths and Crossroads," in *Art in Hungary 1956–1980: Doublespeak and Beyond,* ed. Edit Sasvári, Hedvig Turai, and Sándor Hornyik (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 208–27.

sions was a conscious one. However, taking into account the different approach manifested in their works, this choice might have indeed been intentional. Artists without a personal link to the Holocaust might have been more susceptible, more willing to follow the suggested historical narrative than survivors of the Holocaust, who could have insisted—as they did in their non-commissioned works—on depicting or reflecting upon their own personal experience.

Comparing the two types of works, non-commissioned ones attest to a plurality in their style and artistic approach, while commissioned works occupy a narrower spectrum, subscribing to more traditional forms of realism and figuration. The scale of the works differs as well: state-funded projects—such as memorials, as well as paintings conceived of as a representative means of decoration—tended to be monumental in size, while non-commissioned works tend to be smaller and more intimate, befitting the space of artists' studios. (While a few non-commissioned, small-scale sculptural models exist, the creation of monumental sculptures was a state monopoly.)

In terms of meaning and message, non-commissioned works visualize the victims' perspective; they focus on commemoration, some even raise the question of the perpetrators' responsibility. Contrarily, state-commissioned works tend to visualize official memory politics, that is, the antifascist historical narrative. They emphasize the antifascist fight and its heroes, namely the communists, overshadowing the victims of genocide. Consequently, figures depicted in the commissioned works often assume an active role as opposed to the passivity of those in the non-commissioned works.

Introduction: Official Memory Politics and State Funded Projects

This study examines official memory politics, in particular the earliest state-funded Hungarian art projects related to the memory of the Holocaust during communism. These include the erection of a Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen (1955/1958–64), the art collection commissioned for the permanent Hungarian exhibition in Auschwitz (1964–65) and the exhibition titled *Hungarian Artists Against Fascism*, organized in 1965 at the Hungarian National Gallery in connection with the congress of the *International Federation of Resistance Fighters* (FIR). All of these endeavors shared certain characteristics. First, none of the projects stemmed from popular domestic or political initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust; rather the initial calls always came from—or at least were connected to—foreign organizations and institutions. Secondly, these projects

were either realized abroad, in the context of competing national histories, or were intended for an international audience.

These projects can be understood as embodiments of antifascism, an overarching historical narrative that connected the past to contemporary politics. Accordingly, the primary goal of these projects was to represent the country and to position its current communist leadership, as well as their perceived political ancestry, within an antifascist narrative that helped to legitimate them internationally. Despite being located at preeminent sites of the Holocaust like Auschwitz and Mauthausen, these projects focused on the antifascist struggle rather than (Jewish) victimhood, simultaneously promoting abroad—under the pretext of memorialization—the Hungarian communist leadership and their preferred historical narrative.

Nonetheless, this paper argues that antifascist memory politics had an unintended effect on the evolution of the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary. With the integration of the genocide into a wider historical narrative, both real and virtual spaces were created where the memory of the Holocaust could emerge. For instance, the victims' perspective was represented amongst the unsuccessful candidates for the memorial in Mauthausen, as well as by some of the works created for the exhibition in Auschwitz. As for the antifascist exhibition in the National Gallery in Budapest, it is possible to identify a curatorial decision there to include Holocaust-related works of art despite their commemorative tone and private ownership. Moreover, these state-funded projects also opened up a discursive space, where eventually even criticism of official memory politics could emerge.

The Hungarian Memorial in Mauthausen (1955/1958–64)

The invitation to erect a memorial in Mauthausen "to the memory of the victims of fascism"—as Hungarian authorities put it—arrived from the International Mauthausen Committee (Comité international de Mauthausen) by the way of the Hungarian embassy in Vienna.[2] In early 1955, the International Re-

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2 Proposition for the Secretariat [To erect a Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen], Hungarian Workers' Party, Department of International Relations, January 24, 1955, attached to the acceptance, Proposition to erect a memorial to the memory of the victims of fascism in Mauthausen, subitem 12, within item 10 (Various issues), Proceedings of the meeting of the Secretariat [of the Hungarian Workers' Party], January 31, 1955, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, hereafter MNL OL), M–KS 276, 76. f. 54. cs. 352. ő. e. Since the documents cited in this study do not have a formal title, I will refer to them with an English description.

lations Department of the Communist Party (the Hungarian Workers' Party) prepared a proposition for the Secretariat on how to respond to this invitation. According to their information, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Italy had already announced their intentions to erect national monuments at Mauthausen to the memory of their own victims who had been murdered there.[3] The proposition reveals the inherent, discriminative nature of the prevailing antifascist narrative; depending on the reason for being persecuted, Party officials attributed different "values" to the victims: "According to the information acquired, the number of the victims from Hungary nears 15 thousand. Amongst them approx. 100 were deported due to political reasons. The others landed in Mauthausen due to racial and religious reasons. Nevertheless, our participation in erecting a monument in connection with the anniversary of the liberation bears political importance."[4] The proposal, which the Secretariat approved, suggested a 2 meter tall memorial column, costing 45–50,000 forints in total, but for reasons unknown, the monument was never built.[5]

It was only a year after the 1956 revolution that the plan to build a memorial surfaced again. The Mauthausen Memorial Committee of the Committee of the Persecutees of Nazism, itself a branch of the Hungarian Partisan Association, visited the leaders of the Jewish community at the end of 1957, asking to financially support the planned memorial and also for help with the public fundraising.[6] By the end of March 1958, 70,000 forints were collected, and the Committee of the Persecutees of Nazism commissioned Aladár Farkas, a politically engaged communist sculptor to create plans for the memorial.[7] By the end

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3   These projects date—from the submission of the plans to the inauguration—to 1955–57, 1954–56 and 1952–55, respectively. See Hildegard Schmid, *Kunst, die einem Kollektiv entspricht...: Der internationale Denkmalhain in der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2007).

4   Proposition for the Secretariat [To erect a Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen], Hungarian Workers' Party, Department of International Relations, January 24, 1955, attached to the acceptance, Proposition to erect a memorial to the memory of the victims of fascism in Mauthausen, subitem 12, within item 10 (Various issues), Proceedings of the meeting of the Secretariat [of the Hungarian Workers' Party], January 31, 1955, MNL OL M–KS 276 76. f. 54. cs. 352. ő. e.

5   Proposition for the Secretariat [To erect a Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen], Hungarian Workers' Party, Department of International Relations, January 24, 1955, attached to the acceptance, Proposition to erect a memorial to the memory of the victims of fascism in Mauthausen, subitem 12, within item 10 (Various issues), Proceedings of the meeting of the Secretariat [of the Hungarian Workers' Party], January 31, 1955, MNL OL, M-KS 276-76. f. 54. cs. 352. ő. e.

6   The Hungarian names of the organizations are: "Nácizmus Üldözötteinek Bizottsága" and "Magyar Partizán Szövetség." It is safe to assume that the Mauthausen Memorial Committee, "Mauthauseni Emlékbizottság" or "Mauthauseni Emlékműbizottság," belonged to the Committee of the Persecutees of Nazism, since they operated at the same address (Beloiannisz Street 16), see *Új Élet,* December 1957, 4.

7   Proceedings of the Hungarian Partisan Association's Board Meeting, March 27, 1958, 5, MNL OL, M–KS

of November, funds raised from the public reached 100,000 forints, and the model by Farkas was approved. Unfortunately, this sculptural plan has been lost and no photograph has been found. However, it is certain that the plan included a 6.5 meter tall sculpture, two candelabras, and a memorial plaque, all cast in bronze. The total cost was estimated to be half a million forints. Spending a considerable amount of public funds on the memory of the predominantly Jewish victims did not, however, meet with everyone's approval at the Hungarian Partisan Association. During the discussion one of the officials, Jenő Fazekas went as far as proposing an alternative financial solution: "There are 50–60,000 deportees, it should be examined whether the former deportees could build the memorial at their own expense. They could do as much for those who have perished."[8] This proposal inherently suggested that the genocide of the Hungarian Jews was by no means a Hungarian matter, but merely a Jewish one. Therefore, only survivors, and not Hungarians in general, should be charged with the moral and financial obligation of remembrance.

As the project developed, the Partisan Association realized that a competition between various proposals was a legal requirement for memorials to be erected abroad. For this reason, in July 1959 they contacted the Fine Arts Fund, which was responsible for public commissions, and tasked them to execute the project to honor "the memory of the more than 30,000 Hungarian martyrs who perished in Mauthausen and its subcamps."[9] (In the documents the project was

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288–30 /1958/16. ő. e. For the whole paragraph: Proceedings of the Hungarian Partisan Association's Board Meeting, November 27, 1958, 1–3; Written material for the meeting, submitted by Ödön Gáti, Committee of the Persecutees of Nazism: Introduction (2 pages), Detailed budget (7 pages), MNL OL, M–KS 288–30 /1958/16. ő. e. Informing report for the Secretariat concerning the plan of erecting a memorial in Mauthausen, December 10, 1958, 1–2, MNL OL, M–KS 288–30 /1958/16. ő. e. I would like to express my gratitude to Máté Zombory, who generously shared the documents concerning the Hungarian Partisan Association with me.

8   Proceedings of the Hungarian Partisan Association's Board Meeting, November 27, 1958, 2.

9   The Hungarian name of the organization is "Képzőművészeti Alap." Letter from the Partisan Association to the Fine Arts Fund, July 20, 1959, Archives of the Hungarian National Gallery (now incorporated into the Museum of Fine Arts—Central European Research Institute for Art History, Archive and Documentation Center [Szépművészeti Múzeum—Közép-Európai Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet, Archívum és Dokumentációs Központ, hereafter SzM KEMKI ADK]), 25000/2014/M/VII/1 (Mauthausen memorial folder). I would like to thank Eszter Szőnyeg-Szegvári and Zsuzsanna Farkas for their help in accessing the material held in the Archives and in the Photo Collection respectively. A short summary of the Mauthausen folder can be found here: László Kertész, "Mauthauseni magyar emlékmű" [Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen], in *Kortárs művészet: Szoborpályázatok 1950–2000* [Contemporary art: Sculpture competitions 1950–2000], ed. Ildikó Nagy (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2006), 44–47. I would equally like to thank Doris Warlitsch for providing access to relevant documents held in the archives of the Mauthausen Memorial in Vienna.

usually defined accordingly, as the "Hungarian martyr memorial in Mauthausen" or simply the "Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen.") The Partisan Association argued that the task was long overdue as numerous national memorials were already in place. According to their program, "The Hungarian memorial should express the liberation, the fight for peace and against fascism, the solidarity."[10] This plan, conceived in July 1959, was scheduled to be inaugurated in May 1960, yet due to the number of organizations involved, their disputes, the increasing costs, and the need for permissions (by Austria as well as Yugoslavia and Italy, the nations with neighboring monuments), the memorial was only completed in 1964.[11]

At the end of September 1959, the Fine Arts Fund announced an invitation-only competition, involving six sculptors: Jenő Kerényi (1908–1975), István Kiss (1927–1997), Agamemnon Makrisz (1913–1993), István Martsa (1912–1978), József Somogyi (1916–1993) and Ferenc Laborcz (1908–1971).[12] During the consultation held in mid-October, the nature of the expected outcome had been defined further: "In terms of meaning, the works should express suffering, solidarity and liberation. (It shall not be offensive.)"[13]

Six plans were submitted in total by five sculptors, as Jenő Kerényi did not take part in the contest, while Ferenc Laborcz created two plans. His works, a boy killing a snake and a female figure with raised hands appear to mirror the themes of "fight" and "liberation" set forth in the program (figures 8.1 and 8.2). Yet, according to the opinion of the jury, "regarding its form and theme, both his figures are dominated by lyricism and both plans are intellectually undemanding."[14]

Half of the submitted works concentrated more or less on the suffering of the victims. István Kiss portrayed six extremely emaciated figures, one dead and five standing with raised hands, signifying loss, survival, and liberation (figure 8.3).

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10   Letter from the Partisan Association to the Fine Arts Fund, July 20, 1959, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25000/2014/M/VII/1.

11   "Vasárnap avatják a mauthauseni magyar mártíremlékművet" [The Hungarian martyr memorial will be inaugurated on Sunday], *Népszabadság,* May 9, 1964, 10.

12   All of them were established, middle-aged sculptors (43–51 years old), except for Kiss, the youngest applicant (32). The sculptors were chosen by the Committee for the Division of Work ("Munkaelosztó Bizottság, MEB"), operating at the Fine Arts Fund, on September 30, 1959. Invitations to participate were sent to the sculptors on October 6, 1959.

13   The sculptors were due to submit a 1:10 scale model and a smaller 1:50 scale plan to match the model documenting the surroundings of the future memorial in Mauthausen. Proceedings of the consultation about the martyrs' memorial in Mauthausen held at the Hungarian Partisan Association, October 13, 1959, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25000/2014/M/VII/1. It is unclear whether the "offensive nature" ("támadó jelleg") was meant to reference Austria, the host country, or, more likely, the Germans.

14   Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, April 29, 1960, Sz/237, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25000/2014/M/VII/1.

Figure 8.1. Ferenc Laborcz, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, (*Boy killing a snake*), 1:10 model, 1960. Source: Museum of Fine Arts—Central European Research Institute for Art History, Archive and Documentation Center (SzM KEMKI ADK).

Figure 8.2. Ferenc Laborcz, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, (*Woman with her hands raised towards the sky*), 1:10 model, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

Figure 8.3. István Kiss, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1:10 model, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

Figure 8.4. József Somogyi, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

Although the composition is quite strong and complex, the jury found this work problematic: "from the symbolism of the figures the intellectual subject-matter is missing and without this, the portrayal of the prisoners of the camp cannot be satisfying for us today."[15] It appears that even though the work visualized both suffering and liberation, the realistic portrayal of the victims was simply not considered sufficient. The missing element that the jury was most likely referring to was the teleological interpretation of suffering, the highlighting of a positive cause, in short: the visualization of the antifascist struggle.

For similar reasons, József Somogyi's plan (figure 8.4) was considered equally problematic. His work shows a stiff cadaver, the frozen posture of which resembles the bodies excavated in Pompeii. Two elements complement the figure: the dove of peace on its shoulder and a broken ionic half column—a common topos of demise—in the background. To quote the jury's words: "The tone of József Somogyi's work is pessimistic, it symbolizes demise in a complicated manner and it does not express the struggle for the ideals."[16] Apparently, without a clear emphasis on the antifascist fight, the commemorative tone alone was not considered satisfactory.

István Martsa's sculpture (figure 8.5), which we will encounter again in connection with the Hungarian exhibition in Auschwitz, received mixed judgement: "the symbolism of the additional elements is not clear. Due to its accentuated verticality, his work is not in harmony with the Yugoslav and Italian memorials. The compositional quality of the work is acknowledged by the Committee."[17] One must admit that the smaller scale model—probably due to a scaling mistake—seems gigantic when inserted into the model representing the whole site (figure 8.6). Nonetheless, one might wonder which elements were deemed additional and unclear by the jury. The sculpture shows a male figure kneeling on a stake built up from wooden cuboids resembling railway sleepers (railroad ties). His right arm is stretched towards the sky, intersected by his bent left arm in the form of a cross. The symbolism is rather straightforward: the train tracks refer to deportation, the stake and the cross—even though the latter is somewhat peculiar given the Jewish context—to sacrifice and martyrdom. The figure is stepping on the stake almost voluntarily; this, coupled with the motive of the cross, suggests a teleological, almost religious nature of the sacrifice.

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15   Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, April 29, 1960.
16   Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, April 29, 1960.
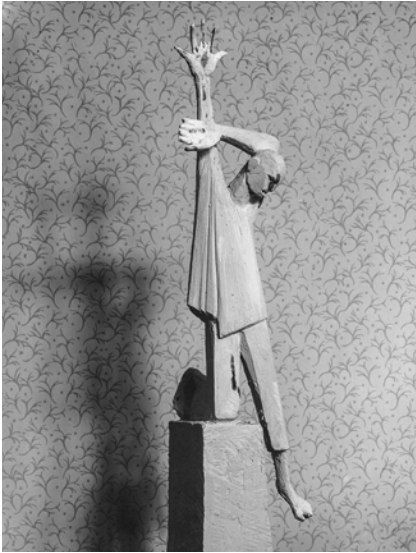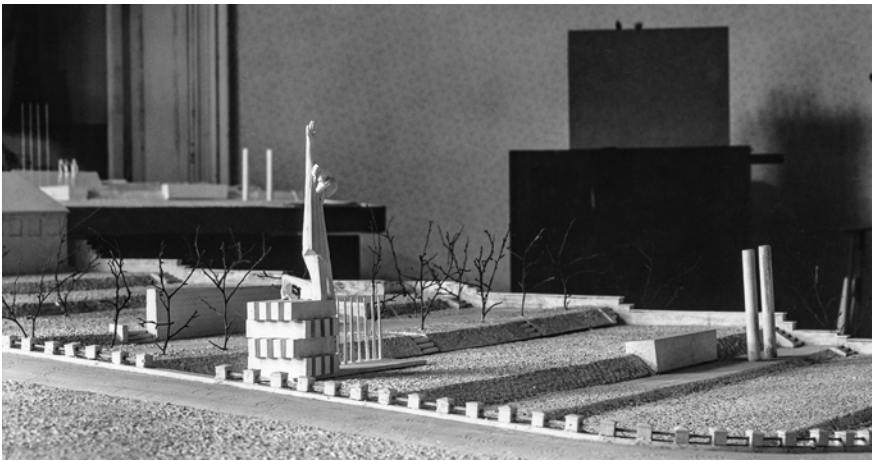17   Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, April 29, 1960.

Figure 8.5. István Martsa, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1:10 model, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

Figure 8.6. István Martsa, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1:50 model inserted into the model of the site, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

The winning design, which met the approval of the jury in every aspect was by a Greek émigré, Agamemnon Makrisz, an influential figure in Hungarian cultural politics (figures 8.7 and 8.8). Besides praising, rightfully, the composition and its placement within the given space, the jury highlighted that "The main virtue [of his work] content-wise is that it is not pessimistic, it expresses the positive traits of the fight against fascism."[18] As Béla Ujvári, the "leading

18   Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, April 29, 1960.

Figure 8.7. Agamemnon Makrisz, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1:10 model, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.
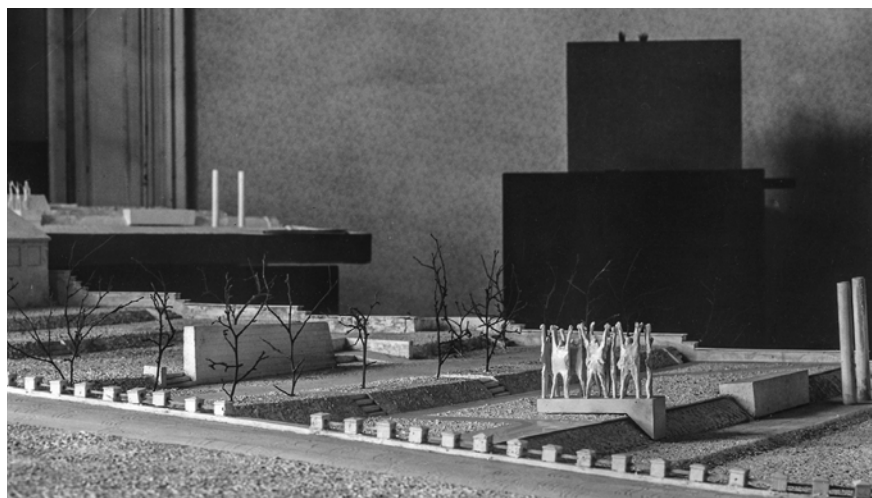
Figure 8.8. Agamemnon Makrisz, *Design for the Hungarian Martyr Memorial in Mauthausen*, 1:50 model inserted into the model of the site, 1960. Source: SzM KEMKI ADK.

specialized lector" and representative of the Fine Arts Fund wrote in his more detailed analysis: "Agamemnon Makrisz's plan on the one hand depicts the barbarity of fascism realistically through the form of the figures, on the other hand it emphasizes the will and power to oppose the barbarity of fascism. The composition, although the suffering and hardship is evident from the figures, is not depressing, nor pessimistic, it does not speak of destruction and death, rather about new life."[19]

Indeed, the memorial shows a dynamic composition: nine strong, geometrically simplified, almost uniform figures are standing back-to-back with their

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19   Béla Ujvári, "Memorandum," May 1960, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25000/2014/M/VII/1.

arms and fists raised towards the sky. Without prior knowledge, they would rather seem to be workers at a demonstration than prisoners of a concentration camp.[20] The sculpture thus meets the requirements of the antifascist narrative: it shows active figures instead of passive victims, whose portrayal was considered, as we have seen above, "pessimistic."

Victors vs. Victims: A Non-Commissioned Hungarian Plan

The development of the official project for Mauthausen resulted in press coverage that provided both inspiration and opportunity for survivors to thematize the Holocaust. With its focus on the suffering of the victims, a non-commissioned plan for the Mauthausen memorial was similar to the majority of the unselected commissioned plans, its form, however, was much more progressive. It stepped further away from strict realism towards a more abstracted type of figuration. Rezső Berczeller (1912–1992) created his small terracotta sculpture titled *Mauthausen* in 1958 (figure 8.9) when the plans to erect a national memorial were already publicly known due to the fundraising campaign.
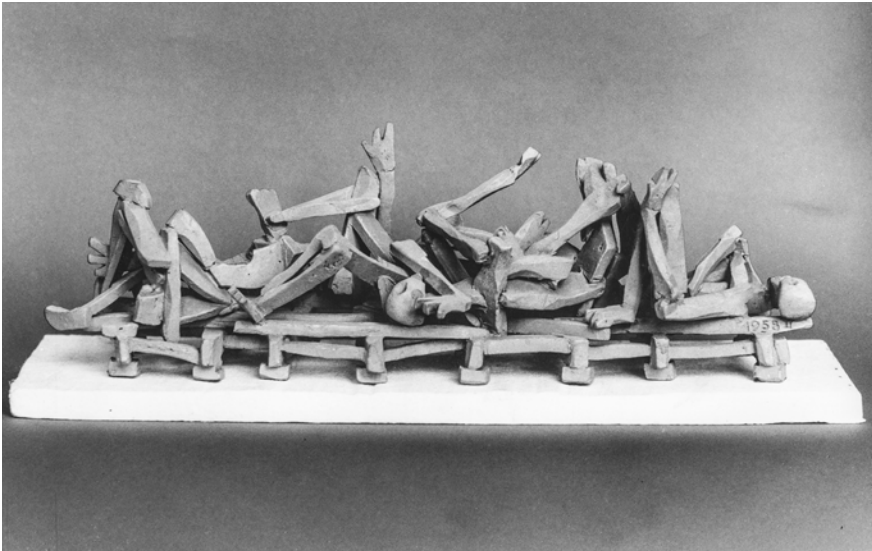

Figure 8.9. Rezső Berczeller, *Mauthausen*, 1958. Photo by László Roboz, courtesy of László Beke.

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20 A contemporary work pertaining to the same iconography is Drago Tršar (1927–), *Manifestants I.,* 1959, Ljubljana, Moderna galerija (Museum of Modern Art).

The lower part of Berczeller's work consists of a rough carpentered grid, which resembles beds in concentration camp barracks. Their rhythm also recalls the wooden sleepers of train tracks (railroad ties), thus evoking deportation.[21] On this structure we see an extremely dense volume of individually unidentifiable bodies, formulated in an abstracted, geometrical manner.

We do not know whether Berczeller made any effort to have his plan selected in 1958, or to be allowed to participate in the competition during the following year. Nonetheless, it is certain that his work could not have met official requirements due to at least two reasons. First of all, instead of applauding the future victors of the fight against fascism, his work clearly commemorates the victims. Berczeller's work thus lacks any visualization of the antifascist narrative, its commemorative tone therefore could have been identified as—to quote the jury's phrasing—"pessimistic." Secondly, the rather abstract way of figural expression he applied was dangerously close to abstraction, which was strictly banned in Hungary at the time.

The overall composition of Makrisz's work is much closer to traditional forms of figuration than Berczeller's. Makrisz's figures, however, are also simplified to geometric forms. This is the reason why Ujvári's analysis had to end with a "red tail,"[22] defending on an ideological basis a work that, in its stylistic details, moved away from socialist realism. He wrote that, "One of the most valuable traits of the composition is that in the spirit of socialist realism—in the true sense of the word—it succeeded in creating a high quality, modern composition."[23] Berczeller's work, which moved even further from realist figuration—and was indeed guilty of "pessimism"—could not have received such an apologetic defense.

Victors vs. Victims: The Yugoslav Memorial

The national monuments erected in Mauthausen offer excellent grounds for a comparative analysis that would, however, exceed the limitations of this study. Two significant caveats should nonetheless be highlighted. First, the victims of most nations came from more diverse backgrounds than the deportees from

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21   The structure was interpreted as barrack beds and the sculpture was first published, titled as Mauthausen, in László Beke, "Berczeller Rudolf szobrászata" [Rudolf Berczeller's sculptures], *Ars Hungarica* 2 (1985): 208.

22   A "red tail" is a sentence or a paragraph in a given text that provides it a communist (e.g., socialist realist) ideological framework. Situated usually at the end, it is added in order to conform—at least formally—to official expectations, even if the text itself contradicts them, with the aim to facilitate the publication of the text.

23   Béla Ujvári, "Memorandum," May 1960, 3, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25000/2014/M/VII/1.

Figure 8.10. Nandor Glid, *Memorial of the Yugoslav Victims*, Mauthausen, 1957–58. Source: Fortepan, image no. 117676, donated by Zsuzsanna Dán.

Hungary, who were predominantly Jewish. This should be taken into account when comparing and evaluating the narratives embodied in the monuments (victimhood and commemoration vs. resistance and antifascist fight). Second, the realized memorials—as we have seen in the Hungarian case—are already results of a selection process. The winning designs might be representative of the nature of official memory politics, but not necessarily of the whole artistic production inspired by Mauthausen.

Nevertheless, one national memorial erected in Mauthausen is comparable to Berczeller's work in terms of both style and artistic approach, and yet simultaneously it is the polar opposite of the winning Hungarian design. Furthermore, it highlights that not every communist country insisted to the same degree on the implementation of the antifascist narrative as did the Hungarian jury. Nandor Glid (1924–1997), a Yugoslav sculptor of Hungarian–Jewish descent was the creator of the winning design for the Memorial of the Yugoslav Victims in 1957, completed in Mauthausen the following year (figure 8.10).[24] The composition shows a dense web of human figures portrayed only by simple

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24   Irina Subotić, *Nandor Glid* (Belgrade: Fondacija Vujičić kolekcija, 2012), 93.

geometrical forms, with arms raised as a cry for help, scattered on a two-dimensional plane evoking the image of a mass murder site.[25]

The similarity of Glid's memorial and Berczeller's plan is striking. The skeletal figures show the same level of abstraction, whereas the composition attests to an affinity towards the representation of a geometrically structured chaos, either on a two-dimensional plane (Glid) or in three dimensions (Berczeller). It is safe to assume that Berczeller was not familiar with Glid's design while creating his own sculpture. Instead, the similarity must be due to their matching artistic approach and possibly to similar sources, namely archival photographs of mass grave sites. These photographs, documenting either the process or the result of the Holocaust were published abundantly in contemporary historical works; they provided a habitual starting point for the artistic reception of the genocide.

Conceived only three years apart, the Yugoslav and the Hungarian memorials stand next to each other in Mauthausen. Their temporal and geographical proximity highlights the distance exemplified by both their form and meaning. From a stylistic point of view, the level of abstraction embodied in the Yugoslav memorial (as well as in Berczeller's plan) was intolerable for Hungarian authorities, where a ban on abstraction was in place. In Yugoslavia, however, after the break with the Eastern Bloc, abstract art gained momentum, which underlined the distance from the Soviet Union and its dominant style, socialist realism.

The contrast of the Yugoslav memorial's commemorative tone and the Hungarian memorial's combative expression becomes even sharper if we take into account the different historical backgrounds of the two countries. In Hungary, armed resistance against Nazis and the local Hungarian far-right Arrow Cross Party was extremely limited, especially compared to the considerable role and activity of Yugoslav partisans.[26] After the war, Hungarian communist authorities wished to see antifascist fighters on the monument, their Yugoslav counterparts were content with visualizing the suffering of the victims. From the perspective of memory politics, it appears that Hungary, a country lacking a strong antifascist past, insisted on adhering to the antifascist narrative, while Yugoslavia—despite its strong partisan movement—did not. As these memorials were

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25 Glid's later work, which depicted bodies on a barbed wire fence, was developed from his Mauthausen composition: *Dachau, International Memorial,* 1933–1945. His design was selected by the jury in 1965 and the memorial was erected in 1968. Subotić, *Nandor Glid,* 97–99.

26 See Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel: Realpolitik, Ideologie und der Mord an den ungarischen Juden* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002).

erected abroad, they did not solely represent the past: they were intended to shape the present perception of their countries—and their current leadership—internationally.

From the history of the Hungarian memorial in Mauthausen it is evident that for the communist leadership of the country, the memorialization of the Holocaust was a means and not an aim. The international setting where the memorial was placed provided an excellent opportunity to present Hungary—and the leadership itself—in the context of the antifascist narrative, which served as a tool for self-legitimization, imagining and visualizing a central role for antifascist resistance in a country which lacked such a strong historical role.

1965, Auschwitz: The Permanent Hungarian Exhibition

Auschwitz was the location of another artistic project that represented Hungary abroad within an international context. The new permanent Hungarian exhibition in Auschwitz, which opened in 1965, was completed with artworks commissioned specifically for the project.[27] Although the main focus was on the monumental visualization of the antifascist narrative, some of the works represented victimhood. Moreover, on this occasion, criticism was formulated about the realization of the project within the jury while an explicit need for a different perspective emerged in the press, one that concentrated on the experience of the victims.

The historical exhibition—reconstructed in 2004 by the Open Society Archives in Budapest—consisted mainly of texts, documents, and photos, as well as illustrative artworks arranged on panels.[28] The narrative began with the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919)[29] and ended with postwar trials and the introduction of the socialist system in Hungary.[30] Out of the 120 panels,

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27 I would like to express my gratitude to Mária Árvai for helping me locate archival material about the exhibition. She was the first to publish the list of the artists involved: Mária Árvai, "Ország Lili első magyarországi gyűjteményes kiállítása, 1967. Székesfehérvár" [Lili Ország's first comprehensive exhibition in Hungary, 1967. Székesfehérvár], *Múlt és Jövő* 4 (2016): 88, 94.

28 "Auschwitz rekonstrukció," (Auschwitz reconstruction), Open Society Archives, 2004 http://w3.osaarchivum.org/galeria/auschwitz/, accessed April 30, 2019, the webpage of the exhibition is currently under reconstruction.

29 Also translated more literally as the Republic of Councils in Hungary (Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság), this was a short-lived (133 days) communist state in 1919.

30 As well as with references to contemporary trials (Eichmann, 1961; Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, 1963–65). "Az 1965. évi kiállítás az Auschwitzi magyar pavilonban" [The 1965 exhibition in the Hungarian pavilion in Auschwitz], Open Society Archives, "Auschwitz rekonstrukció," accessed April 30, 2019, http://w3.osaarchivum.org/galeria/auschwitz/main.html.

only 10 made reference to Jewish victims, and none of them mentioned the Roma.[31] The plans, with their disproportionately wide representation of the 1919–1939 period, evoked criticism from the director of the Auschwitz State Museum who recommended to broaden the part about the fate of Hungarians, from their deportation in 1944 until the end of the war.[32] The Hungarian exhibition, which occupied block 15, was the fifth to open, following the Czechoslovakian, East German, Soviet, and Yugoslav exhibits.[33] These, and further national exhibitions established during the 1960s form the original international context of the Hungarian exhibition.

The artists were chosen by the Committee for the Division of Work in the Fine Arts Fund at the request of the Department of Museums in the Ministry of Culture.[34] (This body was responsible for choosing artists for state-funded projects directly, where a competition was not deemed necessary.) The artists did not apply for the project but were instead appointed to participate. Consequently, they were not necessarily interested in or closely acquainted with the

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31 "Az 1965. évi kiállítás az Auschwitzi magyar pavilonban" [The 1965 exhibition in the Hungarian pavilion in Auschwitz], Open Society Archives, "Auschwitz rekonstrukció," accessed April 30, 2019, http://w3.osaarchivum.org/galeria/auschwitz/main.html; István Rév, "Auschwitz 1945–1989 (rekonstrukció)" [Auschwitz 1945–1989: Reconstruction], *Élet és Irodalom* 19, May 7, 2004, https://www.es.hu/cikk/2004-05-10/rev-istvan/auschwitz-1945-1989-rekonstrukcio.html. At this point—and during decades to come—the Roma Holocaust was virtually absent from historiography. The first Hungarian artwork related to it—which even preceded the historiographic discourse—was an unrealized plan for a memorial by György Jovánovics. See Véri, "The Holocaust and the Arts," 210–11.

32 "Az Állami Múzeum Auschwitzban átirata a Magyar Partizán Szövetség elnökségének" [Letter from the State Museum in Auschwitz to the presidency of the Hungarian Partisan Association], January 29, 1965, Open Society Archives, "Auschwitz rekonstrukció," accessed April 30, 2019, http://w3.osaarchivum.org/galeria/auschwitz/files/pages/main.bottom/69.html.

33 Emil Horn, "Az auschwitzi magyar emlékkiállítás előkészítése" [The preparation of the Hungarian memorial exhibition in Auschwitz], *Legújabbkori múzeumi közlemények,* nos. 2–3 (1965): 87–91. See the timeline of Auschwitz-Birkenau: Memorial Timeline, Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, accessed April 30, 2019, http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/history-of-the-memorial/memorial-timeline/. The 1965 exhibition replaced the first, short-lived Hungarian permanent show that opened in 1960. See András Szécsényi, "'Nem szabad zsidó kérdést csinálni belőle': A Kádár-kori auschwitzi kiállítások kontextusai" ["It shall not be treated as a Jewish question": The contexts of Kádár-era exhibitions in Auschwitz], in *Történeti Muzeológiai Szemle 16,* ed. István Ihász and János Pintér (Budapest: Magyar Múzeumi Történész Társulat, 2018), 153–70. I have identified a painting held without any reference (author, original title, date or provenance) in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum most probably having been exhibited in Auschwitz in 1960. The research is still ongoing, therefore the work cannot be discussed here in detail. The painting depicts trains, filled with deportees, heading towards the mouth of a giant vampire-like head of Hitler with skeleton hands, and crematoria in the background. The composition is based on the iconography of Simon Wiesenthal's drawing, *Transporte* (Transports), published in his book *KZ. Mauthausen* (1946).

34 Proceedings of the Committee for the Division of Work, December 16, 1964, 5; Resolution of the Committee for the Division of Work, December 16, 1964, MEB 24/8/1964, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82 (Auschwitz exhibition folder).

subject of the commission. Furthermore, judging by the late start and the short deadlines for the project, it seems that the artistic part was a belated addition to the historical exhibition, in preparation since spring 1963.[35] The artists were chosen and notified in late December 1964, and the sketches approved by mid-January. The deadline for the finished works was March 1, since the opening of the exhibition was scheduled for May.[36] Although the appointed lector warned in January that the plans for the exhibition were vague and the various artistic works were lacking a coherent composition, the project continued unchanged.[37]

The major part of the artistic material consisted of a "series of drawings" (actually large paintings on particleboard), which corresponded with the narrative of the historical exhibition. The themes were defined as follows:

Wall 1: The Hungarian Republic of Councils and the Horthy-era.
Wall 2: Fascism in Hungary (Massacre in Yugoslavia [Novi Sad, 1942],
        Anti-Jewish laws, Forced labor, Ghetto).
Wall 3: The concentration camp ("lager") in Auschwitz.
Wall 4: Terror of the Arrow Cross, Resistance, Liberation.

The assigned artists were:
Wall 1: Gyula Hincz (1904–1986)
Wall 2: János Kass (1927–2010)
Wall 3: Béla Kondor (1931–1972)
Wall 4: Endre Szász (1926–2003)

A closer look at the list reveals that no consideration was given to the probable thematic preferences of the artists: the historical narrative was divided between them according to strict alphabetical order.[38] Two further paintings were commissioned: one representing the skeleton-like figures of the prisoners

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35   Horn, "Az auschwitzi magyar emlékkiállítás," 88.
36   The artists were first notified on December 18, 1964. Another letter shows that the consultation with them was scheduled for December 21. Letter, 6550/64, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.
37   Opinion formulated by Zoltán Boross, Proceedings of the Complex Jury, January 12, 1965, Sz/21/1965, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.
38   A handwritten note containing only the numbering of the walls, without mentioning the themes, set the deadline for the sketches (January 13) as well as for the finished works (February 15). Agreement upon the division of the graphic works of the exhibition in Auschwitz, December 30, 1964, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82. The themes were defined in Proceedings of the Graphics Jury (in case of Kass, Kondor, and Szász), January 13, 1965, G/1/1965, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82; Proceedings of the Painting Jury (in case of Hincz), March 1, 1965, F/30/1965, 2, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.

Figure 8.11. Gyula Konfár, *Resistance in the Camp (Prisoners of the concentration camp)*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.
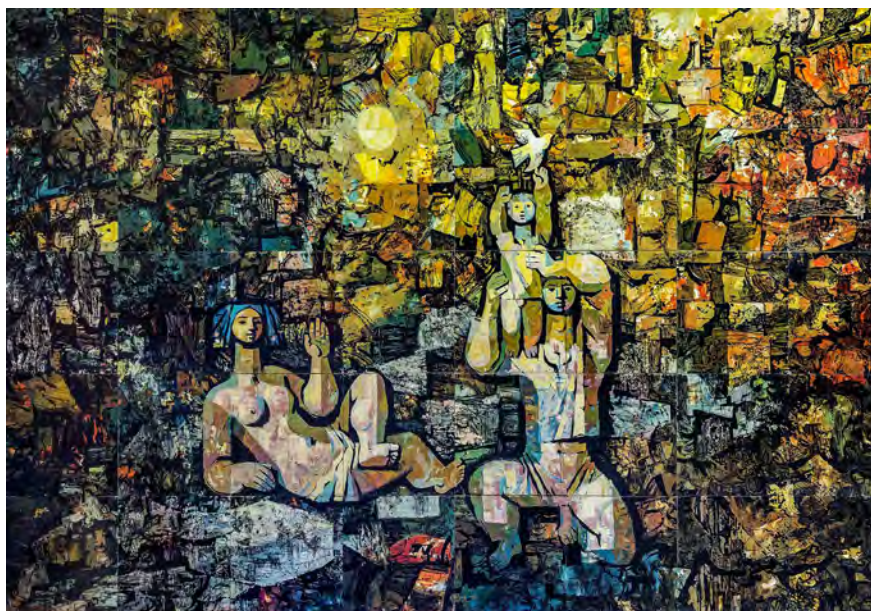
Figure 8.12. György Konecsni, *Liberation (A man, a woman, their child, and the dove of peace)*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

Figure 8.13. István Martsa, *Sculpture for the Hungarian Exhibition in Auschwitz*, 1965 (conceived originally as the design for the Hungarian martyr memorial in Mauthausen, 1960). Courtesy of Piroska Martsa.

Figure 8.14. József Somogyi, *Mother with Her Child*, before 1965. Source: *Művészet*, no. 6 (1965): 24.

(figure 8.11) by Gyula Konfár (1933–2008), and another, a large postwar idyll, showing parents with their child and a dove (figure 8.12) symbolizing peace by György Konecsni (1908–1970).[39]

The Committee also commissioned an artwork based on an earlier model: István Martsa's sculpture created for the competition related to the Mauthausen memorial (figure 8.13).[40] A female counterpart of this life-size figure, a sculpture not listed among the commissions, József Somogyi's fearful *Mother with Her Child* (figure 8.14) was added at a later stage.[41] A further element, a

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39 Proceedings of the Committee for the Division of Work, December 16, 1964, 5. Konecsni was selected conditionally, in case Endre Domanovszky (1907–1974), Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts would not accept the task. For the acceptance of Konfár's 1:1 cartoon and Konecsni's 1:5 colored sketch, see Proceedings of the Painting Jury, January 29, 1965, F/10/1965, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82. Konfár's work was originally intended as a mosaic (to be executed by Lajos Csákvári Nagy), but due to the limited time the technique was changed to painting. Letter by István Fazekas to Lajos Csákvári Nagy, January 20, 1965, 10.025/65, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82. Today, the works commissioned for the Auschwitz exhibition are in the collection of the Szombathelyi Képtár (Szombathely Gallery).

40 For the acceptance of the 1:1 plaster version, see Proceedings of the Sculpture Jury, January 19, 1965, Sz/26/1965, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.

41 The sculpture was mentioned and reproduced for the first time (titled *Auschwitz*) in an article, written while the exhibition material was still in Budapest. Imre Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák az auschwitzi magyar
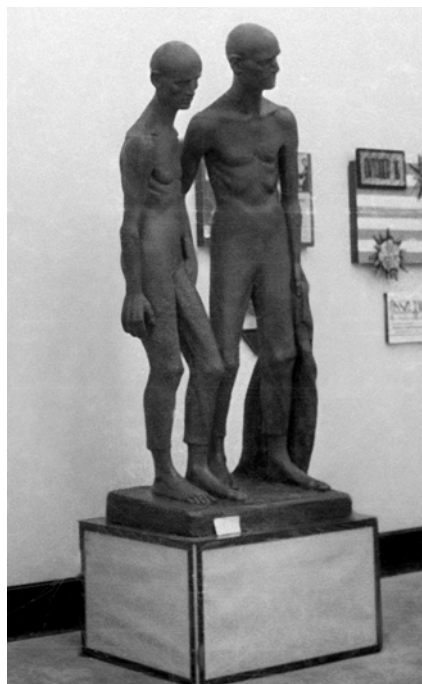
Figure 8.15. Tibor Barabás, *Forced March*, 1959. Source: Fortepan, image no. 114174, donated by Sándor Bauer.

red copper urn by metalsmith József Péri (1933–2003) that symbolized commemoration, served as the container for a memorial candle placed in the exhibition room, which was divided by wrought iron panels by the sculptor Imre Varga (1923–2019).[42]

At the stage of commissioning the works, the Hungarian Jewish Museum proposed the exhibition of *Forced March* (1959) by Tibor Barabás from their collection (figure 8.15).[43] It references the eponymous poem, *Erőltetett menet* (Forced March) by Miklós Radnóti but, as we will see shortly, the meaning of Barabás's work diverges from what the title suggests.

The sculpture belongs to a wide range of works commemorating the well-known Hungarian poet who was murdered as a Jewish forced laborer.[44]

lágermúzeumban" [Paintings and sculptures at the Hungarian camp museum in Auschwitz], *Művészet* 6 (1965): 23–24. A reproduction was also published in Lenke Haulisch, "Az auschwitzi múzeum állandó magyar kiállítása" [The permanent Hungarian exhibition of the museum in Auschwitz], *Népművelés* 5 (1965): 41. The work is currently in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery, exhibited in 2017, lacking any reference to Auschwitz, as *Ballada* (Ballad), around 1960, inv. number 2008.21-N, see Judit Borus, ed., *Within Frames: Art of the Sixties in Hungary (1958–1968)* (Budapest: Hungarian National Gallery, 2017), 353.

42 For the acceptance of the 1:10 models, see Proceedings of the Complex Jury, January 12, 1965, Sz/21/1965, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.

43 The jury consisted of sculptors András Kocsis (1905–1976), Tamás Vígh (1926–2010), István Kiss, and the specialized lector Zoltán Boross. Proceedings of the Committee for the Division of Work, December 16, 1964, 5. According to the invitation, the jury deliberated on January 7, 1965, at the Jewish Museum. Invitation sent by the Lectorate for Fine and Applied Arts, December 28, 1964, 6653/64, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82. For the rejection, see Letter by Tibor Ormos, Director of the Lectorate for Fine and Applied Arts to the Museum Department of the Ministry of Culture, January 20, 1965, 10.025/65, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82. The documents do not make clear who proposed the sculpture in the first place. The work is in the collection of the Hungarian Jewish Museum: Tibor Barabás: *Erőltetett menet* (Forced march), 1959, inv. no. 64.2200, painted plaster, height: 191 cm. I would like to thank Rita Rusznák, curator of the museum, for her help in identifying the sculpture. (In the inventory the work is dated to 1960, but on the bottom right side of the sculpture "BT 59" is carved.)

44 As he continued writing during the labor service, some of his last works can be classified as Holocaust literature.

Radnóti's figure achieved a cult-like commemorative position in this period, as he was strangely suitable for both official memory politics and for people aspiring on their own to commemorate the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.[45] For official memory politics, Radnóti was convenient in that he could be remembered as a great Hungarian poet who fell victim to the war. (As a Christian convert, he was not "obtrusively" Jewish, and as a forced laborer, his death did not necessarily evoke the deportation of the Jews and the extermination camps.) The poet's officially sanctioned commemorative status, however, offered a continued opportunity to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust in general.

The sculpture of Barabás shows the life-sized representation of two men. Contrary to the title, however, the hairless, thin figures do not evoke the image of forced labor or a death march, but rather that of prisoners of a concentration camp. The function of the title, borrowed from Radnóti, is merely to situate the sculpture in an acceptable cultural, historical, and commemorative context. Although the Committee took the offered sculpture into consideration, according to the laconic opinion of the jury, it was "not suitable" to be shown in Auschwitz.[46] It was probably the passive victimhood represented by the figures that was deemed inappropriate—especially since the project already included Martsa's sculpture, which struck a similar tone, although in a more symbolic form.

Most of the artworks commissioned for the project share certain characteristics. First, their exact themes are rather difficult to identify visually, even knowing the topics assigned to the artists. This is partly due to the lack of discrete narrative elements and partly to another recurring characteristic: the abstraction of the figures and, to a lesser extent, the addition of purely abstract elements to the composition. The fact that the artists were lacking both personal experience regarding the depicted themes as well as an expressed interest in the topic most probably contributed to the ambiguous nature of their works.

Hincz's works are the most narrative ones, but even he added geometrical, stylized figures to his compositions (figure 8.16). The panels by Kass show not only an abstract background, but even the depiction of what appears to be an

45   For the artistic reception of Radnóti, see Daniel Véri, "A holokauszt és a zsidó identitás szimbolikus ábrázolásai (1939–1960): Bálint Endre, Martyn Ferenc, Major János és Maurer Dóra grafikái" [Symbolic representations of the Holocaust and Jewish identity, 1939–1960: Graphic works by Endre Bálint, Ferenc Martyn, János Major and Dóra Maurer], in *Szigorúan ellenőrzött nyomatok: A magyar sokszorosított grafika 1945–1961 között* [Strictly checked prints: The reproduced Hungarian graphic, 1945–1961], ed. Gábor Pataki (Miskolc: Herman Ottó Múzeum–Miskolci Galéria, 2018), 40–71.

46   Letter by Tibor Ormos, Director of the Lectorate for Fine and Applied Arts to the Museum Department of the Ministry of Culture, January 20, 1965, 10.025/65, SzM KEMKI ADK, 25020/2014/82.

Figure 8.16. Gyula Hincz, *Miklós Horthy's Coming to Power (The Rider of Reactionaryism)*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

Figure 8.17. János Kass, *Massacre of Novi Sad in 1942*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

abstract sculpture (figures 8.17–19). The theme of the latter work—depicting men, a woman, and her child—which shows an iconographic reference to the biblical Massacre of the Innocents, can be identified as the massacre of Novi Sad (figure 8.17). There the Hungarian army murdered thousands of predominantly Serbian and Jewish civilians in 1942 under the false pretext of counter-partisan operations. Another work by Kass depicts on the right side a kneeling man with his arms tied and floating heads on the left; these most likely reference forced labor (or the ghetto) and the mass murders carried out by the Arrow Cross at the

Figure 8.18. János Kass, *Forced Labor* or *Ghetto* (on the right); *Mass Murders Carried Out by the Arrow Cross at the Danube* (on the left), 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

Figure 8.19. János Kass, *Anti-Jewish Laws* (?), 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

Danube, respectively (figure 8.18). A third painting, showing nothing but a human figure almost completely covered in a geometrical structure of dripped paint could, through the constraints of the figure, represent anti-Jewish laws, but due to the lack of clearly identifiable motifs it could be interpreted in many ways (figure 8.19). Kondor's three paintings and two etchings evoke victimhood mostly through Christological iconographic references, as well as visual (e.g., the chimney of the crematorium) and textual (e.g., "Appell!!") allusions to Auschwitz (figure 8.20). The monochrome series of paintings by Szász can be arranged into a sequence that follows the deterioration of the human figure from a man wearing a yellow star (figure 8.21) leading to disembodied heads, masks (figure 8.22), and finally a skull. This series depicting victimhood is complemented and contrasted—in accordance with the antifascist narrative—with the hopeful image of a liberating Soviet soldier and a landscape with spikes of wheat, symbolizing peace.

Figure 8.20. Béla Kondor, *Auschwitz: Appell!!*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

Figure 8.21. Endre Szász, *Jewish Man with a Yellow Star*, 1965. Source: Szombathelyi Képtár.

The emaciated prisoners on Konfár's monumental painting (320 × 210 cm) are closer to the portrayal of actual victims than Makrisz's sculpture, although the entwined and partially entangled arms of two figures and the lowered but clenched fist of the third man could support the title given in a 1965 article and the exhibition's brochure published in 1969: "Resistance in the Camp" (figure 8.11).[47] The gargantuan postwar idyll by Konecsni (300 × 480 cm, painted on 40 panels, 60 × 60 cm each), titled *Liberation* in the same article offers a schematic representation of a family with the dove of peace (figure 8.12), but also an art historical reference to modernism through the woman's naked figure, reminiscent of Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863). The painting's peculiarity lies in the background, which is formed by purely abstract panels painted using the dripped paint technique of the American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock.[48] With the ban on abstraction still in effect, this painting presented a strange hybrid of modernized figuration (still reminiscent of socialist realism) and abstraction absorbing the background.

To conclude, compared to the single-monument Mauthausen project, the exhibition in Auschwitz offered a more multifaceted artistic reception of the Holocaust with its diverse artists and artworks. Within the broader framework

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47   Haulisch, "Az auschwitzi múzeum," 40–41; Emil Horn, ed., *Die ungarische Gedenkausstellung in Auschwitz* (Budapest: Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1969). As noted already by Péter, Konfár's figures show the influence of Makrisz's Mauthausen memorial. Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 21. The floating heads on the work of Kass are also reminiscent of the memorial.

48   These panels were painted horizontally—in accordance with Pollock's technique—while Kass's human figure, overwritten by the geometrical grid, was apparently painted on a vertical plane. (The vertical streams of the trickling paint are apparent.)

of the state's antifascist narrative, a possibility emerged to focus on victims and on remembrance, although the Jewishness of the victims in question still remained mostly hidden.

The critical assessment of the Hungarian exhibition in Auschwitz presents an interesting insight into the reception of the Holocaust in Hungary. A detailed article about the material of the exhibition, authored by Imre Péter, appeared in *Művészet* (Art)—the only Hungarian periodical dedicated to fine arts at that time.[49] It is symptomatic of this period's public discourse that the words "Jew" or "Jewish" did not appear a single time in the lengthy article. The writing is otherwise both forthcoming and critical. In a "short subjective introduction," as he puts it, the author clarifies that his parents and family were killed in Auschwitz.[50] According to Péter, despite the artists' efforts, the works could not be considered more than decent exhibition decorations.[51] Moreover, these artists were, as he put it, fortunately far from the subject both in time and space, and thus they attempted to visualize something that was not within their own personal experience.[52] As Péter concluded: "It is almost inexplicable why the organizers of the exhibition did not take into consideration that there are artists still living among us who have suffered the torments of hells like Auschwitz and even after twenty years they could have confessed about the horrors of that era in a more authentic and convincing way."[53]

What he proposed here—if we rephrase in a more contemporary perspective—was the merging of the two distinct narratives outlined at the beginning of this study: state-commissioned art sanctioned by official memory politics and non-commissioned art, driven by internal artistic receptions of the Holocaust, created almost exclusively by survivors in this period. His proposition remained, however, unfulfilled due to the lack of commissions. The works by survivors and other interested parties could not—with a few exceptions—be realized in such a monumental form as were the works of the Auschwitz exhibition or the Mauthausen memorial. Although the unrealized plans for Mauthausen, as well as some of the works that were created for the Auschwitz exhibition, represented suffering and victimhood, the victims' perspective in general remained under-

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49   Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 21–24. (The article was based on Péter's visits to the artists' studios and on the completed works amassed at the Museum of Technology before being delivered to Auschwitz.)

50   Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 21.

51   Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 22.

52   Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 22.

53   Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 22.

represented compared to the narrative of the antifascist struggle. Nevertheless, these projects opened up both physical and virtual discursive spaces, where the memory of the Holocaust could emerge and start to take form.

1965, Hungarian National Gallery: Exhibiting the Antifascist Narrative

Although set in Hungary, the exhibition entitled *Hungarian Artists Against Fascism* (1965, Hungarian National Gallery) served a similar cause as the memorial in Mauthausen and the exhibition in Auschwitz. It was organized in connection with the Fifth Congress of the International Federation of Resistance Fighters (FIR), which took place in Budapest.[54] Consequently, the exhibition aimed to position the country for an international audience through its art production related to the antifascist struggle.

The exhibition attempted to trace a politically progressive tradition from World War I up to the present, attributing a central role to the political lineage of the socialist leadership. Despite the role Hungary played in World War II and in the Holocaust, the exhibition created an image of the country as one at the forefront of the fight against fascism.[55] Judging by the exhibited material, antifascism was understood as a broad, undefined framework, which encompassed more or less any historical or contemporary topic considered meaningful from a left-wing—not necessarily communist or socialist—point of view.[56]

Showing approximately 650 pieces, the exhibition was a gargantuan enterprise even if most of the artworks were rather small in scale. Seventy percent of them consisted of graphic works, complemented by paintings, posters, sculptures, and medals. The catalogue (figure 8.23) comprises data from all exhibited works, but contains only 15 illustrations. The titles are enough, however, for a thematic analysis. The time frame of the works ranged from World War I to the 1960s, covering such topics as World War I, the Hungarian Republic of Councils in 1919, the Horthy regime and World War II, and contemporary issues

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54 Zsuzsa D. Fehér, ed., *A magyar képzőművészek a fasizmus ellen* [Hungarian artists against fascism] (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1965), 4.

55 Hungary was an ally to Nazi Germany during World War II. In March 1944, German forces entered the country to prevent it from leaving the Axis. Hungary's governor Miklós Horthy stayed in power, appointing a pro-German prime minister. The Hungarian government and authorities played a crucial role in the deportation of Hungarian Jews and Roma.

56 A substantial number of the exhibiting artists were in fact either members or supporters of the Group of Socialist Artists (Szocialista Képzőművészek Csoportja), an organization active in the interwar period and during World War II.

Figure 8.23. *Hungarian Artists Against Fascism,* catalogue cover, Hungarian National Gallery, 1965.

A MAGYAR KÉPZŐMŰVÉSZEK
A FASIZMUS ELLEN

like colonialism, peace movements, and the threat posed by nuclear weapons.[57] The topics related to World War II and the Holocaust appeared within this wider framework. One part of these works focused on the war in general, others on the enemy: fascism, and the fight against it, including a number of works representing partisans and the liberation.

Although it was not a central subject of the exhibition, it appears that the curator, Zsuzsa D. Fehér, did make a substantial effort to provide a wide and varied representation of the Holocaust.[58] Instead of only relying on public collections and state-funded artistic projects, she also borrowed works from private owners that represented the victims' perspective. For instance, a high number of works were exhibited from Imre Ámos, an excellent Hungarian painter of Jewish origin who was murdered in the Holocaust. His works, on loan from his widow, depicted the war, dark visions of his experience, forced labor, and the

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57　The characterization of the exhibited material is based on the thorough analysis of the works' titles included in the catalogue. Due to the high amount of data involved it is impossible to include here details about the different groups of works.

58　See her introduction: Fehér, *A magyar képzőművészek,* 5–7 (in Hungarian), 9–12 (in French), as well as her article: Zsuzsa D. Fehér, "Magyar képzőművészek a fasizmus ellen: Jegyzetek a kiállítás rendezése közben" [Hungarian artists against fascism: Notes during curating the exhibition], *Népszabadság,* December 19, 1965, 8.

ghetto.[59] Naturally, all plans for the Mauthausen memorial were shown, as were some recent works connected to the preparation of the Auschwitz exhibition.[60] Among the Holocaust-related material, the labor service and the—often thematically related—illustrations of Radnóti's poems were also recurring topics.[61] Two monumental paintings evoking the deportation were also exhibited, as well as three graphic series, entitled *Lager* (Camp).[62]

Judging by their titles, works connected either to the victims or to the Holocaust in general that were not about war or fascism more broadly made up more than ten percent of the exhibition. By sheer number of works shown, the 1965 exhibition in the Hungarian National Gallery can be considered the single largest attempt up until that date to show works related to the Holocaust.[63] It seems that the interest of the curator was mostly historical, preferring works that depicted contemporary events rather than those that reflected upon the events from a distance. Despite the fact that recent Holocaust-related works by progressive artists were already available, the curator did not include these pieces in the exhibition, most likely because of the conservative nature of the museum.[64]

Although born out of the political need to position Hungary at both a domestic and international level as an important actor in the history of the antifascist struggle, the exhibition is deeply relevant to the history Holocaust memory. Compared to the art publications and exhibitions about the Holocaust in the immediate postwar years, which usually featured works by a single artist, this new exhibition provided the first opportunity to see and compare a larger corpus of Holocaust-related works. Despite its shortcomings—primarily the absence of recent, progressive works—the exhibition can be considered an important step towards the inclusion of the Holocaust both in Hungarian history and in the history of art.

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59 The following references reflect the numbers of the works listed in the catalogue (Fehér, *A magyar képzőművészek*). Imre Ámos: paintings: no. 1–3; graphic works: no. 4–21. Exhibiting in Auschwitz the works of martyr artists, including Ámos, was suggested by Péter who was in fact the second husband of the painter's widow, Margit Anna. Péter, "Pannók, tablók és plasztikák," 23.

60 Sculptures, medals: no. 46 (István Kiss); 67–68 (Ferenc Laborcz); 76 (Agamemnon Makrisz); 75, 80 (István Martsa); 108 (József Somogyi).

61 Graphic works: no. 73, 183, 200, 229, 230, 308, 309, 336, 337, 377.

62 Paintings: no. 48, 50 (Deportation); graphic works: no. 130, 200, 250 (Lager).

63 The exhibitions and publications of the early postwar years (1945–1948) involved mostly single artists.

64 Interestingly enough, in the same year art historian Lajos Németh had already criticized the jury of a large contemporary exhibition partly because of their avoidance of Holocaust-related art. He named a couple of examples: "Lili Ország's antifascist requiem series, . . . Lakner's rejected painting, Kondor's works protesting barbarism—now in the Auschwitz Museum thus regrettably not presentable here." Lajos Németh, "Gondolatok a X. Magyar Képzőművészeti Kiállításról" [Thoughts on the 10th Hungarian Exhibition of Fine Arts], *Kritika* 10 (1965): 46.

Conclusion

This study attempted to provide an overview of the first major state-funded art projects concerning the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary. These projects were all representative, monumental visualizations of the communist leadership's official memory politics between 1955 and 1965. This period, from the tenth until the twentieth anniversary of the end of World War II, saw the first major phase since the immediate postwar years in the formation of artistic Holocaust memory in communist Hungary, encompassing commissioned and non-commissioned works alike.

An important and meaningful aspect of these projects is their geographic location, which of course was closely connected to their primary function. The initiatives that brought about such projects always originated from, or at least were connected to, foreign organizations. Two of the three projects were conducted abroad at sites of former concentration camps (Mauthausen and Auschwitz), which became the loci of competing national historical narratives, both "Eastern" and "Western." The third project, the exhibition *Hungarian Artists Against Fascism*, although staged in Budapest, followed a similar pattern, as its primary audience was made up of the participants at the congress of the International Federation of Resistance Fighters.

This international aspect meant that these projects served a diplomatic function in addition to a domestic one. In this respect, the insistence on a combatively antifascist narrative—even when Hungary's history did not support such claims—was part of a broader attempt to build a heroic antifascist and legitimizing image for an international audience, one that benefited both the country and its communist leadership. In this respect, the starting point of the Holocaust was an almost accidental, albeit necessary, element. These projects did not stem from a specific national need for or interest in memorializing the Holocaust. Characteristically, in the period between 1955 and 1965, no comparable state-funded Holocaust-related project took place on Hungarian soil solely for domestic use without an international audience. These three projects made the memory of the Hungarian Holocaust externalized, it became distant and—although relevant symbolic sites were readily available inland—extraterritorial.

From an art historical point of view, abstraction and figuration emerged as important issues in the case of both the Mauthausen memorial and the Auschwitz exhibition. In this period—which followed the violent and short-lived introduction of the Soviet brand of socialist realism—abstraction was still banned

in the domain of fine arts. Consequently, artists struggled with the crucial problem of modernizing figuration while holding on to an acceptable level of realism. Their solution was a small step towards abstraction: the geometric presentation of the human figure. Makrisz's winning design for Mauthausen already moved quite far from socialist realism: the defensive, ideological apology of the lector confirms the novelty of this new type of figuration. Berczeller's non-commissioned plan, however, which went even further in deconstructing realist figuration, would have certainly been unacceptable, not only because of its dangerously "pessimistic" content that focused on the suffering of the victims, but also due to its form. The difference between Hungarian and Yugoslav cultural political attitudes towards abstraction is evident in the fact that the Yugoslav memorial in Mauthausen contained the same type of figuration as Berczeller's plan. Only five years passed between the contest for the Mauthausen memorial and the commissions for Auschwitz. Nonetheless, it appears that during this short period, abstraction started to gain momentum, becoming partially tolerated by the authorities, even if only in the background of paintings and as decorative elements connected to figurative motifs.

Nonetheless, these state-funded projects represent only one part of the two-sided artistic reception of the Holocaust in this period. The first phase of internally driven, non-commissioned Holocaust-related works date—after the immediate postwar reflections—to the same period. The two groups of works differ not only in their narrative, but also in their authorship. Non-commissioned works were created almost exclusively by Jewish survivors who emphasized the figure, identity, experience, and perspective of the victims through a variety of themes and stylistic approaches. In this period and even in the following years, with the exception of commissions, Holocaust-related works by non-Jewish or non-Roma artists were extremely rare.[65]

Contrary to the non-commissioned works, commissions that originated from official memory politics concentrated on visualizing the antifascist narrative. It appears to be more than a coincidence that in the case of the two examined commissions (Mauthausen and Auschwitz) none of the invited artists had a Jewish background, so far as we know. Consequently, they were not personally driven to represent the survivors' perspective and were more susceptible to following the preferred historical narrative. The Auschwitz project was criticized

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65 See László Lakner's works as well as György Jovánovics's plan for a Roma Holocaust memorial: Véri, "Holocaust and the Arts," 210–11, 214–17, 223–24.

by Péter for lacking the important and authentic perspective of the victims, but the suggested inclusion of this narrative into official memory politics did not happen in this period.

Even though the three projects analyzed above had antifascism at their core and not the memory of the Holocaust, the latter's integration into the antifascist historical narrative opened up possibilities for the appearance and articulation of the victims' perspective nonetheless. In the case of Mauthausen, the winning plan represented antifascism in a combative manner, yet half of the submitted works did in fact focus on the victims. In the case of Auschwitz, partly due to its later date and partly to the multiple works included, the representation of the victims emerged, even if their Jewishness remained mostly hidden. Moreover, the non-winning designs submitted for Mauthausen also reached the public gradually; Martsa's plan was realized for Auschwitz, while the others were exhibited, for instance at the National Gallery in 1965. The 1965 exhibition already signified a conscious attempt to include non-commissioned Holocaust-related works that represented a narrative different from the official one. Through these artworks, regardless of their geographical location, intended audience, and suggested historical narrative (antifascism), doors opened for the theme of the Holocaust to enter public spaces and thus reach a larger audience, while their critical reception opened up a discursive space. All these factors contributed to the emergence and formation of the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary.

Richard S. Esbenshade

Towards a Shared Memory? The Hungarian Holocaust in Mass-Market Socialist Literature, 1956–1970*

Surveys of Hungarian Holocaust literature start, and sometimes end, with Imre Kertész, the 2002 Nobel Prize winner, whose breakthrough 1975 work *Fatelessness* was the most remarkable in a flourishing of pointed accounts of the Jewish tragedy in the 1970s.[1] The scholarly consensus, both in Hungary and abroad, is encapsulated by the dean of historians of the Hungarian Holocaust, Randolph L. Braham: after taking power, the communist government "soon began an assault on the memory of the Holocaust . . . like the 'Jewish Question' in general, [it was] for many decades sunk in an Orwellian black hole of history."[2] Other commentators speak of a "knot of silence,"[3] a "ban on Jewish memory,"[4] or

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1   Imre Kertész, *Sorstalanság: Regény* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1975), *Fatelessness*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 2004). Other such notable works include Mária Ember, *Hajtűkanyar* [Hairpin turn] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1974) and György Moldova, *A Szent Imre-induló* [The Saint Imre march] (Budapest: Magvető, 1975).

2   Randolph L. Braham, "Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust," in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2016), 262.

3   Anna Földes, "A holokauszt a magyar (próza)irodalom tükrében" [The Holocaust in the mirror of Hungarian (prose) literature], *Tanulmányok a holokausztról* [Essays on the Holocaust], vol. 1, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Balassi, 2001), 92. This and all subsequent translations are my own.

4   Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, "Trauma and Distortion: Holocaust Fiction and the Ban on Jewish Memory," *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and Brewster S. Chamberlin (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, Graduate Center of The City University of New York, 2006), 337–47.

the "years of silence."[5] Gábor Gyáni, a prominent scholar of history, memory, and Jewish issues, also refers to "the deep silence," "the partial or total lack of keeping in mind the memory of Jewish suffering and mass death, the Holocaust in its entirety, [which] lasted until the 1960s and, in several areas, well into the 1970s."[6]

The blanket nature of this dark picture is belied by Braham's own yeoman work documenting the scope and variety of literature in which elements of the Holocaust featured, in his indispensable *Bibliography of the Holocaust in Hungary*.[7] It lists over 50 Holocaust-related novels or memoirs—or some mix of the two—published in Hungary between 1956 and 1970, and another 10 focusing on the experience of the Labor Service.[8] The major publishing houses in Hungary, Magvető and Szépirodalmi, produced the bulk of these texts; many were by the most popular authors of the period.

In this article, I survey eight novels published between 1956 and 1969, in which Holocaust themes play a significant part. I will examine how such issues as social responsibility for the persecutions; depiction of the relations between Jews and non-Jews; the identification and motivations of the perpetrators; the identification and motivations of those who attempt rescue; and, ultimately, the place of the Holocaust in the history of the war and the ensuing decade of upheavals are represented in these texts. Beyond disputing the prevalent idea that Holocaust representation during this period was lacking, I argue that such an analysis points to a new paradigm of Holocaust memory itself: the possibility of a shared space between a "Jewish memory" that focuses only on the genocide visited on Hungarian Jewry and a hostile nationalist memory that denies non-Jewish Hungarians' responsibility for the deportations, and any connection between the two communities' fate, both during and after the war.

In order to understand both the constrictions on this literature and the certain, and increasing, amount of free play available to it, I will first establish the framework for both cultural policy and Holocaust memory, one riven with contradictions. The period under discussion, from 1956 until the end of the 1960s,

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5   Oszkár Zsadányi, "A magyar zsidóság tragédiájának visszhangja a magyar irodalomban" [The echo of the tragedy of Hungarian Jewry in Hungarian literature], *Évkönyv*, ed. Sándor Scheiber (Budapest: Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete, 1976), 411.

6   Gábor Gyáni, "Hungarian Memory of the Holocaust in Hungary," in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, 217, 223.

7   Randolph L. Braham, ed., *Bibliography of the Holocaust in Hungary* (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, Graduate Center of The City University of New York, 2011).

8   Auxiliary, weaponless military units mostly for Jewish men, which saw massive abuse, starvation, disease and death.

saw the consolidation of a distinct, if ambiguous, cultural system. It was no longer fixed in the Stalinist vise grip, but not yet open enough to allow the appearance of the more discussed works of Kertész and others that appeared from the early 1970s. In terms of the politics of memory, the upheaval of 1956 had transformed the landscape. The Kádárist consolidation that followed created a massive new taboo on recognizing the failed revolution as anything but a "counter-revolution" hostile to socialism and to the security and progress of the Hungarian people, to a significant extent easing the Stalinist taboo on recognizing the particularity of Jewish experience during the war. This took much of the ideological pressure off of Holocaust memory, while at the same time suppressing the more recent traumas, which could henceforth only be expressed indirectly, if at all.[9] The works here, with one exception—not coincidentally, Imre Keszi's *Elysium*,[10] the one which most "looks" like a Holocaust novel due to its plot centered on the travails of a Jewish family and its deported child and their personal struggles *qua* Jews—are by non-Jewish authors, selected for their prominence in the world of published fiction at the time as well as their varied individual biographies. They range from those ensconced in literary and political officialdom, like József Darvas, to those in more marginalized positions, like Gyula Fekete, all the way to Magda Szabó, who had been officially silenced for a time in the 1950s. While all could be categorized in terms of the dominant mainstream of "antifascist literature," their styles range from doctrinaire socialist realism to more innovative documentary and psychological approaches, and even proto-post-modernism. But all were fully a part of the official literary and publishing system, in full circulation with the backing of the literary machinery of the state. Taken together, they exhibit a crucial, if ambiguous, role for the Holocaust in the literary account—to the extent that it was allowed—of the historical period from the beginning of the war through 1956 and its aftermath. In this period, Holocaust-related literary expressions were less about asserting victimhood than engaging in a national historical reckoning, including both Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives—however limited and flawed overall.

In surveying this literature, and reactions to it in the contemporary Hungarian press, I argue that the key elements of the Hungarian Holocaust—persecution based on professed or attributed Jewish identity, deportations, expropriation and sheer plunder, mass killings—were a significant presence in the novels of the

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9 Ferenc Kőszeg, personal interview by author, October 10, 2012.
10 Imre Keszi, *Elysium* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1958).

period that dealt with Hungary's recent history and its echoes. A search for literary narratives in the mold of what we have become conditioned to identify as "Holocaust literature"—floating free from national politics, critical of the nation as a whole, with the victims and the camps at the center—might come up mostly empty. But our recognition of the terms of cultural expression constructed by the Communist Party and the literary intelligentsia can yield much material for analysis. Jewish identity is often—though not always—muffled in these narratives. The events of 1944 as they happened to Jews are intertwined with the experience of the non-Jewish population, often seen through the eyes of non-Jewish protagonists. Class issues are constantly foregrounded, with the aristocratic and exploitative nature of the perpetrators (and sometimes of the victims) emphasized. Fascism is the enemy of the whole Hungarian nation, if parts of that nation are often seen as collaborating with it. 1945 is seen not as an end to the story but as another turn in a complex and turbulent history, often incorporating the Stalinist period and the 1956 revolution, and implicating memory and the effects of bad conscience. Such a perspective may violate our contemporary universalist precepts of how Holocaust memory "should" be constructed; but in doing so it begins to break down the walls between "Jewish" and "non-Jewish" memory, so often barriers to understanding and even discussion or intellectual exchange.

The Kádárist Cultural Landscape

A sense of the contradictions and ambiguities embedded in the cultural policy of the Kádár-era leadership, and more specifically in its relationship to questions of Jewish identity, is crucial to navigating this "gray zone" of Holocaust memory. The particularity of the Hungarian Holocaust left a larger number of Jewish survivors (mostly in Budapest) than in any other state in the Soviet Union's new sphere of influence, survivors who at the same time were thoroughly assimilated into Hungarian culture and identity, often the descendants of converts or themselves converts to Christianity. The Hungarian Communist Party (MKP) was initially dominated by Hungarians of Jewish origin, including all four members of the top leadership up until 1953. But it was surrounded by a population steeped in a quarter-century of propaganda that identified Jews with the failed Soviet experiment of 1919, and with the national tragedy of Trianon in 1920, which separated rump Hungary from half its population and two-thirds of its territory.[11]

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11   István Deák, "Jews and Communism: The Hungarian Case," in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Com-*

The Party therefore took pains to distance itself from any appearance of acting in the "Jewish interest," and went to great lengths to try to establish its national bona fides, expressed as being on the side of "peasants and workers," and against the formerly "dominant bourgeois classes," and later in the campaign against "cosmopolitanism." This stance also engendered a cautious approach to questions of responsibility, avoiding any national self-examination and pushing guilt onto a relatively few politicians and "executioner thugs" (*hóhérlegények*).[12]

The 1956 revolution and its suppression, part of a longer process over the decade following Stalin's death in 1953 in which the strictly controlled Stalinist truth disintegrated and ultimately was replaced with a looser regime of knowledge, created a new situation for Holocaust memory. The various public taboos of the earlier period—of particular relevance here is that on the recognition of a non-religious Jewish identity[13]—were superseded by the aforementioned new overriding taboo, on any validation of the 1956 uprising. In addition, having seen the danger to their authority posed by nationalist mobilization, the new Party leadership (ironically, now somewhat "dejudaized," at least at the top) was less prone to pandering to national sentiment. This opened up space for more critical treatments of the Holocaust experience.[14] Nationalism was attacked—though by also targeting certain figures associated with the still potent Stalinist wing of the Party, this offensive in addition served as a means to consolidate the anti-Stalinist hegemony. Writers were consequently released from their strict ideological-pedagogical responsibilities, as the new regime cultivated a passive population under the slogan "Whoever is not against us, is with us."[15] As Kádár's control stabilized, the "reform model" gained dominance in the latter half of the 1960s. Thus, a shift from ideological control to the reign of "market forces," within the limits of ideological taboos, took place.[16]

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munism, Studies in Contemporary Jewry 20, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38–61; Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 17, 44, 71, 113.

12   Róbert Győri Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon* [Communism and Jewry in post–1945 Hungary] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2009), 62.

13   The communist takeover included the restriction of public Jewishness to religious activity only, for example by suppressing Zionist groups and restricting the Jewish press to a single publication controlled through the official religious hierarchy. Győri Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság*, 158, 285, 301.

14   Kőszeg, personal interview.

15   Melinda Kalmár, "Az irodalmi élet szerkezetváltozása: Szanálás 1957–1962" [The change in the structure of literary life: Reorganization, 1957–1962], *Holmi* 9, no. 1 (January 1997): 78–95.

16   Melinda Kalmár, "An Attempt at Optimization: The Reform Model in Culture, 1965–1973," in *Muddling Through in the Long 1960s: Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary*, ed. János M. Rainer and Györgi Péteri (Trondheim: Program on East European Cultures and Societies, 2005), 53–82.

Despite the post-'56 repression, the reorganized Party was actually weak—especially in the field of culture, where it had been almost completely abandoned by the intelligentsia—and was in need of at least the tacit loyalty and passive support of the writers, who after the dark years of Stalinism had redeemed their status as the conscience of the nation.[17] The system that emerged was one based more on cooption than coercion and, as Péter György argues, more on the editor than the censor—that is, on the carrot over the stick, and on massaging conflicts or delaying reckoning with them until the potential sticking point had been worn down, or, in the constantly changing stream of "correct" politics, no longer stuck out.[18] This policy is signified by the well-known "TTT" formulation, standing for the three categories of artistic regulation: *Támogatott, Tűrt, Tiltott* (Supported, Tolerated, Prohibited), and ruled until 1972 by György Aczél. Aczél, a figure shot through with contradictions surrounding his Jewish identity and wartime memory, took charge of an also ambiguous and constantly shifting cultural policy. He is an apt representative of what Kata Bohus has called the "institutionalized confusion" of Hungarian Jewish policy during this period. Though permeated with a rigid antifascist ideology and its accordant taboos, it evolved, especially in the wake of the 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial, into a "dynamically changing body" featuring "ongoing negotiation and incessant dynamism."[19]

Jews and Non-Jews: Responsibility and Guilt

The key question for the Hungarian Holocaust, both in the communist period and now, is that of responsibility for the Jewish catastrophe—and for the broader national one. Kertész's answer was sharply negative—the protagonist of *Fatelessness*, Gyuri Köves, finds no help or even sympathy among the non-Jewish population, accounting in large part for Kertész's difficulties in publishing and harsh reactions, at the time and after. The picture in the earlier novels consid-

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17 Éva Standeisky, *Az írók és a hatalom 1956–1963* [The writers and the power structure, 1956–63], second, corrected edition (Budapest: 1956 Institute, 1996), 11–12, 458–60.

18 Péter György, *A hatalom képzelete: Állami kultúra és művészet 1957 és 1980 között* [The imagination of power: state culture and the arts between 1957 and 1980] (Budapest: Magvető, 2014), 24. See also the classic treatment of the relationship between artists and the state in state socialism, Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism*, trans. Katalin and Stephen Landesmann with Steve Wasserman (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1989).

19 Kata Bohus, "Institutionalized Confusion: The Hungarian Communist Leadership and the 'Jewish Question' at the beginning of the 1960s," *Judaica Olomucensia* 1, no. 1 (2013): 8.

ered here is more mixed. There is a general sense of fascism as the political environment surrounding the action, but wholly evil protagonists are few and far between. The most stereotypical villain is the local Arrow Cross commander Péter Hohn in György Rónay's 1963 novel *Night Express*.[20] The protagonist, the retired pharmacist Kálmán Kerekes, had in the autumn of 1944 been reunited by chance with his former schoolmate Hohn, whom he had protected as a younger pupil from bullying—an experience of victimhood that slightly mitigates or at least explains Hohn's isolation and rage. The adult Hohn, lacking any human contact, had taken to pressuring Kerekes into regular suppers together; at one of these, the non-Jewish Kerekes inadvertently revealed the Jewish identity of the elder pharmacist couple he was posted to assist, causing their arrest and death. But the center of the novel is not the evil Hohn but Kerekes, the quintessential Everyman, and his growing and eventually overwhelming guilty conscience, which torments him for some two decades until he finally ends his suffering under the wheels of the evening express train.

Another forthrightly negative figure is Károly Baróti, the protagonist of Tibor Cseres's *Clover Baron* (1956);[21] while not an explicitly political actor, he represents the discredited and historically defeated landlord class. His behavior is despicable, especially vis-a-vis the peasant wives on his large estate, who he relentlessly beds, in a modernized *droit du seigneur*. While his fate, dispatched in an inevitably brutal and collective fashion by the peasants whom he tries to return to servitude on his regained estate, shows a certain kind of historical justice, his position with respect to the Jews is more ambiguous. The year before the story's events, he had sheltered Éva, a Jewish doctor's daughter, after her parents were deported, though at the price of forcing her to submit to his advances, threatening otherwise to turn her in. Thereafter she is haunted by her pain and desire for revenge—she blames him for her parents' death, "he could have been their savior, with a word"[22]—embodying a much deeper hostility and resistance to the baron than the peasant women, who accept his predations and care only about material survival. But Baróti is surrounded by casual, explicit antisemitic remarks by other aristocrats, as well as by the prostitutes he visits, for which he admonishes them. The peasants' prejudices come out more forcefully: on the final, fateful day, at the May 1 parade, their Party-dictated chants of "Down with the barons and

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20 György Rónay, *Esti gyors* (Budapest: Magvető, 1963).
21 Tibor Cseres, *Here-báró: Egy nagyvérű ember története* [Clover baron: the story of a hot-blooded man] (Budapest: Magvető, 1956).
22 Cseres, *Here-báró*, 246.

counts! . . . Down with fascism" are supplanted by spontaneous ones: "Beat the Jew, that way you defend the people!"[23] Thus, despite this novel's putative socialist realist form, the sense of guilt for the Jews' disappearance is pervasive.

Another novel steeped in an inescapable, though diffuse, sense of guilt is Gyula Fekete's *The Death of a Doctor* (1963).[24] It is the tale of Weisz, the old village doctor, and his last week on earth. Tired and unwell, he is supposed to retire, but his young replacement leaves for a fellowship abroad, and he is left to carry on "indefinitely."[25] As he does his rounds, and his condition declines, we find out—only by-the-by—that he is Jewish; lost his two sons, who perished while on Labor Service; and, along with his wife, was the sole survivor of a deportation transport. At the end of the week, he is summoned in the wee hours to the home of a family who had verbally abused him during the war, and during a scuffle with the midwife over the condition of the baby—which he has saved—falls, hits his head, and dies of a heart attack. Though not presented directly, the culpability of his fellow villagers—and by extension Hungarians in general—infuses the novel and this final scene.

József Darvas's *Drunken Rain* (1963),[26] personifies the guilt much more pointedly, through a *leitmotif* that reappears throughout. It opens in the present (the early 1960s) with the funeral of the artist Géza, who has committed suicide, and was the best friend of film director Béla, the narrator. Béla recalls the day in 1944 when the few Jewish families in Géza's home village were taken away. Sándor, Géza's brother, had appeared with the cow of his neighbor Steiner, known as the "featherbed [meaning relatively wealthy] Jew."[27] Géza had ordered Sándor to take the cow back, exploding: "Rotten country! Let the sky fall down on it."[28] Sándor pointed out that others were already lined up to take the Steiners' bed and other possessions, so there would be no point in returning the cow. The two brothers got into a fight, beating each other and rolling in the mud: "for a cow the whole country, honor, everything . . . is it worth 30 pieces of silver?"[29] Shifting back to the present, Béla accuses Sándor: "You didn't take back the cow,

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23   Cseres, *Here-báró*, 237–38.

24   Gyula Fekete, *Az orvos halála* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1963). The novel was translated into English as *Death of a Doctor*, trans. István Farkas (Budapest: Corvina, 1965).

25   Fekete, *Az orvos halála*, 37.

26   József Darvas, *Részeg eső* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1963).

27   Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 34.

28   Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 37.

29   Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 37–38.

that's why Géza is dead!"[30] The matter emerges as the root cause of the torment at both the individual (Géza) and the national level. (Pouring rain surrounds the incident, evoking the title.)

The material benefits released by the persecution of the Jews—to put it bluntly, the issue of plunder—focuses guilt on a very concrete level. The stripping of the possessions of the Steiners is echoed in several other novels. Sándor Kerekes, the pharmacist, is gifted the pharmacy of the murdered couple by Hohn, as an indication that service to the nation pays off personally; though he ultimately abandons it, as well as the site of his transgression, the recognition of his susceptibility to such an attraction forms a key part of his torment. The old doctor Weisz recalls how his house was cleaned out by his neighbors after his deportation, down to the plug boxes in the walls. A man of limited horizons, looking forward only to retiring to rest a little, he suppresses the past and bad feelings against his neighbors.

> That this or that one ripped the connectors out of the wall, this one or that one made a pigsty on my floor, this one said this, that one said that . . . that all felt bad to me as a person, after my decades of work . . . *As a person*. But as a doctor . . . it has nothing to do with me.[31]

Still, the unleveled accusation refuses to disperse.

Klára Fehér's *The Sea* (1956),[32] a socialist realist coming-of-age story of the generation that launched the communist experiment, situates its heroine, the non-Jewish Ági Csaplár, as a worker in an office divided into anti-Nazis and fascist cheerleaders. As the Jewish employees, and the relative of the exiled Jewish owners, exit the scene, the scramble for their possessions commences. The left-behind relative, Dr. Römer, who has buried his valuables in the garden of his villa in the Buda hills, is betrayed by his confidant, the (hitherto anti-Nazi) company lawyer, who steals both the valuables and the villa. Caught digging in the yard by the office fascist, who has his own eyes on the property, he in turn betrays the Jewish physician, Dr. Barta, who once saved his son. The fascist obliges by instead grabbing Barta's villa, which he celebrates with a party, wherein his colleagues paw through the family's food, clothes, and mementos, pointing to the more gen-

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30   Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 40.
31   Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 89–90.
32   Klára Fehér, *A tenger*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1956). Fehér had previously worked as a journalist and written young-adult fiction, for example, *Vas-brigád* (Iron brigade) (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1950).

eral theft of the Jews' possessions. The crowd sings "Pogrom, pogrom, pogrom in the village, at the edge of the village the machine gun is sounding nicely . . . let it keep on sounding, as long as there's a Jew in the village."[33]

The latest novel of those covered, Magda Szabó's *Katalin Street*,[34] revolves around a central inadvertent betrayal, as did *Night Express*, but has a very different stylistic approach and a softer judgment. The novel is awash with nostalgia for the "Eden" of the former community of the everystreet of its title, shattered by the destruction of one of the three families who form its heart. The parents, a Jewish dentist and his wife, are deported and meet their deaths in the camps, and though their teenage daughter, Henriett Held, evades the roundup and is hidden for a time by the other two (non-Jewish) families, she is unintentionally betrayed by the neighbor girl, and shot by an Arrow Cross soldier in her house's garden. But Henriett lives on to haunt the street and its surviving remnants, literally, as a ghost commenting from the beyond. She is concerned with the emotions, spirit, and course of individual lives buffeted by historical events, rather than with those events themselves.

The ultimate responsibility of the Germans who occupied Hungary in March 1944 for the deportations that followed has been a commonplace since the end of the war. But these novels are remarkable for the lack of German characters. As a fleeting exception, Imre Keszi's *Elysium* (1958), a story of the arrest, ghettoization, and deportation of ten-year-old Gyuri Szekeres in Budapest in the summer of 1944, mentions one single German officer, who strides into the Jewish Council offices barking orders. Otherwise, there are no alien "fascists" to distract from national responsibility: the persecution of Gyuri and his family is a Hungarian phenomenon. Another novel by Tibor Cseres, *Cold Days*, first published in 1964, concentrates directly on one of the most notorious incidents of the war, as far as Hungarian forces were concerned. Occurring well before the occupation, while Hungary was an independent ally of Nazi Germany, the January 1942 Novi Sad massacre saw over three thousand civilians killed in putative retaliation for a minor partisan attack.[35] This short novel was based on extensive interviews carried out by Cseres with ex-soldiers, some of them his

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33   Fehér, *A tenger*, vol. 1, 141.

34   Magda Szabó, *Katalin utca* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1969).

35   Tibor Cseres, *Hideg napok* (Budapest: Magvető, 1964). Initially published together with three other novellas, it went through numerous further editions by itself already in the next few years, was translated into many languages, and was even republished in 2005 and 2014, making it unusual (along with *Katalin Street*) among all of these works in that it is still being widely read.

former army comrades, as well as witnesses and survivors, and on trial documents and reports.[36] It is set exclusively in a prison cell, where four officers are awaiting their (postwar) trial. While in some respects it is a picture of muddled responsibility, the relentlessly oppressive setting and the lack of mitigating factors produce an overwhelming sense of guilt. Major Büky, in the course of trying to convince himself that his wife, who was on the scene and disappeared, could still be alive, postulates that German units involved in the atrocities took her away as a potential witness against them—thereby also deflecting at least partial responsibility onto "the Germans."[37] This specific means of denial of Hungarian responsibility, active immediately and up to the present day,[38] is however delegitimated by the character's confused, desperate thought process, as well as by his particularly negative portrayal overall (see below).

Narrative Strategies

Narrative strategies were another means of recognizing, or appropriating, Holocaust issues. Keszi's provides the most "classical" Holocaust story, *Elysium*, with its tragic Jewish child-hero, prefiguring Kertész's protagonist (they even share a given name). János Pelle has called the novel a "significant precursor" to *Fatelessness*.[39] Gyuri, while on his way to a family friend, Zsámboky, a retired Interior Ministry official who has been providing his family with produce from his Buda garden, is picked up by gendarmes in a random roundup and thrown together with other Jews in an unused factory. There follows the story of the attempts by Gyuri's parents and especially Zsámboky to access all possible acquaintances and contacts to retrieve him. In parallel, we experience the boy's tribulations as

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36 Árpád von Klimó, "Fascists with a Human Face? The Novel and Film *Cold Days* and the Discovery of the 'Ordinary Hungarian' as Perpetrator in the 1960s," in *Remembering Cold Days: The 1942 Massacre of Novi Sad and the Transformation of Hungarian Society until 1989* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 131–51. This massacre was unique in that a trial of some of the officers responsible was held soon after, in the middle of the war, though most of those convicted at that time fled to Nazi Germany.

37 Cseres, *Hideg napok*, 150–51.

38 See for example the controversy over the Occupation Monument erected in Budapest's Szabadság (Freedom) Square in 2014. Éva Kovács, "The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014: Some Remarks," *S.I.M.O.N.* 1 (2017): 109–20; Ferenc Laczó, "Integrating Victims, Externalizing Guilt? Commemorating the Holocaust in Hungary in 2014," *Cultures of History Forum* (January 21, 2016), http://www.cultures-of-history. uni-jena.de/debates/integrating-victims-externalizing-guilt-commemorating-the-holocaust-in-hungary-in-2014/.

39 János Pelle, "Keszi Imre: Elysium," *Heti Ökopol*, March 31, 2006, cited in Tamás Scheibner, "Utópiák igézetében: Keszi Imre és a zsidó-magyar együttélés" [Enthralled by utopias: Imre Keszi and Jewish-Hungarian coexistence], *Irodalomtörténet* 94, no. 3 (2013): 439.

he is confined, marched across town, put into a boxcar and ultimately, inexorably arrives and is interned in "Elysium," a somewhat fantastical children's adjunct of Auschwitz run by the Mengele-like Dr. Helmer and his brutal assistant, Sepp, and, though not without its momentary joys, never for a moment free of the stench of the crematoria.

Keszi, the only Jewish writer under consideration, was himself a Labor Service survivor, but also a "loyal and strict Marxist critic . . . [and] an enforcer of literary discipline"[40] and "one of the country's cultural commissars"[41] during the Stalinist period. Gyuri and his family are not faceless "victims of fascism," but real and very Jewish characters, with a detailed and sympathetically told history; and they, especially young Gyuri, wrestle with, and debate, their Jewish identity and its connection to their fate. But other, non-Jewish writers, used obvious elements and tropes from the Jewish Holocaust to express the oppression suffered by their non-Jewish characters.

While Ági, of *The Sea*, is not herself Jewish, her travails during the fateful months until the arrival of the Soviet liberators persistently intersect with and ultimately shadow those of her Jewish compatriots. She learns of an arrest warrant out for her, as a suspected communist, due to her father's activities in the 1919 Council Republic. She unsuccessfully tries to secure false papers, in order to flee to a relative in the countryside, and finally finds refuge in the attic of an unused warehouse, which has running water and a stock of musty jars of jam that keep her alive for the remaining months of the occupation and Arrow Cross terror. (The parallels to Anne Frank's story—already well known in Hungary at the time—cannot have been lost on the novel's readers.) One morning, "history [comes] into her prison": she peeks out the window and sees Jews with yellow stars arrested and taken away.[42] Dr. Römer has already made clear what awaits: "ghetto, deportation, death camp."[43] When she runs out of food, she survives only because the Jewish Spitz family buys refuge in an adjoining room, and then is discovered and taken away, leaving behind their own provisions. At war's end, the improbable survival and return of her father and brother from Labor Service—though as suspected (non-Jewish) communists—replicates that of Jewish Labor Service survivors. While the spotlight on suffering has been taken by Ági and family, the numerous and striking details up to that point of

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40   Földes, "A holokauszt a magyar (próza)irodalom tükrében," 90.
41   Ozsváth, "Trauma and Distortion," 341.
42   Fehér, *A tenger*, vol. 1, 202.
43   Fehér, *A tenger*, vol. 1, 96.

Jews' travails are likely to have stuck with readers even in the midst of an almost interminable accumulation of other stories.

While the main theme of *Drunken Rain* is of communists, mostly non-Jews, wrestling together and apart with their principles, contradictions, and failures over 15 years and more, culminating in the climactic days of 1956, the Holocaust and its victims and survivors intrude into the narrative at various points. While in transit between safe-houses in Budapest in 1944, Béla passes a "yellow-star person" on the sidewalk: he remarks that "our motions recognized and sniffed each other, like dogs on the street."[44] On October 15, as Regent Horthy, before being deposed in favor of the fascist Arrow Cross, declares a peace proposal to the approaching Soviet Army, Béla witnesses the residents of one of the yellow-star houses taking down the star and stomping on it. In a later incident, he sees a long line of Jews being herded by Arrow Cross militiamen, "probably from the ghetto."[45] When liberation comes, he himself happens upon the ghetto, where he hears "wailing, the crying, and complaints of millennia."[46]

Although most of the victims of the massacre that *Cold Days* concerns itself with were Serbs, and only about one-third were Jews, the characteristics of the atrocity—roundups, mass confinement, police raids, and mass shootings after forced disrobing on the frozen Tisza river, with bodies disposed of in mass graves and under the river ice—mirror those of other well-known events of the Holocaust going on at the same time in the East and later during the Arrow Cross terror after October 15, 1944 in Budapest. The presence of many non-Jewish victims (including a few Hungarians as well as Serbs) could seem to dilute the "Jewish character" of the Holocaust, but statements such as "It's clear: there's no difference between Jews and Serbs. The one is as criminal as the other"[47] make the antisemitic (as well as Hungarian nationalist) nature of the crimes evident. And there are unmistakable references to core Holocaust tropes—"selections" where civilians arriving on trains are made to go either left or right, making Lieutenant Tarpataki, who had been the commanding officer at the train station, realize that "we are masters of life and death"; and Major Büky's statement that "someone mentioned that incineration [of bodies] is a hygienic and so-to-say humane measure."[48]

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44 Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 50.
45 Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 350–51.
46 Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 220.
47 Cseres, *Hideg napok*, 87.
48 Cseres, *Hideg napok*, 49, 112.

While these narrative strategies may appear at first as a kind of "dejew-ification"[49] of the war experience, appropriating the fates of Jews to non-Jewish characters, I would argue that a more complex phenomenon is taking place. The presence of auxiliary Jewish characters maintains a "crossover" nature for phenomena such as deportations, Labor Service, hiding, and massacres, binding both sets of victims. The strong "mirroring" aspect, expressed explicitly by Darvas's character Béla as he skulks around 1944 Budapest, especially in the context of the politics of assimilation enforced by the regime, also produces identification, a sense of shared fate.

Fate and Memory

In some treatments, this sense of shared fate extended beyond individuals to the fate of the nation during the period. *Drunken Rain* is the account that most explicitly attempts to reckon with what has been created, its overriding question being "where did we (communists) go wrong?" The events of 1944 and of 1956, however politically nebulous in the latter case, form the key signposts to this investigation and self-criticism—the Jewish persecutions of the former echoed in the chaos and danger of the same Budapest streets of the latter. The setting of *Cold Days*, with its protagonists imprisoned and about to go on trial for the widely known crimes in question, and the representative nature of the characters themselves—with stark contrasts of class, background, character and even dialect, as well as of rank, function, and experience during the events—implies such a reckoning, though it ends before any formal judgment can take place. (After the lowly Corporal Szabó relates a scene of killings on the frozen river, including a victim that could only be Major Büky's wife, dashing his illusory hopes that she has survived, Büky savagely beats him to death.) The testimonies that make up the bulk of the novel, presented alternately and piecemeal, add up to a chaotic tale of unclear and contradictory orders, actions at the same time random and over-determined, cruelty at top and bottom punctuated by small individual moments of compassion, yet marching overall towards the inevitable

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49 On "dejewification," see Földes, "A holokauszt a magyar (próza)irodalom tükrében," 79, citing Ágnes Heller, "Zsidótlanítás a magyar zsidó irodalomban" [Dejewification in Hungarian Jewish literature], in *A határ és a határolt: Töprengések a magyar-zsidó irodalom létformáiról* [The boundary and the bounded: meditations on the modes of existence of Hungarian-Jewish literature], ed. Petra Török (Budapest: Yahalom, 1997), 349–62.

and undeniable reality of "three thousand three hundred and nine dead"[50]—the historical verdict.

The meta-issue of memory itself is also touched upon. *Cold Days*, as much as it constitutes a work of sociocultural memory, is also about the process of how such memory is created: its compulsions and silences, its intellectual pitfalls and concrete dangers, as embodied in the concluding murder. The novel's final line, quoting the commander's order just after the end of the massacre—"Gentlemen! Not a word of this, ever!"—sets this work squarely against the repression of memory that threatens from many sides. *Katalin Street*, in a very different way, is steeped in memories that will not fade, in the form of the ghost Henriett, and in the obsession of the other characters with her fate and, thus, with the past. Memory here is less something an individual or society must struggle to preserve than an all-encompassing ether, which returns unbidden, infusing everything with its bittersweet essence.

Official Criticism and the Issue of Reception

Although it is clear that these novels were widely distributed—published in relatively large quantities and in many cases reprinted multiple times within a few years—the question of reception is still difficult to gauge. To what extent and how were these works actually read when they appeared? Looking back after half a century and more, how can their effects be accessed? This literature encompassed many of the leading writers of the period: they figured prominently in publication quotas for the annual spring book fair, the prime launching point for new titles, and in lists of Hungarian works designated for translation across the socialist bloc.[51] They were reviewed in the most important literary journals, often multiple times. Several were produced as plays or films. As such, they were integral to the cultural landscape of 1960s Hungary.

Criticism in the official press showed evidence of what might be seen as silencing, often avoiding mention of the Jewishness of characters, using euphemisms and, despite contrary positions seen in the literature, attributing depre-

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50 Cseres, *Hideg napok*, 5—the opening line of the book.

51 Documented in Gyula Tóth, ed., *Írók pórázon: A Kiadói Főigazgatóság irataiból, 1961–1970: Dokumentum-válogatás* [Writers on a leash: From the papers of the main directorate of publishers, 1961–1970, selected documents] (Budapest: MTA Irodalomtudományi Intézet, 1992), 205, 268ff, 294, 341–42, 359–60; works promoted, both domestically and for translation, included *Drunken Rain*, *Death of a Doctor*, *Night Express*, and *Cold Days*.

dations to unspecified (and thus unaccountable) "fascists." Reviews of *The Sea* almost uniformly ignore the Jewish questions within. Anna Földes, who was quoted above on the "silence," called it a "novel of liberation"—but in a strictly communist sense.⁵² Several critics of *Clover Baron* stick to the framing conflict and ignore the Jewish/Holocaust issue altogether; though István Örkény, author of the 1947 *People of the Camps*, who later became a beloved symbol of literary independence in the communist era, recognized that "Éva's Jewish character is the key to the relationship [with Baróti]," though criticizing Cseres for "hiding away this key" until the middle of the novel.⁵³

The review of *Drunken Rain* in *Kortárs*, the voice of the official cultural sphere, mentions the incident with "the abducted Jewish Steiner's cow" as the crux of the criticism of the Hungarian people's revolutionary potential, and gives a separate paragraph to "Darvas's honest and deep [treatment] of one of Hungarian society's and Hungarian history's difficult and 'delicate' questions, the Jewish question," which he does "with deep sympathy and empathy towards the persecuted, the reviled and the murdered."⁵⁴ Oszkár Zsadányi's review in the Jewish publication *Új Élet* (New Life)—the only one in the country still publishing after the communist takeover—predictably focused on the "deportation and persecution to death of the Hungarian Jews," as well as the incident with Steiner's cow.⁵⁵ However, other reviews almost completely ignored the Holocaust aspect, focusing their—rather heated—debates instead on ideology and style.⁵⁶ The reviews of *Death of the Doctor* ignore the Holocaust aspect even more than those of *Drunken Rain*, seeing merely the struggle of an individual

52 Anna Földes, "*A tenger*: Fehér Klára regénye" [*The Sea*: Klára Fehér's novel], *Irodalmi Ujság* 7, no. 22 (June 2, 1956), 2.

53 István Örkény, "Levelek az olvasóhoz: Második levél: A mogigrafiáról" [Letters to the reader: second letter: on mogigraphy], *Csillag* 10, no. 8 (1956): 394–97. Örkény's memoir of his Labor Service experience, and his time afterwards in Soviet camps, is *Lágerek népe* [People of the camps] (Budapest: Székesfővárosi Irodalmi és Művészeti Intézet, 1947). For the dominant view, see Béla Tóth, "Cseres Tibor: *Here-báró*," *Alföld* 7, no. 4 (1956): 129–30; P. G. [Pongrác Galsai], "Cseres Tibor: *Here-báró*," *Könyvtáros* 6, no. 9 (1956): 707; and Pongrác Galsai, "Cseres Tibor: *Here-báró*," *Szabad Nép*, August 3, 1956, 6.

54 Miklós Szabolcsi, "Darvas József: *Részeg eső*," *Kortárs* 7, no. 8 (1963): 1262, 1265–66.

55 Oszkár Zsadányi, "*Részeg eső*: Jegyzetek Darvas József regényéről" [*Drunken Rain*: notes on József Darvas's novel], *Új Élet* 20, no. 5 (1964): 5.

56 E. F. P., "Darvas József: *Részeg eső*," *Népszava*, May 21, 1963, 2; –i –e, "*Részeg eső*: Darvas József regénye," *Magyar Nemzet*, May 28, 1963, 4; István Fenyő, "*Részeg eső*: Darvas József regénye," *Népszabadság*, July 3, 1963, 8; "A *Részeg eső* vitája: az Írószövetség Szabad Fórumán" [The *Drunken Rain* debate: at the writers' union's free forum], *Élet és Irodalom* 7, no. 45 (1963): 3; Ervin Szombathelyi, "*Részeg eső*: Darvas József új drámája a Nemzeti Színházban" [*Drunken Rain*: József Darvas's new drama at the national theater], *Népszava*, March 29, 1964, 7; Tamás Ungvári, "*Részeg eső*: Darvas József drámája a Nemzeti Színházban," *Magyar Nemzet*, April 14, 1964, 4. A slight exception is Pál Pándi, "*Részeg eső*: Darvas József drámája a

against time, the human condition, and the unrelenting demands of his calling; the most direct acknowledgement being that of "the shadow of the tragedy."[57]

Reviews of the other novels, depending on the directness of their engagement with the fate of the Jews, the identity of the author and the date of publication, as ideological strictures loosened as time went on, were less obfuscatory. The review of *Elysium* in *Új Élet* was unsurprisingly gushing, though also predictably stilted, declaring that the new society which has "declare[d] war on every form of fascism" is full of love for the Gyuris of today.[58] While reviews of *Night Express* somewhat tiptoed around the invocation of the Holocaust as such, using euphemisms such as "the persecuted"[59] or "the betrayed,"[60] the centrality of the Eichmann case to the plot left little room for separation. (Newspaper headlines about the Eichmann trial echo in the conversations of other citizens of the little resort where the present-day Kerekes lives, and even children "play Eichmann" on the street.) Kerekes's identification as "one characteristic type of all Europe in the time of fascism" is fairly damning, though diffusing the particular responsibility of Hungarians.[61]

Reviews of *Cold Days*, given the repeated new editions, continued to appear for several years. They were not completely free of tiresome, obfuscating characterizations such as "Hungarian nationalism acting in the service of German fascism."[62] But references to Eichmann, to the selection scene as "the symbol of the right- and left-side, life-and-death [nature] of all of the death camps,"[63] to the Warsaw ghetto

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Nemzeti Színházban" *Népszabadság*, April 12, 1964, 9, which makes a passing, general reference to "the single-rooted tragedy of Voronezh [site of the Hungarian Second Army's devastating 1942 defeat on the Eastern Front] and Auschwitz."

57 J. Sz., "Fekete Gyula: *Az orvos halála*," *Könyvtáros* 13, no. 7 (1963): 432. See also B. Gy. F., "Fekete Gyula: *Az orvos halála*," *Népszava*, April 13, 1963, 2; "Fekete Gyula: *Az orvos halála*," *Magyar Nemzet*, April 26, 1963, 4; Gustáv Székely, "*Az orvos halála*: Fekete Gyula regénye" [*Death of the Doctor*: Gyula Fekete's novel], *Alföld* 14, no. 6 (1963): 86–87; József Somlay Szabó, "Fekete Gyula: *Az orvos halála*," *Korunk* 23, no. 1 (1964): 156–57.

58 "Keszi Imre: *Elysium*," *Új Élet* 15, no. 4 (1959): 6. The only other review of *Elysium* was all of one sentence long in the daily *Magyar Nemzet* ("Keszi Imre: *Elysium*," *Magyar Nemzet*, January 20, 1959, 6); this critical silence stands in stark contrast to the substantial amount of reviews of all of the other works discussed here, though the novel's republication in two further editions up to 1965 suggests some kind of countervailing pressure.

59 Tamás Ungvári, "*Esti gyors*: Rónay György regénye," *Élet és Irodalom* 7, no. 39 (1963): 7.

60 Szefi Bohuniczky, "Rónay György, *Esti gyors*," *Jelenkor* 6, no. 8 (1963): 775–77. See also Elemér Szeghalmi, "Rónay György, *Esti gyors*," *Vigilia* 29, no. 1 (1964): 60–62; Endre Szigeti, "*Esti gyors*," *Új Ember* 19, no. 31 (1963): 3.

61 Attila Tamás, "*Esti gyors*: Rónay György regénye," *Tiszatáj* 18, no. 2 (February 1964): 7. See also Oszkár Zsadányi, "A bűntudat regénye" [The novel of guilty conscience], *Új Élet* 19, no. 14 (1963): 5.

62 Béla Horgas, "*Hideg napok*: Cseres Tibor regényéről" [*Cold Days*: On Tibor Cseres's novel], *Kortárs* 8, no. 7 (1964): 1149–51.

63 Horgas, "*Hideg napok*," 1149, 1151.

uprising [64] and to Auschwitz,[65] make it clear that after the Eichmann trial, this could be openly recognized as a Holocaust story. The repeated invocation of concepts such as "conscience," "guilt," "responsibility," and even "memory" take the collective voice of the critics out of the realm of empty ideological sloganizing.[66] While the experimental style of *Katalin Street*, moving back and forth in time and space and prone to mysticism, was not to the liking of several critics, all mentioned the Helds' Jewishness and the specificity of their fates.[67]

Reflecting the ambivalent position of the official cultural sphere towards the Holocaust, much ambiguity comes through these reviews, which constitute the most tangible, if indirect, evidence of reception. But in a society of media consumers famous for their ability to "read between the lines," I would argue that the disciplinary effect of such reviews, and thus their control over memory, at least insofar it is shaped by popular literature, was probably limited.

Conclusions: Towards a Shared Holocaust Memory?

As my survey has shown, the period between the 1956 upheaval (and starting even earlier that year, as the winds that propelled it already had begun to blow) and the early 1970s, rather than being a great silence or "black hole" with respect to the Holocaust, was full of references to and, especially as time went on, serious engagement with it, at least in literature.[68] It is true that these representations were wrapped in both ideological and stylistic conventions—in short, they by and large hewed to the precepts of antifascism, which the Kádár regime re-

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64   László B. Nagy, "Az író laser-sugara" [The Writer's laser ray], *Élet és Irodalom* 8, no. 44 (1964): 6.

65   "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Korunk* 29, no. 7 (July 1970): 1129–30.

66   József Seres, "Cseres Tibor két új könyve" [Tibor Cseres's two new books], *Jelenkor* 7, no. 4 (April 1964): 398–400; B. Gy. F., "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Népszava*, October 24, 1964, 2; Ferenc Bíró, "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Népszabadság*, November 11, 1964, 8 (the only somewhat critical one); Gábor Kiss, "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Alföld* 16, no. 2 (1965): 89–90; József Nacsády, "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Tiszatáj* 19, no. 2 (1965): 132–34; Dezső Mészöly, "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Kortárs* 9, no. 5 (1965): 833–34; Balázs Szappanos, "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Könyvtáros* 15, no. 7 (1965): 424–26; "Cseres Tibor: *Hideg napok*," *Korunk* 25, no. 12 (1966): 1797. For a remarkably similar exile perspective, see Tibor Tardos, "A döbbenet objektivitása: Cseres Tibor regénye" [The Objectivity of Shock: Tibor Cseres' novel], *Irodalmi Újság* 17, no. 10 (Paris) XVII/10 (June 15, 1966): 8.

67   Edit Erki, "Vétlen bűnösök: Szabó Magda: *Katalin utca*" [Innocent criminals: Magda Szabó, *Katalin Street*], *Népszabadság*, June 17, 1969, 8. See also Zs. O. [Oszkár Zsadányi], "Jegyzetek Egyről-Másról" [Notes on one thing and another], *Új Élet* 25, no. 14 (July 15, 1969): 3; Tamás Menyhért, "Szabó Magda: *Katalin utca*," *Népszava*, June 1, 1964, 8; Ido Solymos, "Szabó Magda: *Katalin utca*," *Tiszatáj* 23, no. 6 (1969): 562–64.

68   Although the areas of historiography, public commemorations, and public debate are a different story, with ideological restrictions and Party anxiety over Jewish questions holding greater sway.

constructed in the service of its post-1956 consolidation.[69] Rather than forming the exclusive core of the narratives—the literary equivalent to the vexed issue of "uniqueness" of the Holocaust in history[70]—the Jewish tragedy appears amongst a myriad of tragedies and false turns, as part of a longer period extending after and before: as part of Hungarian history. But looking for Holocaust memory in this period through a lens shaped by the particular Western forms that developed especially from the mid-1980s onwards[71] is bound to obscure what was able to arise from Hungarian conditions. In the words of Máté Zombory, András Lénárt, and Anna Lujza Szász,

> Instead of taking the political repression and the different forms of discursive regulation in an era seen as one-dimensional as constant and unchanging, let us examine the possibilities of speech. Let's not, looking back from after 1989, ask what all was not possible, but what had become possible.[72]

The overall picture presented by these novels is one where suffering and tragedy are shared, responsibility and guilt are ubiquitous, the narratives of the events overlap and interact, memory is treacherous but unavoidable, and historical fates are intertwined. Despite their broad label as "antifascist literature," fascism and fascists are often distant, abstract quantities; at the same time, an everyday inhumanity, a "banality of evil,"[73] infuses the flawed behavior of ordinary, identifiable people, most pointedly through the issue of looting and plunder. The Holocaust is sometimes central, sometimes more peripheral, but always present. The events of the latter part of 1944 are not isolated, but part of a span of history that encompasses the depredations of the Stalinist period and, to the extent it could be slipped past ideological gatekeepers, the upheavals of 1956. This also shakes up the accustomed periodization, placing the Holocaust in a broader historical context: as Géza in *Drunken Rain* points out, "What is happening here [in '56] . . . didn't start just now. Not even yesterday. In '45 . . . in '44 . . . or maybe

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69 Péter Apor, *Fabricating Authenticity in Soviet Hungary: The Afterlife of the First Hungarian Soviet Republic in the Age of State Socialism* (London: Anthem, 2014).

70 Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg, eds., *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 441–80.

71 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

72 Máté Zombory, András Lénárt, and Anna Lujza Szász, "Elfeledett szembenézés: Holokauszt és emlékezés Fábri Zoltán *Utószezon* c. filmjében" [Forgotten confrontation: Holocaust and memory in Zoltán Fábri's film *After-Season*], *BUKSZ* 25, no. 3 (2013): 245.

73 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963).

much earlier."[74] Most importantly, the histories told are not walled off between the "Jewish experience" and the overall Hungarian one, but appear as simultaneous and codependent—to use Michael Rothberg's much-cited term, as "multidirectional."[75]

Just as Hungarian Jews were traumatized by the memory of 1944, which became the focal point for much of their thinking about the past and its dangers,[76] the 1956 uprising and its violent suppression traumatized all of Hungarian society. The ideological strictures on the interpretation of '56 did not prevent its trauma from appearing in literature. In addition to the vivid scenes of protest and violence depicted in *Drunken Rain*,[77] Darvas published a play, *Sooty Sky*, which took place solely in those fateful weeks, with various characters dramatizing, and to some extent legitimizing, different positions vis-à-vis the uprising—though with an ultimate bias against the revolt.[78] Another example is the novel *Rust Cemetery* (1962), the story of the hapless Hábetler family through and beneath the dramatic events of twentieth-century Hungarian history: after the intrusion of the Holocaust in the deportation of the son Jáni's lover, when the narrative reaches 1956, it is referred to as a "revolution," and the infamous hanging of suspected secret policemen from lampposts is intertwined with the memory of Auschwitz.[79] Despite attempts by the regime to suppress references to '56, for example on major anniversaries, "everyone knew" what had happened and what was at stake.[80] The imperfect taboo on addressing the trauma of 1956 further

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74 Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 276–77. The communist "broader context," as mentioned above, in taking 1944 and 1956 as two poles on the arc of fascist danger, clashes with one that might connect the deprival of rights visited on the Jews with the show trials, deportations, and camps of the Stalinist period, and the general deprivations of rights that spurred the '56 uprising. But *Drunken Rain*—and many of these works—bears within itself alternate readings; in particular, the portrait of '56 is strikingly ambiguous, with righteous anger acknowledged, Party orthodoxy questioned and argued. Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 223, 230, 238–39, 263, 275.

75 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

76 Győri Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság*, 177.

77 Darvas, *Részeg eső*, 223, 230, 238.

78 József Darvas, *Kormos ég* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1959); it was performed at least in Szeged and Miskolc in late 1959. *Drunken Rain* was also rewritten as a play and performed at the National Theater, in 1964. József Darvas, *Részeg eső: Dráma két részben* [Drunken Rain: A drama in two parts] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1964).

79 Endre Fejes, *Rozsdatemető* (Budapest: Magvető, 2018 [1962]), 176, 181. It was also published and performed as a play, in Budapest and a number of provincial cities in the mid-sixties and afterwards and published separately. Fejes, *Színművek* [Dramatic works] (Budapest: Magvető, 1970). An English translation of the novel appeared as Endre Fejes, *Generation of Rust*, trans. Sanford J. Greenburger and Teranece Brashear (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

80 György Litván, ed., *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt, and Repression 1953–1963* (London: Longman, 1996), 161, quoted in Heino Nyyssönen, *The Presence of the Past in Politics: "1956" after 1956 in Hungary* (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 1999), 115.

loosened an imperfect taboo on Holocaust memory, and the indelible connection between the two, and the unsuppressibility of the memory of both, fostered a certain rehabilitation of Holocaust memory in literature, as at turns a precursor, warning, and surrogate for '56.

This actual and potential connection between 1944 and 1956 in Hungarian literature and memory represents the possibility of a "shared fate" and a common approach to the trauma of history. Certainly there was, alongside and largely separate from this, a distinct "Jewish memory," focusing on the deportations, Labor Service, the camp experience, and the particularity of Jewish suffering, one often suppressed or discouraged. This provides an alternate, and not illegitimate, timeline highlighting the explosion of literature (memoirs, novels, documentation) in 1945–48,[81] latent and mostly "silenced" during the Stalinist period and slowly emerging thereafter, in the pages of *Új Élet* and elsewhere, especially from the mid-1970s onward, and increasingly informed by an ultimately hegemonic "Western" perspective centered on Jewish victimhood, especially after 1989. A nationalist understanding, focused on (non-Jewish) Hungarian victimhood and informed by an enduring historical cultural identity, and symbolized by the massive losses of Hungarian soldiers on the Eastern Front[82] and the deportation of citizens to the Soviet Union after the war, spread in a more subterranean fashion, and ultimately came to, arguably, dominate non-Jewish Hungarian memory. The perspective reflected in the literature under study here is not innocent of the crimes found in that vein of memory, of denial of moral responsibility of the nation and elision of the fact that non-Jewish Hungarians benefitted materially and socially from the expulsion and decimation of their Jewish fellow-citizens. Whether skewed presentations (of both the Holocaust and 1956) contribute to the repression of memory or, given a cultural atmosphere riven by gaps and confusion, can (also) facilitate "multidirectional memory" is a difficult question. But as a "real existing" orientation within the socialist cultural environment, the "antifascist" position, however limited, offers both an instructive picture of the memory possibilities within that cultural system, and a lost alternative model for the post-socialist transition as divided memoryscapes pushed their way to the fore.

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81   For example, Béla Zsolt's novel *Kilenc koffer* (Nine Suitcases), published serially in 37 installments between May 1946 and February 1947 in his weekly *Haladás* (Progress); it was published in book form only decades later, as Béla Zsolt, *Kilenc koffer*, ed. and notes by Ferenc Kőszeg (Budapest: Magvető, 1980).

82   See for example István Nemeskürty, *Requiem egy hadseregért* [Requiem for an army] (Budapest: Magvető, 1972), followed by several more editions.

The work under consideration here has been almost completely ignored by both scholars and Hungarian public intellectuals during the past quarter-century-plus of unfettered engagement with the Hungarian Holocaust and its legacy.[83] This neglect presumably reflects the diminished status of (most of) these writers post-1989, adept at negotiating the politics of the publishing system under which they operated and declining to openly challenge communist political and cultural hegemony. (The aforementioned two recent editions of *Cold Days*, and no less than seven editions of *Katalin Street* in the new millennium, after four over the last two decades of the old system, constitute a challenge to this notion. *Rust Cemetery* has also been republished twice in the last few years.) They by and large lack the rigor and clarity of works we now consider classics; as a source for the brutal self-searching that we find lacking in the Hungarian post-Holocaust experience, they fall short. But taking them seriously could offer the possibility for a joint, if flawed, experience of memory for Jews and their Gentile neighbors: the possibility for an alternative future of Hungarian collective memory, avoiding or at least mitigating the absolute division that we see today. By mingling the suffering of Jews and non-Jews, these novels, taken collectively, hammer out a shared past and solidarity—one that may not have been there in reality, but which was an aspiration that arguably did its part to keep division and antisemitism at bay.

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83   Although for his appreciation of *Clover Baron*, *Elysium*, *Death of the Doctor* and *Drunken Rain*, see Péter György, "'A láger sors': Gera György: *Terelőút* ["The camp is fate": György Gera, *Detour*], *Jelenkor* 53, no. 12 (December 2010): 1350–60. See also Péter György, "A történelem felfedezése: Száz éve született Cseres Tibor" [The discovery of history: Tibor Cseres was born hundred years ago], *Élet és Irodalom* 49, no. 13 (March 27, 2015), http://www.es.hu/cikk/2015-03-27/gyorgy-peter/a-tortenelem-felfedezese.html.

Part Four

Media and Public Debate

Alexander Walther

Distrusting the Parks: Heinz Knobloch's Journalism and the Memory of the Shoah in the GDR

"Distrust the parks."[1] The first sentence of Heinz Knobloch's book on the Jewish philosopher and writer Moses Mendelssohn sounds alarming, but it does nevertheless accurately encapsulate the author's agenda. Describing a seemingly peaceful, insignificant lawn in the center of Berlin, Knobloch soon points to its history as the site of the city's oldest Jewish cemetery. Despite being marked with a somewhat hidden memorial plaque, the site could easily be mistaken for an actual park. "Someone might not have known this," he tags, "it is not his fault that the Jewish cemeteries of most small and medium-sized cities have vanished, leveled as storage areas, flattened as car parks or covered over with grass—distrust the parks."[2]

Pointing to an example of what was obviously the eradicated Jewish life of Berlin, Knobloch turns to a special subject of the GDR's memory of World War II, of the Shoah. The persecution and killing of European Jewry hardly featured prominently in state rhetoric or ritual. In the rare times that history came up in official discourse, it was usually to point to the perpetrators, famous Nazi leaders and high-ranking Western German officials and industrialists, or just impersonal categories like "the SS." The failure of the GDR to accept responsibility for the Shoah among its own was particularly contradictory given that it was both a socialist state and a land of the perpetrators. Fascism, as it was defined by the Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov, had been supposedly wiped out by eliminating its root—capitalism. Accordingly, the GDR denied responsibility for crimes committed by the Germans in World War II. Moreover, this question

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1   "Misstraut den Grünanlagen!" Heinz Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin: Auf den Spuren eines Menschenfreundes* ([East] Berlin: Der Morgen, 1979), 5. All quotes are my translation.
2   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 9.

was considered to be wholly irrelevant as all "fascists" were allegedly either dead or residing in West Germany.[3]

Yet, there was discussion of the Shoah in the GDR, not by the government to be sure, but by writers, artists, intellectuals, and journalists. Though this view has long been rejected by academics, recent studies paint a different picture.[4] This chapter argues that attempts to address the Shoah in the GDR were less prominent, quieter, and subtler than any official rhetoric, yet more appealing to an interested public. Oscillating atmospheres of imposed neglect of or deliberate emphasis on the Shoah as a subject of public discussion was due to the Party's shifting propagandistic agenda. Those interested in talking about the Shoah in a more sincere and less propagandistic fashion made deliberate use of the Party's campaigns to have their works included in the ongoing debate. Although these individuals usually struggled to be heard, they rarely had to fear censorship. After all, addressing Nazi crimes was part of the Party's antifascist rhetoric. Yet, these individuals managed to convey their own interpretation of antifascism that included the otherwise often neglected Jewish perspective. This chapter discusses Heinz Knobloch as one example of this phenomenon.

Knobloch wrote three books on previously little-known or mostly forgotten individuals: Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), Rosa Luxemburg's secretary Mathilde Jacob (1873–1943), and policeman Wilhelm Krützfeld (1880–1953). The first two books were published in 1979 and 1985, and thus subject to GDR censorship, while the last one was written in 1989 and published in 1990, without the oversight of a censor. This chapter interrogates how Knobloch navigated state censorship in writing about the Shoah, as he did in parts of all three of these books, by examining the content, language, and implications of his work as it related to the GDR's state-sanctioned antifascist narrative of history that dictated how writers could discuss World War II, and by extent the Shoah. How did Knobloch deviate from this antifascist narrative and by what means?

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3   Olaf Groehler, "Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust in der DDR," in *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust: Europa—USA—Israel*, ed. Rolf Steininger (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

4   For an overview of studies claiming that discourse on the Shoah was mostly non-existent in the GDR, see Helmut Peitsch, "Antifaschistisches Verständnis der eigenen jüdischen Herkunft in Texten von DDR-SchriftstellerInnen," in *Das Kulturerbe deutschsprachiger Juden: Eine Spurensuche in den Ursprungs-, Transit- und Emigrationsländern*, ed. Elke-Vera Kotowski (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 117–18; for a more nuanced view, see, among others, Bill Niven, "Remembering Nazi Anti-Semitism in the GDR," in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 205–13.

How did he include the Shoah in books seemingly unrelated to the topic? How did Knobloch position himself and how did he address his readership? First, this chapter will analyze his books on Mendelssohn and Jacob. Second, it will trace both reactions to the books and the publishing process, asking what role his discussion of the Shoah played for the reading of the public and for the censors. Third, it will examine Knobloch's views on antifascism in his book on Krützfeld. Finally, it will analyze Knobloch's work in the context of Shoah memory in the GDR.

Heinz Knobloch

Born in Dresden in 1926, Heinz Knobloch moved to Berlin with his family in 1935. He was forced to join the Reich Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*) in 1943, and later drafted into the Wehrmacht, only to desert the army in France in 1944.[5] He was taken as a prisoner of war by the Americans and held in various POW camps in Tennessee and Scotland. He returned to Berlin in 1948 and trained as a journalist at the *Berliner Zeitung*.

Following the uprising of 1953, the East German Communist Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) decided to offer a slightly more diverse set of newspapers and journals in the hope of satisfying the public's obvious need for less ideological forms of entertainment and information. From its first issue in late 1953, the *Wochenpost* (Weekly Post) emerged to become one of the GDR's most popular weekly newspapers, gathering around 1.3 million subscribers, with an estimated 3–4 million readers a week.[6] Knobloch worked at the *Wochenpost* from its establishment in 1953, writing his weekly column from 1968 onwards, advancing to become one of the paper's most prominent and popular voices. In 1949, he joined the SED, leaving it in early 1990, "considerably too late," as he later noted.[7] However, his membership in the SED was hardly exceptional at the *Wochenpost*. The paper should not be seen as an opposition journal, but rather as a more diverse and multi-faceted newspaper.[8] Between his column, en-

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5   Heinz Knobloch, *Mit beiden Augen: Von Dresden nach Tennessee* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), 196–201.

6   Jürgen Reifarth and Gunter Reus, *Lässt sich das drucken? Feuilletons gegen den Strich* (Konstanz: UVK, 2002), 11–12; Klaus Polkehn, *Das war die Wochenpost: Geschichte und Geschichten einer Zeitung* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1997).

7   Heinz Knobloch, *Mit beiden Augen: Mein Leben zwischen den Zeilen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), 55.

8   In this manner, the *Wochenpost* published articles about otherwise taboo topics, such as flight from the GDR or alcoholism. Reifarth and Reus, *Lässt sich das drucken?*, 13. Still, about 75 percent of the editors were members of the party, see Polkehn, *Wochenpost*, 63.

titled "With Both Eyes," and his various books, which contained previously published as well as new texts, Knobloch produced over 1,700 articles.

Herr Moses in Berlin

In the late 1970s, Knobloch began researching the life of Moses Mendelssohn. Finally published in 1979, his book was not intended as a proper biography but as a more personal essay on the life and work of Mendelssohn in his time and his city, Berlin.[9] He depicts Mendelssohn's life, origins in Dessau, studies in Berlin, life as an entrepreneur and philosopher, close bonds with Lessing, and contacts with other intellectuals of his day. He frequently quotes directly from the works and letters of Mendelssohn or those associated with him, though rarely provides sources. Mendelssohn's philosophy is barely addressed or contextualized, and the impact he or his work had at the time and beyond remains vague. In quoting his favorite, rather than the most important, passages of Mendelssohn's works, Knobloch presents a book about his personal relationship with the philosopher and the relevance of his eighteenth-century writings for Knobloch's time.

This is the important aspect that Knobloch addresses in his approach to seek traces of Mendelssohn's, or more generally Jewish life, in Berlin. The opening of the book can be seen as outlining Knobloch's broader agenda, and his call to "distrust" parks and the city landscape should be seen in this light. Throughout the book, the author strolls around (East) Berlin "not only as a flâneur, but as a detective and an archaeologist," sharing his thoughts and questions about former inhabitants, buildings, cemeteries, and events.[10]

Although Mendelssohn died long before the rise of National Socialism, Knobloch frequently considers sites related to the Shoah in the book. Beginning with the cemetery at Große Hamburger Straße, "which we innocently thought to be a small park,"[11] the author guides his readers to other cemeteries, parks, squares, and buildings in Berlin, while sometimes going into tangents about their history. The former Jewish school right next to the cemetery—founded by Mendelssohn himself and used by the Gestapo between 1942 and 1945 as a gathering point for the Jewish inhabitants of Berlin prior to deportation—was

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9 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 13.
10 Birgit R. Erdle, "Knobloch, Heinz," *Munzinger Online—Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, June 6, 2006,, https://www.munzinger.de/search/klg/Heinz+Knobloch/310.html.
11 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 6.

a vocational school in Knobloch's time.[12] He inquires whether anyone at the school has an interest in the building's history and is infuriated at the answer he is given: "'There is no memorial plaque for Moses Mendelssohn in our house,' a horrible indictment, lacking any mention of six million murdered Jews of which thousands had gone to school in this very building, in these very rooms. *Staatsbürgerkunde* [Political education] . . ."[13] *Staatsbürgerkunde* was a subject for older pupils in secondary schools of the GDR, which included an introduction to Marxist philosophy and political economy, aimed at fostering socialist consciousness. By closing his remark with a simple, though frustrating, reference to this, Knobloch critiques such socialist education for its lack of any reference to the country's recent history and the regime's stance on the memory of the Shoah.

In another scene, Knobloch describes the "vanished culture of Berlin" as he recalls the former Jewish museum, which was opened on January 24, 1933, and a concert held at the synagogue on Oranienburger Straße, where Albert Einstein once played the violin.[14] Knobloch characterizes his work at the outset as an "archaeological book. Excavations everywhere. How many Jews did Hitler leave in the reader's region? What does the reader know about these people and their religion? What does he know about their history in Germany? Probably little."[15] It is this assumed ignorance of his readers that he seeks to tackle with his findings and "excavations," providing a "personal workbook or do-it-yourself manual in the Jewish cultural heritage of the GDR."[16]

After borrowing from the library a copy of Mendelssohn's *Brautbriefe*, a compilation of letters to the philosopher's future wife, Knobloch discovers an inscription revealing that the book was originally purchased privately as a husband's gift to his wife on Rosh Hashanah in 1936.[17] Answering Knobloch's request, the library explains to him that the book was incorporated into their holdings in 1945 after having been discovered "in the rubble." "Back then, rubble did not only imply debris and craters, but abandoned Nazi flats; maybe the 'Brautbriefe' were

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12 Today it is a Jewish secondary school called "Jüdisches Gymnasium Moses Mendelssohn."

13 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 332–33. The original letters can be found in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter, SBBPK), Nl. 353 (Heinz Knobloch), Material "Herr Moses in Berlin."

14 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 370.

15 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 15.

16 Nancy A. Lauckner, "Heinz Knobloch's 'Herr Moses in Berlin': An Innovative Reclamation of the Jewish Component of the GDR Cultural Heritage," *Studies in GDR Culture and Society* 2 (1982): 129. Still, Knobloch admits to some aspects of an attempted revival of Jewish culture and a commemoration of the Shoah, e.g., when he mentions highly successful books and movies such as *Naked Among Wolves* or *Jacob the Liar* (79) or the reopening of the Jewish community's library in East Berlin (368).

17 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 155.

lying in a Gestapo shed together with other captured books."[18] In stating this, Knobloch points to the seizure of Jewish deportee's assets and property, a method that not only benefitted the state, but frequently the arrested person's neighbors as well.[19] By bringing an individual perspective to the subject, he also provides a more tangible and affective view on the matter, expanding the impersonal and leveling view that dominated the GDR's hegemonic Shoah discourse.[20]

This approach is intensified in three other sections of the book, in which Knobloch depicts his experiences as a child and adolescent. First, he mentions an episode from his early school days in Dresden. One morning in 1933, "in the days of the boycott of Jewish shops," his teacher orders a student to stand on top of his desk. "The boy's name is Werner Israel. There he stands, uncertain, perplexed, stared at by everyone. The teacher has him utter the sentence: 'My name is Werner Israel and I am not a Jew.' He has to say it three times—fairy-tale-like—and now all is well. For him. How I wish to talk to the teacher about those days."[21] The student's exposure and the ritual-like confirmation of his non-Jewish identity seemed to have unsettled Knobloch profoundly. The teacher's instructions seemed unnecessary, even whimsical, and his reasons remain dubious. Yet, by adding "for him" (i.e., the exposed student), Knobloch alludes to the issue of perspective: for those deemed non-Jewish, such episodes remained a disturbing, albeit harmless anecdote. For those defined as "Jewish," it was the beginning of various forms of persecution, which all too often ended in death.

Second, Knobloch mentions his treatment by Dr. Schiff, a Jewish ophthalmologist. Fond of the physician as a child, he writes:

> No other doctor . . . did I, being a shy child, bring a toy to show to as a companion. I brought Doctor Schiff a teddy bear. . . . One day, the sign of the eye doctor next to the entrance was gone or it was glued over. I can't remember.

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18 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 158.

19 Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 36–93; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997).

20 Christiane Reichart-Burikukiye, "'Lauter Ausgrabungen'—Erinnerung und Gegen-Erinnerung im archäologischen Schreiben in Heinz Knoblochs 'Herr Moses in Berlin,'" in *Gedächtnis und Literatur in den "geschlossenen Gesellschaften" des Real-Sozialismus zwischen 1945 und 1989*, ed. Carsten Gansel (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2007), 200; Stephan Stach, "Dissidentes Gedenken: Der Umgang Oppositioneller mit Holocaustgedenktagen in der Volksrepublik Polen und der DDR," in *Gegengeschichte: Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens*, ed. Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015), 232–35.

21 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 70.

> I cannot give a date, but I remember us discussing at home that he might have gone abroad. Later, much later, when I fathomed the German history I had experienced as an adolescent, I was relieved by the thought of him having escaped the annihilation, surely treating sore eyes in New York or Tel Aviv.[22]

He adds a quote from a text on Jewish physicians during the National Socialist period, pointing out their esteemed reputation among the German population.[23] In this way, Knobloch stresses the integral role and importance of Jewish doctors in Germany, both before and after 1933. He implicitly challenges the reader to recollect his or her own contacts and acquaintances from that time. In doing so, he challenges the impersonal view of antifascism that major segments of Germans had of "the Jews," giving individual members of this constructed group a name. He closes these remarks by stating: "Since he unintentionally opened my eyes as a child, no superior has ever succeeded in instilling in me or demanding a general hatred of Jews or Americans or Russians or whose turn it was or might be."[24] This ambiguous statement can also be read as a challenge to his socialist superiors because it refers to rejecting a hatred of "Americans."

Knobloch's attempt to include the views of non-Jews in 1930s Berlin is stressed in a point concerning neighbors. Quoting a text by Meyer Kayserling on the enthusiasm of eighteen-century German Jewry for German (i.e., non-Yiddish) books, Knobloch refers to the "lurking neighbor," who must not be allowed to see the prohibited consumption of German texts by Jews:

> In Hitler's time, the neighbor was lurking around to see whether someone was listening to a foreign radio station. He was also lurking, and quite often successfully, to see whether someone was hiding Jews in his flat. Or the lurking neighbor is himself paid a visit [by the Gestapo] and questioned about his neighbors. What does he say if he likes them? What does he reveal if his neighbors do not greet him? Do not worry, you will not find out, as the spying neighbor is exhorted not to talk about his questioning. If he spreads the word, he cannot know whether he entrusts it to a neighbor lurking around him.[25]

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22   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 156.
23   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 157. Knobloch quotes from Siegfried Ostrowski, "Vom Schicksal jüdischer Ärzte im Dritten Reich: Ein Augenzeugenbericht aus den Jahren 1933–1939," *Leo Baeck Institute Bulletin* 6 (1963): 314–15.
24   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 156–57.
25   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 292.

Here, Knobloch points to two phenomena. First, he recalls a feeling of constant uncertainty and distrust, typically associated with societies under dictatorships. The myth of an ever-present Gestapo coexisted with the notion of a self-surveilling society, both during and after National Socialism.[26] Second, although the presence and power of the Gestapo have been shown to be far more limited than previously assumed, and the number and impact of denunciations far less crucial,[27] Knobloch still manages to compel the reader to assess his or her own experience and role under Nazi rule. In an implicit way, he also hints at the activity of the *Stasi* (the Ministry for State Security) in the GDR and its practice of hiring so-called unofficial informants (*inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, IM), which neighbors (or readers) could have been and often were. Neighbors secretly observing other neighbors was a phenomenon Knobloch and his readers were quite familiar with.[28] In July 1969, for instance, Knobloch was approached by the *Stasi* and asked to work as an informant. However, he failed to submit any reports and was ultimately deemed unfit to work for the ministry. He was evaluated as lacking a "solidified class stance," and regarded as "very sensitive."[29]

In the longest section on his own childhood, Knobloch reflects on his grandmother who was "a good woman, but—alas, I must say it—she supported Hitler."[30] He depicts her as ill-treated, hard-working, and kind:

> One must be just with this woman. She had always suffered losses when her country was not faring well. She liked Hitler, because he promised to make this country great again. . . . When Hitler rose to power, my grandmother was 61 years old. She died in Berlin in 1942. That was the time when the Gestapo moved into the retirement home [at Große Hamburger Straße] and brought Jews of all ages to their death. . . . Most likely she had never heard the street's name. She probably did not even know about the crimes, or not

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26 Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65–81.

27 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (London: Penguin, 2006), 100–108, 114–15.

28 In 1958, Knobloch was asked to provide his home to host secret meetings of Stasi agents, a request that he denied on the grounds that his parents allegedly lived in West Berlin. See Knobloch, *Mit beiden Augen: Mein Leben*, 47–48. For the practice of hiring IMs, see Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945–1990* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 77–123.

29 Bundesarchiv (hereafter, BArch), MfS, ZA, BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 10060, 2. Knobloch was also found to have "revisionist opinions." See Joachim Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur: Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1996), 717–18, citation from BArch, MfS, ZA, AIM 5618/71, Bd. I/1, 67–68.

30 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 335.

enough. How am I to blame her or to justify her? What if I had had a grand-mother on Große Hamburger Straße, a Jewish grandmother?[31]

Here, Knobloch addresses the difficulty of assessing the behavior of one's own family members. Antifascist rhetoric commonly proclaimed "others"—industrialists and Nazi leaders—to be the only guilty ones; it never seemed necessary to ask questions about the individual responsibility of the average German.

One afternoon, Knobloch brought home a Jewish classmate to play with, while his grandmother paid the family a visit. After he left, she explained to him: "'It is not good for a German boy to play with a Jewish boy, you know.'"[32] Interpreting this episode, Knobloch argues that this,

> smart, respectable woman, who had done much good in her life and often missed out [on life], joined us playing in the corridor that afternoon, as if she was at the Auschwitz platform selecting [prisoners for extermination]; this one yes, that one no. Shall I judge so severely? Did the worldly grandmother . . . not want to assist her grandson in standing against possible disadvantages or worse? Is a grandmother not worried about his acquaintances? Was it not wise to avoid contact with a little Jew? It was even wiser, was it not? The grandmother was not a member of the Nazi party. None of us were members of anything despite the compulsory exercises of air-raid protection and the Hitler Youth. On the bookshelf, *All Quiet on the Western Front* stood next to Thomas Mann and Emil Ludwig hidden in the second row.[33]

Claiming that no one in his family had been a Party member, Knobloch points to the majority of the German population who had not joined it either. Still, as he shows in this episode, one did not have to be an active member of the Nazi Party to tolerate or even endorse its ideology. On the contrary, the initially skeptical assessment of the new regime by many Germans gradually turned into acceptance and approval. After the turbulent years prior to 1933, a feeling of calm and security ensued, turning the majority of Germans into supporters, beneficiaries, and accessories.[34]

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31 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 336.
32 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 338.
33 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 339.
34 Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries*, 310–26; Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: BpB, 2014), 358–69, 493–504.

Knobloch struggled with this question of responsibility. The story of his classmate and his grandmother took place in the safe environment of his parents' home. Active participation in the discrimination of those deemed unfit to be part of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was encouraged by the regime. Yet, it was not mandatory to enforce this discrimination in private life, at least not in the early years of National Socialism. By comparing his grandmother's actions to SS officers selecting prisoners at Auschwitz, Knobloch does not imply that they are equivalent, but rather raises questions about the functioning of German society in general, its prejudices and relationship with the regime. He points to the reasons why it happened, rather than how. This approach differed significantly from the SED's economy based explanations of fascism. The ideology of antifascism, thus, helped to exculpate the vast majority of Germans, and it was this exculpation that Knobloch critiqued in the story.[35]

Knobloch finished the manuscript in early 1978. In order to publish a book in the GDR, the publishing company had to formally apply to the Ministry of Culture, attaching two assessments—one by the editor, another by an external expert. It was common practice among writers and publishers to choose or propose these experts themselves in order to ensure a positive outcome.[36] Accordingly, Knobloch turned to Ursula Machlitt, archivist at the municipal archive in Dessau, Mendelssohn's birthplace.[37] In her report, she praised Knobloch's book, paying special tribute to his method of confronting the reader with contemporary traces of Mendelssohn's eighteenth-century life. Yet, she criticized his conclusions as rash and at times trivial, suggesting they be abridged, especially his opening description of the park.[38] The other reviewer, Maria Schrader-Diedrichs, an editor at the publisher *Buchverlag Der Morgen*, also praised Knobloch's book, pointing to his writing technique as well. The contemporary reader would be able to relate "emotionally" to the subject, Schrader-Diedrichs argued, because of Knobloch's excellent description of the social situation of Jews in Mendelssohn's time.[39]

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35 Jürgen Danyel, "Vom schwierigen Umgang mit der Schuld: Die Deutschen in der DDR und der Nationalsozialismus," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 40, no. 10 (1992). Knobloch was not the first to address this issue. Christa Wolf's novel *Kindheitsmuster*, published in 1976, had already pointed to the question of individual responsibility and guilt. Knobloch shares Wolf's didactical approach and the encouragement of the reader to remember his or her own experiences. See Lauckner, "Heinz Knobloch's 'Herr Moses in Berlin,'" 134.

36 Simone Barck, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis, *"Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer": Zensur-System und literarische Öffentlichkeiten in der DDR bis Ende der sechziger Jahre* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997).

37 Machlitt to Knobloch, December 22, 1977; Knobloch to Machlitt, December 27, 1977, SBBPK, Nl. 353.

38 Ursula Machlitt, Gutachten, July 5, 1978, BArch, DR 1/2321a, 461. Knobloch reacted to the report with gratitude. Knobloch to Machlitt, July 22, 1978, in SBBPK, Nl. 353.

39 Maria Schrader-Diedrichs, Gutachten, July 25, 1978, BArch, DR 1/2321a, 465.

In August 1978, Marion Fuckas, an official at the Central Office for Publishing and the Book Trade (Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel, HV)—a department of the Ministry of Culture—initially refused to grant permission for the book's publication due to concerns over "some controversial political parts" in the manuscript. The head of the publishing company, Wolfgang Tenzler, was asked to review the text together with Knobloch. In her memo, Fuckas explicitly mentions Knobloch's references to "fascist horrors against the Jewish people," yet these were not the source of her objections. Rather, Knobloch's other allusions and his treatment of "current problems" were regarded as trivial and arrogant.[40] In depicting his travel to West Berlin in the book, Knobloch had mentioned the Berlin Wall, predicting that it would one day come down.[41] Still, he cleverly phrased the episode in a somewhat ambiguous fashion, so that it could be interpreted as an argument in favor of socialism, which Fuckas did.[42]

Knobloch reluctantly conceded to most of the proposed changes, including removing the name of one communist who had fallen out of favor with the Party. Agreeing to these alterations, Fuckas granted the book the imprimatur of the Central Office.[43] Despite a few changes, the book still included several controversial passages, which led Klaus Polkehn, deputy editor-in-chief of the *Wochenpost*, to appreciate the censor's generous judgment and to conclude: "If all of it is published in this form, I will start believing in miracles."[44]

The book was finally published in 1979 and renewed in a total of five editions in subsequent years until 1989. The official approval allowed for 10,000 copies of the first edition, which according to Heinz Werner, the director of the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek), did not even come close to meeting the demand.[45] Due to Knobloch's prestige, the book was reviewed in a variety of newspapers and journals in the GDR. Most critics acclaimed and praised Knobloch's efforts to shed light on Mendelssohn's life. Shortly after, the book was published in West Berlin, leading to less enthusiastic, though overall positive reviews. Surprisingly, *Herr Moses* was also reviewed in foreign, mostly Jewish, newspapers, such as the Yiddish *Folks-shtime* in Warsaw and the Hebrew *Arakhim* in Tel Aviv.[46]

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40   Marion Fuckas, Aktennotiz, August 21, 1978, BArch, DR 1/2321a, 467–68.

41   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin,* 311–12.

42   Fuckas, Aktennotiz, August 21, 1978, 468.

43   Marion Fuckas, memo, September 15, 1978, BArch, DR 1/2321a, 473.

44   Klaus Polkehn to Knobloch, October 1978, 1, in SBBPK, Nl. 353.

45   The letter is cited in Reichart-Burikukiye, "Lauter Ausgrabungen," 203.

46   Reichart-Burikukiye, "Lauter Ausgrabungen," 194–96.

In 1981, Günter Hartung, professor of German Studies, published a review of the book in the literary journal *Weimarer Beiträge.* He tore the book to shreds, criticizing Knobloch for his "blatant, slightly coy dilettantism," especially in his treatment of Mendelssohn's philosophy and his description of eighteenth-century Berlin.[47] Still, he lauded Knobloch for his attempts to commemorate the destroyed Jewish life of Berlin.[48] The review led to several indignant reactions by readers and academics, some of which were published in two subsequent issues.[49] Kristiane Taegers, a librarian from Schwerin, defended Knobloch in her letter to the journal, arguing that his book was among the rare few that dealt with the persecution of Jews between 1933 and 1945. Thus, she saw him as actively contributing to the preservation of Jewish heritage, which led to the question: "What do you [the author of the review] do to make amends for the enormous guilt of our parents and grandparents about their deeds against their Jewish fellow citizens, the survivors and their descendants—as far as it is even possible?"[50] Hartung, the reviewer, and Taegers, the reader, drew different conclusions from Knobloch's book, and apparently differed in their interpretation of the author's intentions. While the reviewer expected a proper biography of Mendelssohn, the reader praised it as an attempt of commemorating Jewish victims of National Socialism.

Knobloch himself did not seem amused by this review. He wrote to Ursula Ragwitz, head of the "culture" section at the Central Committee of the SED, complaining about the style and tone of the review which, he argued, betrayed a political rather than a literary motive with a distinctly "anti-Jewish tendency."[51] The debate surrounding *Herr Moses* shows that the relatively few passages in which Knobloch focused on the Shoah and its aftermath apparently had an impact on many readers' impression of the book. In his review, Hartung treated the book as a study of Mendelssohn, while many others read it primarily as an eyewitness account of the persecution of the Jews and a comment on the often neglected

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47 Günter Hartung, "Heinz Knobloch, Herr Moses in Berlin: Auf den Spuren eines Menschenfreundes," *Weimarer Beiträge* 27, no. 9 (1981): 165.

48 Hartung, "Heinz Knobloch, Herr Moses in Berlin," 166.

49 "Zuschriften zu einer Literaturkritik: Zu Günter Hartungs Kritik von Heinz Knoblochs 'Herr Moses in Berlin,'" *Weimarer Beiträge* 28, no. 2 (1982): 175–77; Siegfried Rönisch, "Fortführung und Abschluß der Diskussion über Heinz Knoblochs Buch 'Herr Moses in Berlin,'" *Weimarer Beiträge* 28, no. 7 (1982): 151–74.

50 Rönisch, "Fortführung," 153.

51 Knobloch to Ragwitz, November 9, 1981, BArch, DY 30/23231, unpaginated. The ministry tried to calm Knobloch by underlining their own critical assessment of the review. Knobloch also complained to the journal's editors, arguing that the book was treated with a tone suitable for an argument with "the enemy." Letter to Hähnel, January 7, 1982, SBBPK, Archiv des Aufbau-Verlages, Dep. 38, W0151.

commemoration of a lost Jewish culture. Thus, Knobloch's hints, allusions, and criticism were mostly overlooked by the officials, but understood as important by his readership. In his next project, his intentions became much more visible.

Meine liebste Mathilde

After the publication of *Herr Moses in Berlin*, Knobloch began researching the life of Mathilde Jacob. Born to a Jewish family in Berlin, Mathilde worked as a translator and secretary for Rosa Luxemburg between 1915 and 1919. Afterwards, she assisted Paul Levi, newly elected chairman of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), before they both joined the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD). After Levi's death, Mathilde Jacob continued her work as a translator and typist, retiring in the 1930s.[52] On July 27, 1942, she was deported to Theresienstadt, and died in April 1943.[53]

About half of Knobloch's book is concerned with Mathilde's work for Rosa Luxemburg. However, similar to *Herr Moses*, he narrates not only Mathilde's life, but his own thoughts and walks through Berlin. He even invites the reader to experience his process of research and discovery in an attempt to make his sources as transparent as possible. He even reveals his contact with the Hoover Institution in Stanford, which holds a number of her letters and documents.[54] The other half of the book tries to reconstruct aspects of Mathilde's life. Here, Knobloch again looks for traces of former Jewish life in Berlin. He draws on all manner of texts, such as phone books, commercial registers, and newspaper ads, enacting his call to scholars in the preface to use non-traditional sources: "Is the historian not required to set aside his history books and put on his shoes every now and then?"[55] This question can be read as an appeal to both historians and the general public to take an interest in everyday life rather than solely the history of classes and nations, as was conventional at the time. Accordingly,

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52 During that time, one of her customers was Ismar Elbogen, a historian, who wrote the introduction to the edition of Moses Mendelssohn's *Brautbriefe*, the book Knobloch had discovered a few years earlier. Heinz Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde: Geschichte zum Berühren* ([East] Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1985), 255–56.

53 "Terezín Memorial: Victims of the Terezín Ghetto," https://www.pamatnik-terezin.cz/prisoner/te-jacob-mathilde-2, accessed March 14, 2022.

54 "Collection Guide: Register of the Rosa Luxemburg and Mathilde Jacob Papers," Hoover Institution, Online Archive of California, http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf8489n9bp, accessed June 2, 2021.

55 Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 5.

Knobloch pays a visit to the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee in search of the grave of Mathilde's parents.[56] Contemplating the nature of such a cemetery, he includes information about its history, mentioning plans for a new one in the south of Berlin: "The Jews of Berlin did not need a new cemetery. Or they did! An enormous, egregious one. But not in Berlin," he concludes this reflection, insinuating that most of the persecuted Jews were not killed in Germany, but abroad.[57]

In the same fashion, Knobloch uses the last quarter of the book to narrate the hardening life circumstances of Berlin's Jewish population during the war. His references to the Shoah are rather explicit, much more so than in *Herr Moses*—for example, when he mentions the "gas chambers" in Auschwitz—yet metaphoric at other times.[58] Knobloch tries to familiarize his readers with the experience of the persecuted. After having listed several laws passed in the early 1940s that constrained and terrorized Jews in Berlin, he concludes: "In order not to read them with a shaking head and full of regrets, all of those laws, regulations, and actions have to be imagined as imposed on one's own person, in one's own household."[59]

Knobloch reproduces the questionnaire Mathilde had to fill out during the expropriation of her property prior to deportation. Listing all aspects meticulously, he not only explains in detail the theft carried out by the German state, but also how numerous companies benefitted from it. Much of her property had to be sold to Berlin-based firms, which then resold the items on behalf of the state, retaining a share of the profit. In reconstructing this procedure, Knobloch underlines the formal and orderly manner that the exclusion and persecution of German Jews took place. Accordingly, on the basis of the work of Raul Hilberg, whose work was mostly unknown in the GDR, he recreates a train route similar to the one taken by Mathilde.[60]

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56   In 1980, Knobloch published a brochure on the cemetery together with Peter Kirchner (chairman of the Jewish community) and Alfred Etzold (who was responsible for East Berlin's cemeteries) on the occasion of the cemetery's centenary. *Jüdische Friedhöfe in Berlin* (Berlin: Institut für Denkmalpflege, 1980). In addition, he had written a text on Weißensee, published in various versions, where he quoted the memoirs of Martin Riesenburger, later chief rabbi of the GDR, who had secretly organized services and burials at the cemetery during the war. See Heinz Knobloch, "Herbert-Baum-Straße 45," *Wochenpost*, no. 30 (1980), 20–21; *Berliner Fenster* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1981), 170–202; *Zur Feier des Alltags* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1986), 123–44.

57   Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 137.

58   Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 273, 303.

59   Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 285.

60   Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 311–12.

Subsequently, Knobloch tries to track the fate of Mathilde's family members, successfully finding a few who were able to emigrate or survive. In recounting a meeting with Mathilde's nephew in West Berlin, Knobloch ends the book on a bitter note. He is given a tape recording of a reading of Tucholsky's *Wendriner Stories* so that he might hear "'how they used to talk Jewish [dialect] in Berlin.' No one talks like this anymore. It is extinct."[61]

Knobloch submitted the manuscript in 1983. The publisher asked Annelies Laschitza, professor at the Institute for Marxism-Leninism and an expert on the life of Rosa Luxemburg, to review the work for publication. While she praised Knobloch's attempt to pay homage to Mathilde Jacob, Laschitza rejected the claim that Mathilde was "forgotten" as Luxemburg's secretary. Her main points of criticism related to Knobloch's depiction of the history of the Communist Party, especially the allegedly too positive role given to Paul Levi, and some remarks about Luxemburg that Laschitza deemed superficial or impetuous. However, she stressed her positive judgment of the manuscript, calling it a "poignant accusation of the bestial persecution of the Jews by fascism, which may foster and strengthen an antifascist position and a socialist self-consciousness."[62] Marion Fuckas saw the book as an important contribution to the 35th anniversary of the GDR in 1984, as it addressed not only the November Revolution of 1918 but also the fascist period, and she especially praised how the book pilloried the "bestial persecution of the Jews."[63]

It took some months to persuade Knobloch to alter or omit a few passages. In the end, the manuscript was approved in July 1984. In the final version not only some controversial episodes were omitted, but also the list of references used by Knobloch, as it equally contained Marxist-Leninist books and "bourgeois" and "anti-communist" literature. The acknowledgments were also dropped, as Knobloch had thanked some "bourgeois and anti-communist persons and institutions."[64]

Though both the expert and the ministry agreed with the publisher and the author on the importance and significance of the book and its segments dealing with the Shoah, they differed in their argumentation and intention. While Las-

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61   Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde*, 337.
62   Annelies Laschitza, Gutachten, December 9, 1983, BArch, DR 1/2324, 178.
63   Marion Fuckas, Aktennotiz, January 30, 1984, BArch, DR 1/2324, 200.
64   Eckhard Petersohn, Ergänzung zum Verlagsgutachten, undated, BArch, DR 1/2324, 193–94; Fuckas, Aktennotiz, July 26, 1984, 171. Unfortunately, the archive of the publisher Buchverlag Der Morgen was lost after the company was sold many times after 1990. As such, the original manuscript including the table of reference and the acknowledgment cannot be cited.

chitza and Fuckas perceived the book as a contribution to antifascist literature, Knobloch's and his publisher's intentions were more concerned with restoring the memory of an individual, Mathilde, and by extension the memory of other Jewish citizens of Berlin and elsewhere. As Günter Grimm, editor of *Der Morgen*, put it: "Knobloch wants to convey historical knowledge in an intuitive way, but more so, he is concerned with the shaping of an active historical consciousness."[65] In narrating Mathilde's life, Knobloch does not scold former Nazis in West Germany, as the official rhetoric did, though by that point in the 1980s considerably less often than in the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than point fingers, Knobloch depicts a more individual and graceful—and thus comprehensible—image of the Shoah. Furthermore, in describing the persecution of the Jews, Knobloch again did not point to any individual, high-ranking Nazi criminals, but to the more complex role the vast majority of German society played during the National Socialist period.

Still, his text *could* be seen as a contribution to antifascist literature by the public, but like *Herr Moses*, it ended up being read quite differently as well. Thus, Knobloch managed to convey his own perspective on the matter while adopting and amending the state's ideology for his purpose, demonstrating his *Eigen-Sinn*. This concept, originally developed in the historical study of everyday life, implies that the self-perception of an individual living under dictatorship (or any other environment of domination for that matter) is shifting and never rigid, leaving opportunities to position and reposition oneself within its schemes, and to demarcate "a space of one's own."[66] Also, the meaning that a person ascribes to his or her own deeds can change over time, thus official policies are always interpreted and often adopted according to one's own needs and beliefs.[67] By using a "cover story" about a prominent eighteenth-century philosopher or a less prominent secretary of a key figure of the German Communist party, Knobloch managed to camouflage his true intentions and ensure his publication.

However, his books must not be read as part of a distinct Holocaust literature. His works demonstrate a genuine concern for and fascination with the individuals he wrote about. Neither should his writing about the Shoah be seen as

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65   Günter Grimm, Gutachten, January 3, 1984, BArch, DR 1/2324, 186.

66   Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 313.

67   "Even though external appearances might at first suggest the congruence of ideological meaning and the individual attribution of meaning, they are not identical. A constant process of mediation is taking place between them, the result of which can never be final," see Thomas Lindenberger, "Eigen-Sinn, Domination and No Resistance," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte,* June 16, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.646.v1.

an act of dissidence. The Shoah as an event itself was not subject to censorship in the GDR, rather censors targeted only various forms of representation and memory that were anathema due to their style of writing and interpretation. The regime mostly welcomed accounts of the Shoah that proved useful for its propagandistic goals and helped legitimize the founding myth of the socialist state. However, it was not always possible to have it both ways. Works that openly assailed antifascism, and thus denounced the core of the Party's legitimacy, were banned or quashed. For example, when Aufbau-Verlag tried to publish Primo Levi's most prominent book *If This Is a Man* in 1981, the authorities immediately cancelled the project. In their assessment, the Committee of Antifascist Resistance Fighters[68] deemed the book unworthy of publication as it propagated "egoism" and lacked any reference to the communist resistance movement or solidarity among inmates in the National Socialist period. Furthermore, it was believed that Levi would disgrace the reputation of political prisoners by comparing them to "ordinary" criminals.[69] His description struck at the heart of the committee's self-conception. His account deviated from the canonical reading of the concentration camp as an experience of gruesome horror carried out by the SS and undermined the state's narrative of heroic solidarity between prisoners, led by the international communist resistance committee. Instead, Levi offered a far more diverse and realistic description of the inmates' complex "coerced communities."[70]

Similarly, Volk & Welt attempted to publish a book based on Claude Lanzmann's movie *Shoah* in 1986. While praising the book for its intensity, the editor Carola Gerlach criticized Lanzmann's portrayal of fascism as "politically biased and distorted," concluding that "*Shoah* is an unacceptable publication for us."[71] Though the editor was stunned by the power of the testimonies Lan-

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68   The committee was founded after the more diverse and less ideological *Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime* had been banned in 1953. It was an organization closely related to the party, consisting of former communist inmates, and intended to preserve the antifascist tradition. See Jon Berndt Olsen, *Tailoring Truth: Politicizing the Past and Negotiating Memory in East Germany 1945–1990* (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 62.

69   Otto Funke, Gutachten, November 24, 1981, BArch, DR 1/2124a, 341–44. Surprisingly, Volk & Welt attempted to publish the book in 1959 as well. Their assessment praised the book and recommended it for publishing. Since no other documents are preserved, it remains unclear why the project was not pursued, although the result of the application to the ministry probably would have been similar. Akademie der Künste (hereafter, AdK), Berlin, Archiv Verlag Volk & Welt, no. 2938. See also Thomas Taterka, "Mythen und Memoiren im 'Antiglobkestaat': Konturen des zwischen Buchenwald und Auschwitz gespaltenen Lagerdiskurses in der DDR," *Menora* 11 (2000): 148.

70   Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), 499.

71   AdK, Berlin, Archiv Verlag Volk & Welt, no. 2987, 3–4. In 1989, Rütten & Loening decided to publish Lanzmann's book, probably since from January 1989 onwards the practice of censorship had been abolished. The

zmann had gathered, she refused to have the book published. Her decision not to engage in the troublesome process of censorship seems wise given the low chances of the book's publication. However, this account also illuminates the diversity of the GDR's literary scene. Although editors had a genuine interest in helping their authors to publish their works, they could still function as the first step of censorship. This underlines the difficulty of evaluating their actions. While sometimes striving to go beyond the boundaries of ideology and publish the seemingly unpublishable, editors and authors must not be seen as true opponents of the system. Rather, they might be described as struggling between their beliefs in socialism and their critique of it. Broadening a story conventionally told in a narrow way and providing alternative interpretations of history was not equivalent to a total negation of the state or the system they lived under. Knobloch's books ought to be read in this context. His methods changed, however, after the publication of *Mathilde* and his attitude toward antifascism was more openly revealed in his final book, which dealt with another character from Berlin's history.

Der beherzte Reviervorsteher

Knobloch recounted the role of Wilhelm Krützfeld, a police lieutenant who helped preserve the synagogue on Oranienburger Straße from being burned down during the wave of pogroms in November 1938 (*Kristallnacht*).[72] However, the book only deals partly with the protagonist. Rather, Knobloch assembles a collection of stories about various individuals, who at one time lived in the vicinity of Krützfeld's police station near Hackescher Markt in central Berlin. Drawing on a wide range of literature, he offers his readers different accounts of the pogrom by Jewish witnesses. Consequently, the Shoah is featured much more prominently in the book. Though Knobloch exaggerated Krützfeld's role, due partly to a lack of sources,[73] he still reminded his readers that individuals, even those closely engaged with the state and the regime, were able to make decisions whether to collaborate and implement given orders or to refrain from participating.

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book, however, was never published, presumably due to the new availability of books from West Germany following the falling of the Berlin wall in November of the same year. See SBBPK, Archiv des Aufbau-Verlages, Dep. 38, A674, 57–86; BArch, DR 1/2240.

72 Heinz Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher: Ungewöhnliche Zivilcourage am Hackeschen Markt* (Berlin: Morgenbuch-Verlag, 1990).

73 Regina Scheer, "Im Revier 16," in *Die Hackeschen Höfe: Geschichte und Geschichten einer Lebenswelt in der Mitte Berlins,* ed. Gesellschaft Hackesche Höfe e.V. (Berlin: Argon, 1993), 78; Hermann Simon, *Die Neue Synagoge Berlin: Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 1991), 76–86.

The book was published in 1990, and so did not have to undergo censorship, though parts of it, like in the case of *Herr Moses* and *Mathilde*, were previously published in the *Wochenpost*.[74] Knobloch could therefore include sections that were hitherto unimaginable, especially his harsh criticism of the ideology of antifascism. In referring to the 1988 defilement of a Jewish cemetery in Berlin by a group of adolescents, Knobloch ridicules the scarce and often misleading press coverage of the incident, as destroyed Jewish graves and fascist paroles "are not allowed to exist" there.[75] Observing the subsequent trial, he characterized the teenagers as "imbruted," who would have served as "fine SS men" 50 years ago. Still, he concludes: "They are a product of our society."[76] Knobloch draws on these thoughts again when condemning the state's history education program, which dedicated only fifteen minutes to the Shoah as he claimed.[77] Furthermore, he denounced the party's involvement in the 1988 commemoration ceremonies of the November pogroms 1938 as another one of their "campaigns" that no one believed in. Proclaiming East Germany the "winners" of World War II together with the Soviet Union unmasked how "ghastly" and shallow antifascism had become.[78] By criticizing the regime's commemorative policy and arguing that the GDR could bring about people capable of "fascist" crimes, Knobloch attacked the Party's legitimacy and demystified the GDR's founding myth as the allegedly *better* Germany. Obviously, such statements could not have been made publicly during the SED's rule. Thus, though *Reviervorsteher* may not serve as an example for Knobloch's way of addressing the Shoah within socialist censorship, it does testify more openly to his beliefs and the criticisms he had been holding back.

Conclusion

In a speech delivered at the annual *Lion Feuchtwanger Preis* ceremony in 1986, during which Knobloch was honored with the German literary prize, Waltraud Lewin praised him as wise in not immediately presenting his findings to the reader, but rather inviting them to follow him on his many quests. "No detective story is as exciting as the tenacious and adventurous process of research in *Meine*

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74   Heinz Knobloch, "Der beherzte Reviervorsteher," *Wochenpost* 26 (1988), 4.
75   Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher*, 40.
76   Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher*, 41.
77   Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher*, 67.
78   Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher*, 164.

liebste Mathilde," she stated.[79] In her concluding remarks, Lewin praised Knobloch's works as precise, detailed, and, most importantly, invigorating to the reader's mind and his or her perceptive abilities.

Lewin was quite accurate in her analysis and aptly captured Knobloch's intentions. In the beginning of *Herr Moses*, Knobloch states: "Today, the reader is spoiled. He passionately seizes the few instances in which he is required to think for himself."[80] As shown above, Knobloch frequently reminded his readers to question the encounters, stories, and even parks they came across. Mostly, he wrote in a vague, ambiguous fashion, maneuvering between "the demands of the ruling power and his own ideas."[81] In this manner, Knobloch impersonates Jaroslav Hašek's famous character *Švejk* from *The Good Soldier Švejk*, as he indicated in one of his texts.[82] In veiling his criticism in allegedly innocent little texts of casual contemplation, he managed to circumvent censorship (most of the time), yet also provide his readership with thoughts and stories for an alternative, more diverse portrayal of the state they were living in and its history.

Knobloch's books can therefore be seen as a prime example of a different way of addressing the Shoah and commemorating its victims than state propaganda would have it. As this chapter has shown, he tried to implement his thoughts on the subject even in contexts where it did not seem to belong. In doing so, he shed light on one of the consequences of National Socialism: the almost complete destruction of Jewish culture and life of Berlin. Though he emphasized the visibility of new attempts to revive Jewish cultural life, he mostly pointed to the traces of those who were lost, rather than those who survived.

The reactions of the ministry indicate that it was not the subject of the Shoah itself but only its interpretation that determined whether a work should be banned. His dealing with the subject was regarded as a fine contribution to the GDR's antifascist struggle. Though his criticism of antifascism was severe, Knobloch should not be seen as opposed to the whole system. In the preface to the second edition of his book on Krützfeld, which appeared in 1993, he wrote that, given the re-unification of Germany, he would prefer "an imposed antifascism"

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79 Waltraud Lewin, "Geschichte zum Anfassen: Aus einer Laudatio auf Heinz Knobloch anläßlich seiner Auszeichnung mit dem Lion-Feuchtwanger-Preis 1986," *Positionen: Wortmeldungen zur DDR-Literatur* 3 (1987): 124.

80 Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 13.

81 Jürgen Reifarth and Gunter Reus, "'Mich aber mag das Gesetz recht eigentlich nicht': Publizistische Opposition gegen den SED-Staat in den Feuilletons von Heinz Knobloch," *Publizistik* 47 (2002): 17.

82 Heinz Knobloch, "Hašeks Befinden," in *Zur Feier des Alltags: Feuilletons,* ed. Jürgen Borchert (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1986), 211.

over no antifascism at all.[83] Therefore, his treatment of the Shoah should not be regarded as a rebellion against the ideology of the GDR, but as an example of his *Eigen-Sinn*, his particular interpretation of antifascism and his mission to fill an important historical gap.

Also, as it was apparently possible to address the Shoah in various ways, one should ask why more texts dealing with the subject were not written in East Germany. The public reactions to Knobloch's work certainly demonstrated a great deal of interest in the topic, though his books never reached the circulation of highly successful books like *Naked Among Wolves*. Stories that emphasized heroism and clearly assigned guilt to others, it would seem, were highly desirable, whereas those about individual responsibility drew less attention. Of course, this was primarily due to the regime's interests, but the readers' preferences should be kept in mind here as well. This, however, cannot be seen as a distinctly socialist or East German reaction, but a primarily German one, deriving from the needs of a post-genocidal society. While both German societies differed in various ways, they largely agreed on their neglect of the Shoah and its victims.

Still, Knobloch's work stands as a fitting example of what was indeed possible. In focusing on his protagonists' lives and their culture, he hinted at the lives that were destroyed or forgotten, and the almost completely erased Jewish culture of Germany. In inviting his readers to join him in his explorations, he urged them to question the conventional explanations of the past, their daily encounters, and their own role during the National Socialist period. In pointing to specific individuals and victims, he deliberately refrained from accusing West German officials or industrialists as the party propaganda did, but without excusing them altogether. It is the personal experience he shared and the individual perspective he chose that deviated from the common narrative of the time, and broadened the story of the Shoah as it was then understood. However, his understanding of the Shoah remains grounded within a distinctly German perspective. Non-German victims hardly appear in his texts, and his preoccupation with Berlin precludes attention to other places.

Describing the destroyed cemetery where Mendelssohn was buried, Knobloch explains that a symbolic grave was established for him after the war. He wonders: "Then again, what use is it if the new grave was placed with German thoroughness

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83 Heinz Knobloch, *Der beherzte Reviervorsteher: Ungewöhnliche Zivilcourage am Hackeschen Markt* (Berlin: Morgenbuch-Verlag, 1993), 5.

exactly where the old one was wiped out with German thoroughness."[84] In examining his work, one might conclude that Heinz Knobloch was one of the few non-Jewish Germans on the literary scene of the GDR who cared enough about the Shoah to address it repeatedly in his work. His exceptional role in bringing this subject to the minds of many deserves our attention.

Figure 10.1. Heinz Knobloch at Moses Mendelssohn's grave at Große Hamburger Straße, Berlin, 1986. Ullstein Bild, Nr. 00006755.

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84   Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin*, 10.

Miriam Schulz

"We Pledge, as if It Was the Highest Sanctum, to Preserve the Memory": *Sovetish Heymland*, Facets of Holocaust Commemoration in the Soviet Union and the Cold War[*]

In August 1961, a curious event occurred, referred to by the *New York Times* as a one-round victory of the Yiddish language "in the struggle with the Kremlin:"[1] for the first time in thirteen years, and nine years after the Stalinist purge of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia, a Yiddish periodical called *Sovetish Heymland* (Soviet Homeland) appeared in the Soviet Union. A year earlier, editor-to-be Arn Vergelis had written a letter to Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party, requesting the creation of a Yiddish-language periodical to cater to the several hundreds of thousands of Soviet Yiddish-speakers and a potential worldwide readership. From 1961 until 1991, this highbrow political and literary journal would be the monthly, state-sponsored hub of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union.[2]

Not only did the journal satisfy the need for the cultural expression of Soviet Yiddish literati and (contributing) readers, it was also meant as the weapon of the "Soviet Yiddish front in the Cold War" for persuading Jews worldwide of the benefits of Soviet communism.[3] The (however limited) autonomy of Yiddish discourse within the Soviet Union combined with the journal's global mis-

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[1] "Yiddish Wins a Round," *New York Times*, August 26, 1961; also mentioned in Gennady Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War* (Leeds: Legenda, 2008), 65.

[2] The journal started out as a bi-monthly publication.

[3] Gennady Estraikh, "Sovetish Heymland," in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, online edition, accessed November 23, 2017, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Sovetish_Heymland; on this Cold War function, see Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*.

sion meant that Soviet Yiddish succeeded on another intra-Soviet "battlefield." From its very start, *Sovetish Heymland* was fertile soil for a lively discourse on the great cataclysm of Soviet Jewry—the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.[4] While never actively repudiated or completely erased, outside of the pages of *Sovetish Hemyland* the specifically Jewish catastrophe of the Second World War was otherwise of rather marginal importance in the emerging state-propagated cult of the "Great Patriotic War."[5] For Jewish communities worldwide, conversely, this topic was at the center of postwar (re)construction.

A comprehensive account of the engagement with the Holocaust in the pages of the Soviet Yiddish journal during its thirty years of existence is beyond the scope here. The Soviet party-line towards the Holocaust was as variable as Soviet Jewish confrontations with it—there was neither a coherent and linear policy of suppression regarding the Holocaust in public discourse, nor was there a mono-lithic Soviet Jewish coming-to-terms with it.[6] Therefore, the following pages will spotlight only one specific chapter: *Sovetish Heymland*'s coverage of Soviet Jew-ish initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust through the erection of monu-ments during the late 1970s and early 1980s, which Gennady Estraikh has called "a unique form of Jewish independent activity in the Soviet Union" analogous to the concept of the American *landsmanshaftn*.[7] These activities coincided with a steadily growing war cult which, besides literary works, poetry, memoirs, and

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4   Per Alexander Pomerantz, who summarized the contents of the journal's first two issues, among 68 "non-ideological" poems (vs. 85 "purely ideological" ones) 13 were devoted to the Holocaust; among the 19 "non-ideological" prosaic texts (vs. 24 "purely ideological" stories) 6 were about the Holocaust; see Alexander Pomerantz, *Di sovetishe haruge-malkhe* [The martyred Soviet Jewish writers] (Buenos-Aires: YIVO, 1962), 97; mentioned in Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 89.

5   The Second World War had been proclaimed the "Great Patriotic War" by Stalin himself, deliberately in-voking the victorious "Patriotic War" against Napoleon of 1812. See Jochen Hellbeck, "War and Peace for the Twentieth Century," *Raritan* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2007): 24–48.

6   There were few examples of officially approved publications by Soviet Jewish authors writing in Russian that focused on experiences of the Holocaust. See for example, Masha Rol'nikaite's 1964 *Ya dolzhna rasska-zat* (I have to tell), Anatolii Rybakov's 1979 novel *Tyazhelyi pesok* (Heavy Sand), Grigori Kanovich's 1979 *Svechi na vetru* (Candles in the wind); on the publication history of Rol'nikaite's memoir, see Boris Frezin-sky, "Il'ia Erenburg I devnik Mashi Rol'nikaite," *Narod knigi v mire knig* (October 2009), online, accessed February 24, 2019, http://www.narodknigi.ru/journals/82/ilya_erenburg_i_dnevnik_mashi_rolnikay-te/; Anja Tippner, "The Writings of a Soviet Anne Frank? Masha Rol'nikaite's Holocaust Memoir *I Have to Tell* and Its Place in Soviet Literature," in *Representation of the Holocaust in Soviet Literature and Films*, ed. Marat Grinberg et al. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 59–82; for more on Rybakov's *Heavy Sand*, see Anja Tippner, "Writing a Soviet Holocaust Novel: Traumatic Memory, the Search for Documents, and the Sovi-et War Narrative in Anatolii Rybakov's *Heavy Sand*" in this volume.

7   See Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 132. *Landsmanshaftn* were mutual aid societies created by Jewish im-migrants in the US. In these organizations *yizker-bikher* (memorial books) about the destroyed hometown were written, which can be seen as Holocaust monuments in their own right.

films, found its "most visible artifacts" in "thousands (if not tens of thousands) of monuments" erected across the Soviet Union.[8] This commemorative environment also changed the way sites of Jewish suffering could be encountered. After overcoming bureaucratic hindrances, they could now be approached and inscribed into this memorial landscape as remnants of the Soviet tragedy.[9]

Several advantages accrue from this microscopic approach: (1) *Sovetish Heymland*'s coverage is a testament to these still understudied activities by Soviet Jews in and of themselves; (2) the analysis will open up a window on the ways Soviet Jews confronted and made sense of the Holocaust in the context of Soviet memory politics; and (3) it will speak to how these activities were instrumentalized by the journal in the Cold War battle for the right kind of Holocaust interpretation and the right kind of Jewish identity in a time of increased emigration by Soviet Jews to the State of Israel and the US in the 1970s and early 1980s. As such, the journal's coverage of Holocaust commemoration could be read as evidence that such commemorative activities (and by extension the Jewish community as a whole) were not only *not* suppressed in the Soviet Union but, indeed, these activities could be presented as expressions of Soviet Jewish patriotism.

Rather than the clandestine and *per definitionem* dissident Soviet "Holocaust" literature of Jewish *samizdat* or the subversive commemorative activities of *refuseniks* who aimed to leave the Soviet Union,[10] the grey zone of *Sovetish Heymland*'s "conformist agency," i.e., the engagement with the Holocaust in a

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8   Citations from: Scott W. Palmer, "How Memory Was Made: The Construction of the Memorial to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad," *The Russian Review* 68, no. 3 (2009): 373–407, here 373. Since this article was written, the definitive study on Soviet Holocaust monuments was published by Arkadi Zeltser, see Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018); Zeltser does not focus on the representation in *Sovetish Heymland* alone and this is where I intervene. Parts of this chapter draw heavily on my dissertation that I have since defended, see Miriam Schulz, "Keyner iz nit fargesn: Soviet Yiddish Antifascism and the Holocaust," dissertation, Columbia University, 2021.

9   For more on these activities under Stalin, see Mordechai Altshuler, "Jewish Holocaust Commemoration Activity in the USSR under Stalin," *Yad Vashem Studies* 30 (Jerusalem 2002): 271–96. Yad Vashem's initiative "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of the Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR" studied a huge part of Soviet Holocaust commemorative activities and disclosed the obstacles that were faced in post-Stalin monumentalization work, often leading to monument inscriptions that would not mention Jews as victims specifically. See "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of the Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR," *Yad Vashem*, online, accessed October 25, 2016, http://www.yadvashem.org/untold-stories/database/homepage.asp.

10   Roughly a quarter of activists who subsequently settled in the State of Israel stated that "learning about the Holocaust and its results . . . was the necessity of developing a national consciousness and of creating frameworks for collective national activism" for the sake of *leaving* the Soviet Union. This number is pulled from the unpublished survey "The Sociological Characteristics of the 'Aliya' Activists in the Soviet Union: Awakening or Continuity," which is introduced and discussed in Yossi Goldstein, "The Jewish National Movement in the Soviet Union: A Profile," in *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i and

state-approved setting, provides a barometer for the complexities of Holocaust memory of Jewish "insiders" who situated themselves *within* the Soviet system.[11] As we will see, they were engaged in an alternative memory discourse, albeit a limited one, within the legitimate framework of Soviet Yiddish culture.

Yiddish in Postwar Soviet Union

In the early 1960s, Khrushchev's "gesture" of recognition towards Soviet Jews by providing them with a mere literary outlet clearly did not stem from a desire to fully revitalize Soviet Yiddish culture, which late Stalinism (1948–1952) had virtually destroyed. It was primarily a means of containment of Soviet Yiddish culture and the product of increasing international pressure to stop the suppression of the Jewish minority unleashed under Stalin in 1948.[12] Yet, apart from Khrushchev's appeasement policy, why did the only state-approved Jewish magazine appear in *Yiddish*, not in Russian?

Yiddish held a special place in the Soviet Jewish mindset from the very beginning of Soviet state-building. In the years following the October Revolution, the new state installed ethnically identified intelligentsias as "cultural translators"—among them a Jewish intelligentsia operating in Yiddish—tasked with bringing Soviet ideology and culture to their ethnic constituency in their own vernacular for the sake of unifying a vast multiethnic state. By 1919, the authorities declared Yiddish the national tongue of Soviet Jewry and made it the primary marker of a secular Soviet Jewish collective identity, ousting its long-held rival Hebrew, which was seen as a symbol for everything that Soviet Jews had to overcome: Jewish religiosity and bourgeois nationalism, primarily in the form of Zionism.[13] To be sure, Yiddish's meteoric rise in status disregarded not only the

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Avi Beker (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 30n1; for more on the Holocaust and the State of Israel as understood by Soviet Jewish emigres, see Irena Cantorovich and Nati Cantorovich, "The Impact of the Holocaust and the State of Israel on Soviet Jewish Identity," in *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 119–36, they disregard the Yiddish expression of this culture, though.

11 Gleb Tsipursky describes the "conscious or willing decision, stemming primarily from one's internal motivations and desires, to act in ways that closely follow top-level guidelines." Applied to Holocaust coverage in *Sovetish Heymland*, we can deduce that it was read as being in conformity with top-down guidelines of war commemoration, see Gleb Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 8.

12 Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 64–65; Abraham Brumberg, "'Sovyetish Heymland' and the Dilemmas of Jewish life in the USSR," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1972): 28.

13 On this chapter of Soviet Jewry, see David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 14–59.

socio-linguistic and ethnic variety of Soviet Jewry but also the changing cul-tural-linguistic reality of an assimilating Soviet Jewry, which was fast moving toward the Russian language.[14] But despite the steadily declining Yiddish read-ing public and even after the state-orchestrated purges, Yiddish never lost its aura as the chief indicator and "deliberate means of expressing" Soviet Jewish nationality.[15] Thus, for the Yiddish-speaking/-reading subset of Soviet Jewry, post-Stalinist *Sovetish Heymland* symbolized the continuity of their Soviet Yid-dish culture—including the resuming of a tradition of Soviet Yiddish responses to the Holocaust that had been started by the Jewish Antifascist Committee (JAC) in the 1940s. Indeed, "the vast majority of regular Soviet Yiddish readers were subscribers of *Sovetish Heymland*" beyond a doubt, despite the shifting na-ture of Soviet Jewish cultures and languages.[16]

Towards a Straightening of the Lopsided Historical Record

The enduring status of Yiddish even after the Stalinist purges in the late 1940s and early 1950s has only recently been fully acknowledged by scholars such as Gennady Estraikh and Harriet Murav and led to the first scholarly discussions of *Sovetish Heymland*'s treatment of the Holocaust.[17] This belatedness is a testa-ment to the long-term effects of the myopic tendencies operative in Cold War scholarship. This myopia articulated itself, first and foremost, through simplis-tic juxtapositions of the Soviet regime's alleged total silencing and successful re-pression of Holocaust memory with the "West's" initially slow, but then full-frontal and dynamic embrace of it. To be sure, the Soviet regime distorted the understanding of the Holocaust as part of its memory politics and subsumed

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14 For a detailed analysis of language developments, see Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry since the Second World War: Population and Social Structure* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 22, 179–97; Mark Tolts, *Yiddish in the Former Soviet Union since 1959: A Statistical-Demographic Analysis* (2012), https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-fsu88. *Sovetish Heymland*'s circulation numbers decreased from 25,000 in 1961 to 5,000 in 1985. In the USSR, the number of a journal's copies did not depend on the real demand of a reading pub-lic, though. Therefore, while the decrease in circulation numbers corresponds to the shrinking reading pub-lic, the authority's decision to reduce circulation was arguably due to other reasons. For more on this, see Gennady Estraikh, "The Era of *Sovetish Heymland*: Readership of the Yiddish Press in the Former Soviet Union," *East European Jewish Affairs* 25, no. 1 (1995): 17, 18; Chone Shmeruk, "Twenty-five Years of *Sove-tish Heymland*: Impressions and Criticism," in *Jewish Culture and Identity*, 201.

15 Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry since the Second World War*, 180.

16 Estraikh, "The era of *Sovetish Heymland*," 22.

17 See, for example, Harriet Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Rus-sia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*; Shmeruk, "Twenty-five Years of *Sovetish Heymland*: Impressions and Criticism."

the particular Jewish tragedy within the greater torment of the Second World War; the 2.5–2.7 million Soviet Jewish Holocaust victims were simply folded into the 26.6 million Soviet war victims (military and civilian) in total.[18] At least since the 1960s, there was a concerted effort from above to fit the Nazi genocide of Europe's Jews into a war cult that soon dominated all realms of the Soviet (Russian-speaking) commemorative culture. This war cult succeeded in overshadowing even the October Revolution as the vindicating event of the Soviet system itself and portrayed the Soviet Union, rather than Europe's Jews, as the primary target of Nazi Germany.[19]

What this image of top-down Soviet memory policies overlooks, however, is the bottom-up participation in Holocaust commemoration from Soviet Jewish/Yiddish insiders themselves. In addition to simplifying binaries in Soviet memory studies, scholarly enquiries of post-Stalin Soviet Jewry fell victim to certain paradigms that dichotomized this diverse community into two opposing camps: Jewish victims of the Soviet regime in want of (Zionist) rescue whose identity was allegedly formed by and large by their experience of the Holocaust versus anti-Zionist denouncers, who actively or passively betrayed and collaborated in the destruction of "their" Jewish culture.[20] This dichotomy, it could be argued, was a mirror image of the Cold War binaries writ large.

Sovetish Heymland's editor-in-chief Arn Vergelis is arguably the most prominent figure to become a casualty of this zero-sum logic. Vergelis was vilified in

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18   Soviet war casualties in general and Holocaust victims on Soviet soil specifically are highly debated. An added difficulty stems from territorial consideration: does one take into account Jewish victims on territories acquired by Soviet aggression before 1941 or not? The estimates of 2.5 to 2.7 million Jewish victims include the annexed territories. See Olga Baranova, "Early Historiography of the Holocaust: The Example of the Soviet Union," in *Als der Holocaust noch keinen Namen hatte—Zur frühen Aufarbeitung des NS-Massenmordes an den Juden* [Before the Holocaust had its Name: Early Confrontations of the Nazi Mass Murder of the Jews], ed. Regina Fritz, Éva Kovács, and Béla Rásky (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 185, 187; Mark Kupovetsky, "Estimation of Jewish losses in the USSR during World War II," *Jews in Eastern Europe* 24, no. 2 (1994): 34; Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry since the Second World War*, 4; Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 525. Thanks to Arkadi Zeltser for his illuminating help in this regard.

19   For the war cult, see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12–39, 208 ff., 233, 235; Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

20   Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 65; Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*, 2–4; Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 1–18; Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train*, 1–18; Miriam Schulz, "'The Deepest Self Denies the Face': Polish Jewish Refugee Intellectuals and the Birth of the 'Soviet Marrano,'" in *Polish Jews in the USSR (1939–1959): History and Memory of Deportation, Exile, and Survival,* ed. Katharina Friedla and Markus Nesselrodt (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021), 143–74.

Western Jewish discourses as a toxic *apparatchik* who collaborated in the destruction of Soviet Jewish culture as early as the late 1940s by allegedly denouncing veteran Yiddish literati who were murdered on August 12, 1952.[21] In 1961, Western onlookers suggested that he continued this destruction by usurping their legacy and becoming the editor of *Sovetish Heymland*—the authorities' alleged mouthpiece.[22] Others defended Vergelis "as a committed communist and anti-Zionist who tried to preserve the remnants of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union."[23] An "objective" biography of Vergelis is yet to be written, but as he himself noted in September 1994 with the privilege of hindsight:

> You, like others, will in the future evaluate what I did or did not do in the course of my life. But one does not have to see everything as either black or white. Keep in mind that I acted under specific conditions, at a specific time and place. . . . What is true is that I was and remain a committed Communist. However, I also was and remain a Jew who has felt the pain of his people. I defended them and devotedly served our *mameloshn* [sic].[24] I did what others could not do or did not want to do. . . . As for the authorities, they were occupied with their matters and I—with mine.[25]

What can be established is that the authorities considered Vergelis the best suitable candidate for the editorship of *Sovetish Heymland* since (1) he was an experienced editor; (2) he had spent his youth in Birobidzhan and was considered a representative of the Jewish Autonomous Region; (3) he was a veteran of the "Great Patriotic War;" and (4) he was an intellectual without gulag experience. Thus, he was deemed fitter for foreign contacts and trips as a "cultural diplomat" than the recently rehabilitated Soviet Yiddish gulag returnees. Indeed, the "authorities permitted him to amalgamate the function of editor and [sole] censor" of the jour-

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21   Sol Liptzin, "Vergelis, Aron," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, 1st ed. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1973), 111.

22   For further reading on the ambivalent portrayal of Vergelis, see Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 65–82; Mark Kupovetsky, "Aron Vergelis: Survivor of the Destruction of Soviet Yiddish Culture, 1949–1953," *Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe* 58, no. 1 (2007): 40–94; Gennady Estraikh, "Odinochestvo evreyskogo redaktora: K 100-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya Arona Vergelisa" [Solitude of the Jewish editor: To the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Aron Vergelis], in *Narod knigi v mire knig* [The people of the book in the world of books], April 2018, http://narodknigi.ru/journals/133/odinochestvo_evreyskogo_redaktora/.

23   David Markish in *Ma'ariv*, February 27, 1987; quoted in Kupovetsky, "Aron Vergelis," 41.

24   *Mameloshn* means "mother tongue" and refers specifically to the Yiddish language.

25   Interview with Vergelis conducted by Kupovetsky in September 1994, quoted in Kupovetsky, "Aron Vergelis," 41–42.

nal—perhaps because (1) he was considered so trustworthy, (2) his enterprise so unimportant, or (3) there simply was no other censor competent enough in Yiddish.[26] Whatever the reason may be, Vergelis was autonomous in editing and was *not* monitored by *Glavlit*—the Soviet censorship authority over printed material. Therefore, when it comes to the abundance of de facto existing Holocaust-related material in *Sovetish Heymland*, it was approved by Vergelis and Vergelis alone.

A Monument over Babyn Yar

A relevant case in point for this chapter might be Vergelis's article "*Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres*" (The Babyn Yar monument will stand forever) published in *Sovetish Heymland*'s June issue of 1975. In it, he celebrates the coming unveiling of the Babyn Yar memorial and offers his readers a sneak preview of the monument.[27] This article was part of a wide Soviet public debate about the German mass murder of Kyiv's Jews,[28] which had been ongoing for over five decades.[29] The most important public breakthrough was Yevgeni Yevtushenko's 1961 poem "Babi Yar" in which the poet—a committed communist himself and not a dissident despite what liberal histories tell us—lamented the lack of a monument as a Soviet turn away from Marxist-Leninist ideals back to

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26 Estraikh, *Yiddish in the Cold War*, 82.

27 Arn Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," *Sovetish Heymland*, no. 6 (1975): 158–64; further see Shay Arie Pilnik, "The Representation of Babi Yar in Soviet Russian and Yiddish Literature," (dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2013), 200 ff.

28 On September 29–30, 1941, *Einsatzgruppe C* killed 33,771 Jewish men, women, and children at the ravine Babyn Yar at the North-Western outskirts of Kyiv. Until Kyiv was liberated in 1943, there were several successive executions of Kyiv residents regardless of ethnicities, massacres of more Jews, Roma, POW, concentration camp inmates, etc. Historians continue to debate the number of victims and estimate it between 33,771 and 150,000 people. They agree that the majority were of Jewish descent. See Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), 65–68; Jeff Mankoff, "Babi Yar and the Struggle for Memory, 1944–2004," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2004): 393–415; Vitalii Nakhmanovych, Anatolii Podolskyi, and Mykhailo Tyaglyi, eds., *Babyn Yar: Masove ubyvstvo i pam'yat' pro n'oho; Materialy mizhnarodnoi naukovoi konferentsii 24–25 zhovtnia 2011 r., m. Kyiv* [Babyn Yar: Mass murder and memory about new; Proceedings of the international scientific conference on June 24–25, 2011, in Kyiv] (Kyiv: Ukrains'kyi tsentr vyvchennia istorii Holokostu, 2012).

29 Frank Grüner, "Die Tragödie von Babij Jar im sowjetischen Gedächtnis" [The tragedy of Babyn Yar in Soviet Memory], in "*Zerstörer des Schweigens": Formen künstlerischer Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa* ["Destroyer of silence": Forms of artistic memory of the National Socialist race and extermination policy in Eastern Europe], ed. Frank Grüner, Urs Heftrich, and Heinz D. Löwe, with the collaboration of Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 57–98, 58 f.; Kiril Feferman, *Soviet Jewish Stepchild: The Holocaust in the Soviet Mindset, 1941–1964* (Saarbrücken: VDM, 2009); William Korey, "A Monument over Babi Yar?," in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941–1945*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 61–76.

tsarism. His Soviet-internal protest against what he saw as overt antisemitism was a *cri de coeur* calling for the communist project to be put back on track.[30] Even though Yevtushenko spurred a nationwide debate, it still took 15 more years for the Soviet authorities to erect a monument in October 1976.

Sovetish Heymland, meanwhile, mostly abstained from engaging in the heated "Babyn Yar Debate" of the 1960s. This policy of "not taking a clear stand" can be explained by a combination of careful calculation on the part of the editorship to cover controversial topics only to a certain extent and by their deep-seated trauma having recently witnessed the dismantlement and execution of the JAC on the grounds of alleged "reactionary nationalism." After all, almost half of *Sovetish Heymland*'s writers had been incarcerated in gulags until the mid-1950s.[31] And the issue was controversial insofar as there exists a de facto difference between the genocidal sites in *shtetlekh* and the site of Babyn Yar: while in *shtetlekh* the prime victims were Jewish, at Babyn Yar Jews made up the majority of victims, but the area served as an execution site for several thousands of non-Jews as well. Hence, the events of Babyn Yar were ripe for appropriation by the prevalent Soviet antifascist narrative, which made this site a touchy topic to embrace for the Yiddish journal.

However, all of this should not be mistaken as a total omission of the topic by the journal. *Sovetish Heymland* consistently published works dealing with this atrocity—primarily in the form of poetry. And a year before Babyn Yar's memorial was finally unveiled, Arn Vergelis chimed in with a poetic reading of Babyn Yar's topography of suffering:

> The ravine on the outskirts of Kyiv, that old ravine, drenched with inexhaustible sorrow, endowed with its own climate of Elul,[32] windless, with the secrecy of the heavens, with, so to speak, a unique body-and-soul. . . . This piece of land [is] . . . almost transparent from above and endlessly-labyrinthine from deep under, soaked with blood and tears, completely empty and, at the same time, densely populated—with what and with whom God only knows. . . .[33]

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30 Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *The Collected Poems 1952–1990*, ed. Albert C. Todd with the author and James Ragan (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), 102–4; see also Gennady Estraikh and A. Polyan, "Ekho 'Bab'ego Yara'" [The Echo of "Babyn Yar"], *Arkhiv evreyskoy istorii*, no. 10 (2018): 196–220.

31 Brumberg, "'Sovyetish Heymland' and the Dilemmas," 33.

32 Elul is the month in which it is customary for Ukrainian Jews to visit their ancestors' graves. Litvaks, Jews from the historical territory of Lite, do this on Tisha be'Av. Thanks to Arkadi Zeltser for pointing this out.

33 Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," 158; a slightly different translation can be found in Pilnik, "The Representation of Babi Yar," 200.

Vergelis's essay then swiftly turns into a Cold War discussion over how to best interpret the events of September 1941, and the Holocaust writ large, and how to adequately memorialize it. The mid-1970s were a high time of the Soviet Jewish efforts to emigrate and of contentions between American and Israeli Jews fighting for their "liberation." *Sovetish Heymland* took part in the campaign against emigration and the concurrent anti-Zionist campaign so that Vergelis's Cold War framing must also be situated as part of this parallel struggle. In a conversation with US tourists from California—and by extension American Yiddish readers of the journal—who are adamant in highlighting Babyn Yar as an exclusively Jewish catastrophe, Vergelis explains that the differentiation of victims had been the methods of the fascists, a product of "reactionary nationalism" that has been overcome in the Soviet Union. "For all martyrs," after all, "the blood which was spilled from their veins had one color."[34]

> I don't quite remember, how many times I have come here to Kyiv's death valley under the open blue sky, to which from time immemorial—and not at all coincidentally—cling three adjacent, suburban cemeteries: the "Lukyanover"—a Christian [*kristlekher*] one, the Jewish one, and the one that is called in all cities the *mixed* or *general* cemetery. . . . Also, Babyn Yar is a mixed one, a general grave for 120,000 martyrs [*kdoyshim*].[35]

To be sure, Vergelis did clarify that the number of Jewish victims was proportionally higher than that of any other ethnicity. But by means of this anecdote and in accordance with the Soviet protocol, he both elegantly propagates communist internationalism and the commemoration of collective Soviet suffering and strikes a blow to Western Jewish communities' singling out of the genocidal assault against Jews, which only perpetuates a fascist methodology.

Revisiting Yevtushenko's opening line, Vergelis asks "Why is there no monument over Babyn Yar?" and replies in conformity with Soviet orthodoxy: the admittedly long delay had to do with the complex topography of the ravine's territory. Reminding the reader of the natural catastrophe of 1961, when a 45-foot high mudslide fatally flooded that part of the city, the territory had to be restored and paved in order for the monument to "stand forever."[36] What he de-

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34   Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," 159.

35   Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," 158.

36   Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," 160.

cides to omit, however, is the delicate incident when in 1957 the Ukrainian Central Committee shelved the project of building a monument and planned to build a sports stadium on the site of Babyn Yar in its stead.[37] Instead, he puts forward an interesting analogy to the memorial of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which alongside the Babyn Yar monument, as he sees it, constituted the beginning of a new sculptural tradition.

> It is clear, that Mikhail Lysenko not only saw the composition of Nathan Rapoport, but that he "resumed drawing the line." Both monuments will be united in a sort of visual-aesthetical type of sculptures, which highlight that the monuments are not only addressed to the present, but also to future generations. Dynamism, militancy, integral connection between tragedy and heroism, between death and life—these basic motives are constitutive in both works.[38]

To revert to Warsaw's monument as a framework to discuss Babyn Yar as both Soviet and Jewish is indeed a smart maneuver by Vergelis. The 1943 Uprising could be appropriated by Soviet Jews early on being one of few Jewish specific events included into the wider Soviet war narrative without delay.[39] Erected on the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto on the uprising's fifth anniversary on April 19, 1948, the monument was the first to juxtapose both the heroism of Jewish resistance to the Nazis—symbolized by muscular figures standing in for the New Jew who fights back—with figures of perennial suffering of the "weak" Diasporic Jew which culminated in their almost complete annihilation at the hands of the Nazis.[40] As such, Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto memorial set in stone Soviet Yiddish interpretations of the Holocaust since 1941. By drawing a straight line from the

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37 Richard Sheldon, "The Transformations of Babi Yar," in *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham*, ed. Terry L. Thompson and Richard Sheldon (London: Westview Press, 1988), 133.

38 Vergelis, "Der denkmol in Babi Yar vet shteyn ledoyres," 161.

39 Ewa Thompson showed that there was an ambition by Soviet propagandists to use the Nazi destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto as a means of diverting attention away from the concurrently discovered Katyn mass grave of Polish officers executed by the NKVD in early 1940. See Ewa M. Thompson, "The Katyn Massacre and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the Soviet-Nazi Propaganda War," in *World War 2 and the Soviet People*, ed. John Garrard (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 212–33; mentioned in Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater*, 250.

40 On the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial, see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 155–84; on this memorial as an embodiment of communal Jewish memory beyond the specifically Soviet context, see David G. Roskies, "Dividing the Ruins: Communal Memory in Yiddish and Hebrew," in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric. J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2012), 82–101.

Warsaw ghetto to Babyn Yar with his own pen, Vergelis radically re-interpreted the events in Kyiv in late September 1941. In accordance with the communist interpretation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a long-planned, self-sacrificing contribution by Warsaw's Jews to the heroic struggle of the Red Army, in Vergelis's narrative the large-scale massacre of Kyiv's Jews becomes part of this struggle as well. Without "red-washing" the immense suffering, Babyn Yar became a redemptive sacrifice and symbolized the longed-for overcoming of Jewish powerlessness and the final emergence of the New Soviet Jew. In this vein, the inseparable link between death and life translates as a metaphor of Jewish continuity in the Soviet here and now, intrinsically tied to the sacrifice and endurance of the Jewish catastrophe on Soviet soil. So much for the major Soviet lieu de mémoire of the Holocaust, but how did matters stand on the periphery?

Commemoration Activities in Popervāle, Latvia

Irine Legudina's report "Keyner iz nit fargesn" (No one is forgotten) in *Sovetish Heymland*'s May issue of 1977 covers Popervāle (Yiddish: Popervol), the site of the Poperwahlen labor camp established in 1943 specifically for Jews brought over from the Latvian concentration camp of Riga-Kaiserwald.[41] Legudina, a secretary of the village council, was not a Popervāle native. She was sent there as a teacher and was told by the local (ostensibly non-Jewish) population of what had happened during the Nazi occupation in "one of the most horrific death-camps."[42] Together with her pupils, the report tells us, she investigated "whether anyone of the former KZ-lers was still alive" (*tsi es iz geblibn lebn emetser fun di gevezene katsetler*).[43] As it turned out, only six of the approximately 1,000 prisoners could "save themselves from dying" (*geratevet zikh fun toyt*) and survive the camp's liquidation on May 9, 1944.[44] Every year since the erection of the monument in 1968, the town's residents and the camp's survivors would assemble around the erected obelisk on May 9, which was also celebrated in the Soviet Union as Victory Day. The obelisk, the report and embedded photographs relate, bears an inscription in Latvian: "*Ļaudis! Mums nav tiesibu aizmirst kas ir fašisms*" ("People! We have no right to forget what fascism really is!"). Legudina's report, interestingly, transforms the Latvian "categorical imperative" into a

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41   Irine Legudina, "Keyner iz nit fargesn," *Sovetish Heymland*, no. 5 (1977): 23–25.
42   Legudina, "Keyner iz nit fargesn," 23.
43   Legudina, "Keyner iz nit fargesn," 23.
44   Legudina, "Keyner iz nit fargesn," 23.

text that, if anything, speaks to a tendency of forgetting: it does not reproduce the inscription, but transposes it with the faulty Yiddish translation "*Gornisht iz nit fargesn, keyner iz nit fargesn*" ("Nothing is forgotten, no one is forgotten"). The transposition renders the idea of forgetting into something that is beyond human capacity. This "translation error" is telling. The term rendered by *Sovetish Heymland* in Yiddish echoes the inscription on a granite wall behind a bronze sculpture of "the Motherland" in the Leningrad Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery, unveiled in 1960 and dedicated to the victims of the Siege of Leningrad, one of the most appalling war crimes committed by Nazi Germany. The inscription is from a poem by Olga Berggolts (1910–1975), a verse from which became a catchphrase in Soviet memory politics.[45]

Like Vergelis before her, Legudina's report abides by that specific Soviet etiquette: it highlights the solidarity among the Soviet people, how the non-Jewish population of Popervāle helped the entrapped Jews under life-threatening circumstances during the war and now annually commemorated the victims together with the survivors. The echo of Berggolts's words in Popervāle ostensibly further reproduces the dominant Soviet narrative that the Holocaust was but a part of German War crimes during the "Great Patriotic War." Both could be read as mere lip-service to Soviet guidelines, but the context matters. Rather than subsume the memory of Holocaust victims under that of "mere" war casualties, I argue that—thanks to *Sovetish Heymland*—the reproduction of (a part of) Berggolts' poem on the Popervāle Holocaust memorial recasts the original poem itself into a "Holocaust dirge": the original Leningrad inscription remains—Popervāle's inscription can be read as its "Jewish transposition."[46] The same is true of the commemoration services, led by survivors, held at the monument, where an oath is pledged by Jewish and non-Jewish participants: "We pledge . . . to preserve the memory of all captives in death camps—the memory of all murdered and tortured human beings."[47] The oath expresses the universal in a concrete context. This concrete universality, as it were, is reinforced by a Holocaust-specific language used in the report.

45   For the original Russian poem, see Olga Berggolts, "Zdes' lezhat leningradtsy" [Here lie Leningraders], Russian version: https://biography.wikireading.ru/32071; English translation: https://russiandefpolicy.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/here-lie.jpg, retrieved 29 March 2022.

46   James Young notes the fluctuation of these kinds of memorial icons in regard to the Warsaw Ghetto Monument with reference to Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," see. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 184.

47   Legudina, "Keyner iz nit fargesn," 25.

Terms like *toyt-lager* (death camp) and *katsetler* (concentration camp inmate), or the mention of Riga-Kaiserwald without further explanation, demonstrate a certain familiarity on the part of the journal's audience with the jargon specific to the Holocaust, even if somewhat confused.[48] Furthermore, the report contains a nuanced conceptualization of the camp's survivors.[49] While "*lebn geblibene*" emphasizes stamina and continuity, a term that was also ubiquitous amongst the *sheyres hapleyte*,[50] the reflexive "*geratevet zikh fun toyt*" highlights the agency of survivors to save themselves and corresponded much more to the Soviet ideal of survival through resistance. Just like in Vergelis's article, tragedy and heroism here coalesce. Legudina gives agency back to the survivors and lets the survivors speak for themselves as surviving witnesses. By acknowledging their heroism by "simply" surviving hell, universal Soviet suffering turns into individual heroic Jewish suffering. It is striking how much Legudina's choice of terminologies in 1977 resembles the evolution of the concept of "Holocaust survivor" in Western discourse, which moved steadily from the monolith of the passive survivor to the survivor as a *secular saint* in the 1970s.[51] It was in the "era of the witness" when an array of oral history projects slowly but surely established the importance of survivor testimonies and spotlighted the survivor-witness as a superior kind of individual by dint of his/her survival.[52]

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48   Death camps were a specific subgroup of the Nazi concentration camp system. In the narrowest sense, they comprised the camps of *Aktion Reinhard* designed and established solely for the purpose of efficient mass murder starting in late 1941. Blumental's dictionary *Verter un vertlekh fun der khurbn-tkufe* also distinguishes between *toyt-lager* and *katset*, suggesting that the distinction was known already during/right after the war. Nakhmen Blumental, *Verter un vertlekh fun der khurbn-tkufe* [Words and idioms from the Holocaust period] (Tel Aviv: Farlag Y.L. Perets, 1981), 121, 276.

49   Bothe and Nesselrodt provided a first step towards the conceptualization of the transnational concept of the "Holocaust survivor." My analysis may function as an addendum to their findings, which unfortunately did not include Soviet Jewish conceptualizations. See Alina Bothe and Markus Nesselrodt, "Survivor: Towards a Conceptual History," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 61, no. 1 (November 2016): 57–82.

50   *Sheyres hapleyte* is of biblical origin and entered Yiddish through its Semitic component. It can be translated as the "saved remnant" or "survivors of a catastrophe." Among Jewish Holocaust survivors in DP camps in liberated Europe it was a self-designation that demarcate them as having collectively experienced a specifically Jewish catastrophe. They used the term to actively distance themselves from the bureaucratic label "Displaced Person" used by the Allies to classify any person who resided outside of his/her home country on account of the Second World War. See Bothe and Nesselrodt, "Survivor," 63 ff.; Ze'ev Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective; Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches, and Fundamental Issues* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 329–32.

51   David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 7, quoted in Bothe and Nesselrodt, "Survivor," 61.

52   Annette Wieviorka, *L'ère du témoin* [The era of the witness] (Paris: Hachette: 2009), 179.

The oath sworn at the Popervāle commemoration ceremony, which expands the victim group at Popervāle to include all human beings who were killed or tortured under Nazi occupation, did not transgress the Soviet protocol. Yet, more than Vergelis in his article, the Jewishness of the victims is clearly highlighted and Popervāle demarcated as a locality of Jewish torment while retaining universal significance. Read in light of the shift in Western Holocaust commemoration, when the transition from "*provisional* to *authorized* memory"[53] made Holocaust survivors into authoritative voices of history and the "Holocaust" itself into a didactic instrument to teach "fundamental values"[54] especially in the Americanized Western hemisphere,[55] Popervāle's oath comes along like the very common "Never Again" à la Emil Fackenheim and Elie Wiesel, which understands Jews as the embodiment of humanity itself and the Holocaust thereby as an assault on all humanity.

Commemoration Activities in Medzhybizh, Ukraine

In the April issue of 1981, *Sovetish Heymland* covered another example of commemoration activity on the grassroots level. The account *Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto* (Notes about the Ghetto in Medzhybizh) includes both a letter to the journal's editorial staff and a detailed survivor's account. Medzhybizh, located in Central Ukraine, is known today as the birthplace of Hasidism because its founder Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov took residence there in 1740. It remains an important pilgrimage site to this day.[56] Under German occupation, the Jews of Medzhybizh were herded into a ghetto and most perished in an "Aktion" on September 21, 1942.

> I was born in the *shtetl* Medzhybizh [Yiddish: Medzhibozh], in the region of Khmelnytskyi. In 1968, I visited my birthplace as the leader of a group of activists in order to immortalize the memory of the victims in the ghetto of Medzhybizh. When we built the memorial and put the mass grave in order,

53 David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant, *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 8.

54 Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 11.

55 Bothe and Nesselrodt, "Survivor," 23.

56 Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train*, 269. See also Murray Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Marcin Wodziński, *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Moyshe Eynhorn, one of those, who miraculously saved themselves from fascist hell, entrusted me with his notes on how the Jews of Medzhybizh perished. . . . Therefore, I decided to send Eynhorn's notes to the editorial office of "Sovetish Heymland." Avrom Vayner, Volgograd. [57]

It is important to highlight that Avrom Vayner, the founder of a Holocaust commemoration activists' group in his hometown Medzhybizh, was convinced that *Sovetish Heymland* was the right address for the Moshe Eynhorn's survivor testimony he was entrusted with. In other words, Vayner understood the journal to be a partner in commemorating Jewish Holocaust victims. According to his letter, Vayner, a Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) resident, founded this group in order to initiate commemoration activities in Medzhybizh to specifically honor "*Medzhybizher yidn*."[58] On September 22, 1967, the monument was unveiled and since then attracted many Jews from across the Soviet Union to participate in the annual memorial ceremony. But similar to Legudina's account before, it is not so much the activities of Vayner's group that are in the center of this account, but the survivor Moyshe Eynhorn, assuming the role of the survivor-as-witness, who by dint of his survival is obliged to speak for all victims.

In his account, "a reply from a living witness of the Medzhybizh Ghetto and the camp in Letychiv,"[59] Eynhorn retells his experiences during the Second World War starting with the German occupation of his hometown Medzhybizh on August 7, 1941.[60] He miraculously survived the "pogroms," as he tellingly calls the (first) liquidation of the Ghetto's inhabitants between August and November 1942, and was subsequently deported to the labor camp of Letychiv. He managed to escape the camp more than once, making his way back to Medzhybizh as well as other *shtetlekh* in the region. The imminent threat of more "pogroms" instigated by the Germans and the dire state of Jewish life in Ukraine convinced him to escape to Romanian occupied Transnistria since allegedly "there Jews live free," but he ended up in the ghetto of Sharhorod.[61] In-

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57 "Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto," *Sovetish Heymland*, no. 4 (1981): 84.

58 Yad Vashem designates 1965 as the year in which the Jewish activists group decided to start their commemorative activities in Medzhybizh.

59 "Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto," 95.

60 Yad Vashem speaks of July 8, 1941, as the date when the Germans captured Medzhybizh, although different accounts give different dates "08.07.1941" vs. "07.08.1941." Regarding all other dates, Eynhorn's account is in agreement with Yad Vashem. See "Medzhibozh," *The Untold Stories, Yad Vashem*, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/index.asp?cid=497.

61 "Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto," 92.

deed, due to international pressure and the poor state of the war effort, Germany's ally Romania had changed its policy towards its Jews in the course of 1942 and distanced itself from the planned deportations of Jews to the Bełżec death camp in the Lublin district.[62] However, it was only on Yom Kippur in 1943, according to Eynhorn, almost a year after the matter of the scheduled deportations was supposedly put to rest, that rumors spread of a German order to deport all Jews in Transnistria to "Lublin." Eynhorn does not elaborate further on what "Lublin" stood for, but obviously expects his readers to know that this was a region in which the extermination of Jews was carried out. But before these deportations could take place, the Jews in Sharhorod were "redeemed" by the Red Army.[63] The city was liberated on March 20, 1944:

> A lieutenant addressed us: "Dear friends! Please excuse our tardy arrival. We handed you over and now redeemed you. For the victory of the Red Army!" . . . None of us was happy about this. Crying with bloody tears, we remembered our parents, sisters and brothers, women and children, who had died innocently.[64]

Acknowledging the Red Army as the Jews' savior, Eynhorn offers an explicit corrective to the grand Soviet narrative of the war against German fascism by framing the specific Soviet Jewish experience of the 1940s somewhat disconnected from the events of the Soviet-German war itself. The Soviet war narrative is inverted by making the "Great Patriotic War" into a war fought by the Red Army to liberate the Jews—the "redeemers" (*oysleyzer*) fought a Jewish war.

Yet, the Soviet victory was no compensation for the losses Ukrainian Jewry suffered. Indeed, Eynhorn's testimony is filled with denunciations of Ukrai-

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62 For more on Romania's change of mind, see Bert Hoppe and Hildrun Glass, eds., *Sowjetunion mit annektierten Gebieten I: Besetzte sowjetische Gebiete unter deutscher Militärverwaltung, Baltikum und Transnistrien* [Soviet Union with annexed territories I: Occupied Soviet territories under German military administration, the Baltic States and Transnistria], vol. 7 of *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945* [The persecution and murder of European Jews by National Socialist Germany, 1933–1945] (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2011), 69 ff.; International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, "Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Presented to Romanian President Ion Iliescu," November 11, 2004, online, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080226-romania-commission-holocaust-history.pdf, 77ff.

63 On the ghetto in Sharhorod, see Iemima D. Ploscariu, "Institutions for Survival: The Shargorod Ghetto during the Holocaust in Romanian Transnistria," *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 1 (2019): 121–35.

64 "Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto," 95.

nian collaboration with the German occupying forces—a topic which was strictly regulated by the authorities—writing extensively about actions of "*shutsmener*" (security men), a Yiddish euphemism of that time for the Ukrainian police, a force created specifically to carry out Germany's plan to annihilate the Jews.[65] For Eynhorn, this was a specifically Jewish catastrophe, which happened independently of the war and with active support of the Ukrainian "*rotskhim*" (murderers):

> In August 1942, the waves of Jewish pogroms started anew.... They [the Ukrainian police] forced him [the leader of the Jewish community] to go around the houses and assemble the Jews of the Ghetto. Moyshe went and screamed: "Jews! Speak Vidui[66] and go to the slaughter!"... In the *shtetl*, everything was normal except for the Jews.... A Jew was worth less than a dog.[67]

Eynhorn does not refer to these events using the term (*driter*) *khurbn* ("destruction" or "the third destruction"), the common term among many Yiddish-speakers for the Holocaust that draws a continuity between the tragedy of the Second World War back to the pivotal Biblical events of the destruction of the first and second temple in Jerusalem.[68] Rather than use this terminology, Eynhorn, like many other Soviet Yiddish-speakers, made sense of the Holocaust within the context of distinctively Eastern European Jewish persecution and suffering of the more recent past, a past that he himself had witnessed (as we can presume from his age): the era of anti-Jewish pogroms. Roughly 20 years before the German occupation, Medzhybizh's Jewish community had suffered heavily under the pogroms during the Russian Civil War (1918–1921), a "forgotten genocide" of the twentieth century that killed an estimated 50,000 Jews. Even though all contending armies in the Civil War committed pogroms, Jews primarily identified them with the Ukrainian national movement headed by Symon Petliura (responsible "only" for approximately 40 percent of recorded pogroms).[69] Returning to

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65   See Blumental, *Verter*, 160, 313.

66   Ritual term for the confession of sins, made both collectively on Yom Kippur and individually before dying.

67   "Notitsn vegn Medzhibozher Geto," 86 f.

68   See Benjamin Harshav, "Introduction," in Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), xx–lii, xxiii.

69   The 1926 assassination of Petliura in Paris is testament to his alleged overall culpability for the pogroms held in Jewish circles, see David Engel, ed., *The Assassination of Symon Petliura and the Trial of Scholem Schwarzbard, 1926–1927: A Selection of Documents* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

Figure 11.1. Picture in *Sovetish Heymland* about locating the site of the Medzhybizher mass grave. The Yiddish caption reads: "At the mass grave, one of the creators of the monument, I. A. Sinitsin (in the front), and the author of *Notitsn*, M. Eynhorn, determine and mark (*farpinktlekhn*) the location where the mass shootings took place."

Figure 11.2. Picture in *Sovetish Heymland* of survivors and Jewish natives of Medzhybizh visiting the site of the Medzhybizher mass killings during their annual memorial meeting. The Yiddish caption reads: "Medzhybizher *landsleyt* (compatriots) at a meeting at the mass grave."

Eynhorn's *Notitsn*, the "genocidal behavior"[70] of Ukrainian collaborators under German occupation in the 1940s mirrored their alleged behavior during the Russian Civil War. Thus, his interpretative framework is not the "Holocaust" as one commonly understands it today, but the "pogroms" the community had last endured between 1918 and 1921, also perpetrated by their Ukrainian neighbors.

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70   David Gaunt, Jonathan Dekel-Chen, Natan M. Meir, and Israel Bartal, "Introduction," in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Re-Thinking the Pogrom in Eastern European History*, ed. Jonathan Dekel-Chen, David Gaunt, Natan M. Meir, and Israel Bartal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–19, 4 f.

Eynhorn's testimony is interlaced with photographs documenting the process of monumentalization *in situ*—from marking and ordering the mass grave to memorial gatherings at the erected monument (see figure 11.1). Initially, the activists around Vayner intended two plaques for the monument—one in Yiddish, one in Russian. The local authorities hampered the Yiddish inscription, however, and additionally ordered the replacement of the word "Jew" with the ubiquitous euphemism "Soviet citizens." Vainer's group was able to add the words "prisoners of the Medzhybizh ghetto."[71] This unpleasant backstory is (naturally) not included in *Sovetish Heymland*. Instead, the text-photograph-interplay tells a narrative of return, taking root, and rebirth by turning neglected mass graves into sanctified spaces of Jewish memorial rituals (see figure 11.2). And while the monument itself was, on the surface, part of the Soviet monumentalization efforts honoring the "Great Patriotic War" with no particular space for Jews, *Sovetish Heymland*'s coverage clearly serves as a means to making this ethnically objective monument Jewish. The picture-text-interplay is a testament not only to the tragic past, but—despite or perhaps because of that past—to a vital and durable present and future of the Jewish community in their "Soviet Homeland," which after all liberated them from the Nazi onslaught.

Conclusion

Close readings of these three accounts allow for several conclusions to be drawn regarding Holocaust memory as represented in *Sovetish Heymland*. On the most basic level, the previous pages demonstrated that a variety of ritual Holocaust commemoration activities and interpretative frameworks in different parts of the Soviet Union existed. *Sovetish Heymland* offered an outlet for a great variety of Yiddish voices to report about these activities by offering different interpretations and opinions about the meaning of the Holocaust and the significance of its collective commemoration. Though manifestly different in detail, the examples exhibit a number of shared characteristics and suggest a reciprocal influence between Soviet memories of the "Great Patriotic War" and Jewish reckonings with the Holocaust. While the Soviet war cult was intended by the authorities to subsume the Holocaust—which was to a certain degree

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71   See "Commemoration of Jewish Victims," The Untold Stories, Yad Vashem, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/commemoration.asp?cid=497.

successful in the hegemonic Russian cultural realm[72]—this same cult arguably fostered, and potentially reinforced, a distinct way of commemorating the specifically Jewish catastrophe and experience amongst Soviet Yiddish-speakers.[73]

This holds true also for the Jewish activities of monumentalization themselves, which emulated the erection of monuments across the Soviet Union. The writings about these activities published in the journal similarly display the synergetic interplay between the Soviet war cult and Holocaust memory that resulted in two diverging tendencies: (1) at times the Holocaust narrative followed a different, even opposing, trajectory to non-Soviet narratives; and (2) in other respects, it contained many similar features to simultaneously emerging Jewish responses West of the Iron Curtain. As such, Soviet Yiddish Holocaust memory is a reflection of Soviet Yiddish culture writ large. This culture did not follow a zero-sum logic but provided a framework in which the Soviet and the Jewish could coexist or even synergistically cross-fertilize. As such it is indicative of a form of modern Jewish identity for which the commemoration of the particularly Jewish suffering during the Second World War did not stand in opposition to a feeling of belonging to the Soviet "homeland." Indeed, the "Great Patriotic War" was understood by many as a proof for the realization of a Soviet-Jewish symbiosis.

Sovetish Heymland's editor-in-chief Arn Vergelis was a figurehead of this phenomenon. Despite his mostly negative reputation, Vergelis was himself a practitioner of Holocaust commemoration and, thanks to his unusually autonomous powers as editor, opened up avenues for engaging with the Holocaust that were otherwise closed. This engagement can be read as a more communist, i.e., antifascist, way of interpreting the Holocaust than what was the norm in the West, but by no means a less Jewish one. Soviet Jews were located in a specific social narrative, molded it, and made sense of their "national" catastrophe through the lens of their experiences and vocabulary as Soviet Jews. Their efforts to mourn their brethren at times transgressed the confined Soviet narrative of the war. This transgression was made also possible by the (however limited) autonomy of the Yiddish language itself. By dint of its Yiddishness, the reading au-

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72 Two of the most famous incidents were the suppression of the *Black Book of Soviet Jewry* in 1947 and Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate* in 1961.

73 This approach follows Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory." Rothberg focused on postwar France as a "laboratory" to analyze where and how the differing histories of colonialism and Nazism overlap(ped). See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

dience was presumed to be limited to a Jewish audience at home and abroad. Thus, violating the orthodox Soviet master narrative of collective suffering, redemptive sacrifice, and salvation during the "Great Patriotic War" was admissible in this internal Jewish discourse.

Moreover, the predominance of this topic had to be expected given the journal's mission as a "cultural translator and persuader" amongst Jewish communities West of the Iron Curtain in which the Holocaust was pervasively discussed and played a (similarly) immense role in the shaping of postwar identities. Taking on the ambivalent role as a Cold War Warrior, *Sovetish Heymland*'s coverage of the commemorative activities thus also conveyed certain cross-bloc messages about Soviet Jewish culture generally. Externally, it communicated that neither the commemoration of the Holocaust nor the Soviet Jewish community were suppressed. All three accounts are cases in point here: whereas the monument in Babyn Yar was framed as an important external and internal symbol of Soviet acknowledgment of Jewish suffering and heroism as part of the grand narrative of the Soviet victory, Popervāle is the ideal of the Soviet town, in which the friendship of the Soviet people is actively lived out, and Medzhybizh, the *shtetl* of Jewish nostalgia, stands for the *hemshekh* (continuity) of Jewish life. Coverage of the memorial activities also provided a counter-image to simultaneous Soviet Jewish efforts to emigrate. It propagated the development of Jewish culture in their Soviet homeland, as the journal's title boldly announced, by means of mourning, commemoration, and reconstruction. The balance between "hybridization" with Soviet surroundings while retaining spaces of "autonomy" was somewhat reminiscent of the old *Bundist* principle of "*doikayt*" (hereness).[74] This hereness was translated through the erection of monuments—stony embodiments of rootedness.

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74   I draw on Homi Bhaba's notion of "cultural hybridity" here, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4; for more see also "Migration führt zu 'hybrider' Gesellschaft," Homi K. Bhaba in an interview with Lukas Wieselberg, *ORF-Science*, accessed on December 7, 2020, https://sciencev1.orf.at/science/news/149988.

Stephan Stach

"The Jewish Diaries . . . Undergo One Edition after the Other": Early Polish Holocaust Documentation, East German Antifascism, and the Emergence of Holocaust Memory in Socialism*

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"I clearly remember where this book, which was an integral part of my youth, was to be found in my parents' library," writes the historian and orientalist Hermann Simon about a collection of five accounts of Polish Jews on Nazi Occupation in 2009,

> which appeared under the title "Im Feuer vergangen" [Gone with the Fire][1] in the GDR in 1961 [sic] and achieved seven editions in only four years. These texts, translated from Polish, were available on virtually every book-shelf of our friends and acquaintances at that time. When I had to liquidate my parents' library two years ago, one could clearly see the traces of regular use on the 18.5 by 12.5 centimeter small but 600 pages' strong book.[2]

Simon was the son of the philosopher and Judaist Heinrich Simon and the prominent philosopher Marie Jalowicz. The family belonged to the tiny Jewish community of East Berlin. Both parents were professors at Berlin's Humboldt

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1   *Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto*, with a foreword by Arnold Zweig (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1958).

2   Hermann Simon, "Ihnen und der Gemeinde alles Gute": Der Dichter Arnold Zweig—Ein prominentes Mitglied der (Ost)Berliner Jüdischen Gemeinde," in *Integration und Ausgrenzung: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur und Kulturgeschichte von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart, Festschrift für Hans Otto Horch zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Mark H. Gelber, Jakob Hessing, and Robert Jütte (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 2009), 351.

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University and part of the intellectual elite of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The collection *Im Feuer vergangen* was an enormous success for its publisher *Rütten & Loening*, but also for the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, JHI) in Warsaw, which had chosen the documents from its collection. Apart from Anne Frank's diary, *Im Feuer vergangen* became the most prevalent non-fictional account on what was then called persecution or destruction of the Jews[3] in East Germany and only later was referred to as the Holocaust.

For several reasons, this book gained enormous popularity between 1958 and 1962: The memoirs in the collection provided touching firsthand accounts on the horrors Polish Jews experienced in the ghettos and camps in German-occupied Poland. The foreword by the renowned German-Jewish writer Arnold Zweig contributed to its popularity. Its classification as antifascist literature promoted the book's use for political education, while its descriptions of Nazi crimes made it useful for East German press campaigns highlighting the supposed ideological and personal continuities between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

In this article, I analyze how antifascist ideology and political propaganda interfered with an emerging Holocaust memory in the GDR of the late 1950s and 1960s. I place three books at the center of this analysis: Besides *Im Feuer vergangen*, Ber Mark's *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* (The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) and the document compilation *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord* (Fascism—ghetto—mass murder). Rather than the content of these books, I analyze how they were introduced to East German readers; received in the media; perceived in society; and used for educational projects, documentaries, and further artistic reflection on the Holocaust. I will show that the perception of these books, which publishers labeled as "antifascist literature" and reviews in East German Press presented as part of campaigns against Nazi criminals in West Germany, ultimately exceeded superficial propagandistic purposes. In fact, I argue, antifascism and the campaign against Nazi criminals in West Germany formed a discursive framework for East Germans to confront the Holocaust within the narrow boundaries of public debate in the GDR. The second important aspect of this case study is the transcultural movement of knowledge and memory of the Holocaust. All three books originate from the

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3   The German terms used were *Judenverfolgung* or *Judenvernichtung*.

Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and first appeared in the GDR between 1957 and 1960. The article is based on archival materials from the Jewish Historical Institute, the East German Ministry of Culture, which was responsible for the authorization of book production, and the archives of the publishing houses *Rütten & Loening* and *Karl Dietz Verlag*. This article also draws on East German press reporting and journal articles.

The Jewish Historical Institute and Antifascist Literature in the GDR

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw was founded in 1947, during a period when Jews enjoyed a limited autonomy in postwar Poland. It was one of the first Holocaust research centers in the world at the time. Initially, it operated under the auspices of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, the self-governing body of Polish Jews.[4] In the late 1940s, however, when the Polish United Workers' Party consolidated its power in Poland, its Jewish representatives took power in the Central Committee of Jews in Poland as well, and ended Jewish autonomy. This also affected the JHI, where Ber (also Bernard) Mark, a Jewish communist activist, historian, and literary critic, had become director in September 1949 (see figure 12.1). Though Mark's nomination was supported by his comrades, he directed the JHI following his own agenda, often testing the tolerance of the communist authorities. In fact, Mark had been at the center of a series of ideological conflicts with the Party leadership ever since he had joined the communist movement.[5] Thus, his nomination suggests a lack of academically trained activists among the small group of communists knowledgeable about the particular section of Jewish society in postwar Poland, the so-called *Yidisher gas* (Jewish street),[6] who could have been able to fill the position. This opened possibilities for less orthodox communists like Mark who, according to his com-

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4   On the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, see August Grabski, *Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce (1944–1950): Historia polityczna* [The Central Committee of Jews in Poland, 1944–1950: A political history] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2015).

5   See Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, "Three Colors: Grey; Study for a Portrait of Bernard Mark," *Holocaust Studies and Materials: Journal of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research* 2 (2010): 205–26. On his suspension from the Communist Party in 1936, see The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Archive (GGDA), P-69 Bernard and Esther Mark Bequest, Folder 1, Życiorys Bernarda Marka [CV of Bernard Mark], July 28, 1944, 2f.

6   Mark was one of the very few people active on "the Jewish street" who held a university degree. See Grzegorz Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950–1956: Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* [Jewish life in Poland 1950–1956: From the history of the Social and Cultural Society of Jews in Poland] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006), 157.

rades, had a "too friendly attitude to people."[7] High positions, but less political ones, like the directorship of the JHI, were thus still open to them.

When the Central Committee was dissolved in 1950 and Jewish institutions were either disbanded or nationalized, Mark found a way to keep the institution going. He moved it under the auspices of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute, an academic society founded by him only for that purpose. It was not directly subordinated to the state but under the supervision of the Polish Academy of Science. This put the JHI in a relatively independent position vis-à-vis the government. Thus, it was

Figure 12.1. Ber Mark (1908–1966), director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Source: Jewish Historical Institute.

on Mark's merit that the JHI survived Polish Stalinism widely unscathed and persisted as one of the very few Holocaust research centers at the time.[8]

Until today, the JHI's archive houses many valuable collections on the Holocaust, among others some ten thousand witness accounts of Holocaust survivors, many of them children, as well as diaries and memoirs. The best-known collection is the secret archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, created by the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum and hidden in tin boxes and milk cans under the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto.[9]

Shortly after its establishment in 1948, the JHI began to publish the Yiddish journal *Bleter far geshikhte* (Pages for history). A second, Polish language journal followed in 1950, the *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*

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7   Anna Sommer Schneider, *Sze'erit hapleta: Ocaleni z Zagłady; Działalność American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee w Polsce w latach 1945–1989* [Sh'erit ha-Pletah: Survivors of the Holocaust; Activities of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Poland 1945–1989] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2014), 244.

8   On the JHI in the early 1950s, see Stephan Stach, "'The Spirit of the Time Left its Stamp on These Works': Writing the History of the Shoah at the Jewish Historical Institute in Stalinist Poland," *Remembrance and Solidarity: Studies in 20th Century* 5 (2016): 185–211.

9   On the history of the archive, see Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

(Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute).[10] Until 1957, the institute also published several books and pamphlets in Polish and Yiddish. Though the Polish publications addressed mainly a domestic audience, the Yiddish publications' outreach exceeded Polish Jews and reached the East European Jewish diaspora in Israel and the West, the so-called *Yiddishland*. These publications, and the JHI itself, received harsh criticism in the Western Yiddish press at times, and was accused of politically biased falsification of Holocaust history. Nevertheless, the JHI became an important part of the early transnational Jewish discourse on the Holocaust.[11] Especially successful was the publication of Emanuel Ringelblum's diary from the Warsaw Ghetto. In order to receive printing permission from the communist authorities, this and other documents published in Stalinist Poland had to be purged of politically inappropriate statements, like critical comments on the behavior of non-Jewish Poles and the Soviet Union.[12] However, these politically biased intrusions were only noticed by people who had seen the originals and did not affect the positive reception of the diary in the Western Yiddish press.[13]

In the mid-1950s, the political thaw in Poland and other socialist countries influenced the publication policy of the JHI in different ways. As the boundaries of what could be published vastly widened, the JHI wanted to use the occasion to rework its earlier publications. Many of them were subsequently republished without, or with far less, politically motivated alterations to the texts. In addition, the JHI's leadership wanted to publish in languages other than Polish and Yiddish to expand its outreach and keep up with the international debate on the Holocaust. However, the JHI's appeals to the Central Office for Press,

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10   On the *Biuletyn* and—to a lesser extent on the *Bleter*—see Stephan Stach, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego—powstanie, warunki działalności, percepcja" [The Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute—Its establishment, working conditions and perception], in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego / Kwartalnik Historii Żydów: Wybór artykułów z lat 1950–2017* [The Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute / Jewish History Quarterly: A selection of articles from 1950–2017] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2017), 13–36.

11   Jan Schwarz, *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 118–21; Sven-Erik Rose, "The Oyneg Shabes Archive and the Cold War: The Case of Yehoshue Perle's Khurbn Varshe," *New German Critique* 112, vol. 38, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 181–215; Stach, "The Spirit of the Time."

12   For an extensive analysis of these purges, see Person and Żółkiewska in this volume and Katarzyna Person, "The Initial Reception and First Publications from the Ringelblum Archive in Poland, 1946–1952," *Gal-Ed* 23 (2012): 59–76.

13   See for instance Joseph Kermish, "Mutilated Versions of Ringelblum's Notes," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 8 (1953): 289–301. In 1958, an unauthorized English translation appeared, Jacob Sloan, ed. and trans., *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum* (New York: Schocken Books, 1958).

Publications, and Performances (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk) for permission to publish English translations of some key publications had no success, despite the JHI's argument that this would be the only way to reach, and thus influence, Jews in capitalist countries.[14]

Around the same time, the Institute began to cooperate with several East German publishers, which resulted in a series of publications that appeared between 1957 and 1966.[15] Their importance for the East German academic and public debate on the Holocaust is best illustrated with a quote from Kurt Pätzold, one of the few GDR-historians who began to research the Holocaust in the 1970s. To rebuke the common view that literature on the Holocaust was lacking in the GDR during the 1950s and 1960s, he wrote:

> In 1955, Lord Russel of Liverpool's *The Scourge of the Swastika* had been released. In 1957, Bernard Mark's report *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* was made available. In 1958, *Im Feuer vergangen*, an anthology of eye-witness accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto appeared, also translated from Polish. The document collection on the mass murder of Polish Jews and their resistance originated from the same Jewish source in Warsaw, accessible in German from 1960.[16]

Three out of four publications Pätzold listed had originally been published by the JHI. GDR historians, however, failed to publish their own works or document collections on the Holocaust in the 1950s, a fact Joachim Käppner explained with the struggle of East German historians to create a "socialist view of history" clearly distinct from bourgeois West German historiography. In *Erstarrte Geschichte* (Ossified history) in 1999 Käppner argued that historians

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14 Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, hereafter AŻIH), 310/223 Konspekt publikacji Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w języku obcym, undated and without pagination.

15 The translations of books from the JHI or prepared in cooperation with the Institute are: Bernard Mark, *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto: Entstehung und Verlauf*, 1st and 2nd ed. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1957), and 3rd ed. (1959); *Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1958–1962) (7 editions); *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord: Dokumentation über Ausrottung und Widerstand der Juden in Polen während des zweiten Weltkrieges*, 1st ed. (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1960), and 2nd ed. (1961); Walther Petri, *Das Tagebuch des Dawid Rubinowicz* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1961); J. Bernstein, et al., *Ghetto: Berichte aus dem Warschauer Ghetto* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1966); and Hubert Witt, *Der Fiedler vom Getto: Jiddische Gedichte aus Polen* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1966).

16 Kurt Pätzold, "Die frühe Geschichtsschreibung in der DDR über den Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Schuld und Sühne? Kriegserlebnis und Kriegsdeutung in deutschen Medien der Nachkriegszeit (1945–1961)*, ed. Ursula Heukenkamp (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi, 2001), 711.

who published about the Holocaust only used it to "prove the crimes of 'German Imperialism.'" In his view, memorializing the Nazi persecution of Jews was seen as competing with antifascism. Consequently, works on the Holocaust were suppressed. The only exceptions to this rule, according to Käppner, were "a few memory volumes and translated Polish and Czech works."[17] While the Holocaust was indeed not in the focus of East German research on the Nazi era, Käppner's statement does not explain why the above ideological considerations were not applied to translations. A closer look at the genesis of the three books published in cooperation with the JHI demonstrates that neither were ideological guidelines applied for translation, nor was the Holocaust seen as a competitor of antifascism in the GDR of the 1950s and 1960s. On the contrary, these translated publications presented Holocaust memory as an integral part of antifascism.

The Three Books

The first book by the JHI which was published in the GDR was Ber Mark's *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto: Entstehung und Verlauf*, which appeared in January 1957. It was a shortened and reworked version of the Polish *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim* that Mark had published for the 10th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1953. The 1953 Polish edition presented the Ghetto Uprising in a thoroughly Stalinist style as an antifascist revolt of the Jews in the Ghetto under the leadership of the communists, and as a part of the all-Polish resistance movement. It had been hastily revised under the impression of antisemitic events like the Slánský trial in Prague and the Doctors' Plot in Moscow.[18] Despite these deformations, the uprising is evidently told as a story of Jewish suffering and heroism.[19] The centrality of the Holocaust in this book did not prevent the *Karl Dietz Verlag*, the central publishing house of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) to

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17 Joachim Käppner, *Erstarrte Geschichte: Faschismus und Holocaust im Spiegel der Geschichtswissenschaft und Geschichtspropaganda der DDR* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1999), 287. The Czech book he mentions is Ota Kraus and Erich Kulka, *Die Todesfabrik Auschwitz* (Berlin: Kongressverlag, 1957).

18 Ber Mark, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim na tle ruchu oporu w Polsce: Geneza i przebieg* [The Warsaw ghetto uprising in the context of the resistance movement in Poland: its origins and course] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1953). On the circumstances of the emergence of this book, see Stach, "The Spirit of the Time," 197–202.

19 Already on the first page of the foreword, Mark states that Nazism "terrorized and oppressed Jews" worst among all European nations. See Mark, *Powstanie*, 3.
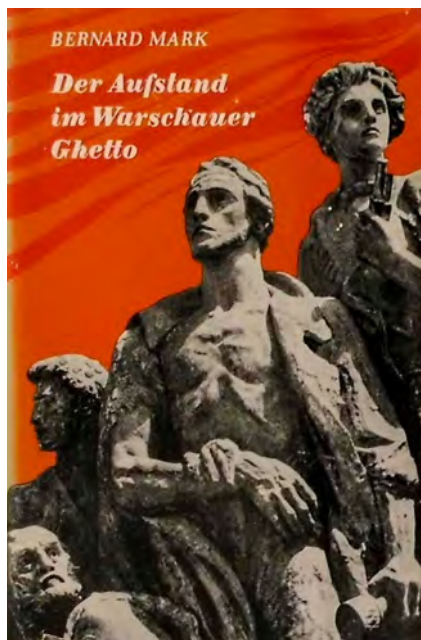
Figure 12.2. Dust jacket cover of the 1957 edition of *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto*

prepare a German edition as early as October 1953,[20] thus during a period when Soviet-style anti-Zionism was a widely used political tool of the communist regime in the GDR to eliminate its opponents.[21]

The book was finally published in January 1957. In the meantime, the anti-Zionist campaign had ended and Ber Mark took the occasion to thoroughly revise the manuscript,[22] softening or completely removing ideological deformations and references from the 1953 Polish edition. Praise of Stalin, and attacks against the governments of Israel and the United States disappeared from the manuscript; the role of political groups other than the communists or their sympathizers was acknowledged. Mark camouflaged the changes to the German manuscript quite flimsily as "deletions" of parts "which are not interesting for German readers."[23] *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* had two editions of 5,000 copies each in 1957 and a third reworked edition with another 8,000 copies in 1959.[24]

The collection *Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto* was published by *Rütten & Loening* (R&L), East Germany's main publisher (Leitverlag) for historical literature. R&L approached the JHI in 1956 for Jewish memoirs on the German occupation, and the JHI chose five works. The contract with R&L was signed in early 1958.[25] Four of the chosen books had originally been published by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in 1946–47. Leon

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20 Archive of Karl Dietz Verlag GmbH (AKDV), B. Mark, Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto, Laufzettel (Control Slip, no pagination). I would like to thank Karl Dietz Verlag for making these files accessible.

21 Jeffrey Herf, "East German Communists and the Jewish Question: The Case of P. M." *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (October 1994): 627–61.

22 AKDV, B. Mark, Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto, Laufzettel.

23 AKDV, B. Mark, Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto, Laufzettel.

24 AKDV, B. Mark, Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto, Laufzettel.

25 AŻIH 310/206AR, 207AR.

Weliczker's *Brygada śmierci* (The death brigade) of 1946 was an edited version of his secretly kept diary, written as a member of *Sonderkommando 1005*. In 1943, this Sonderkommando's task had been to cover up the German crimes committed during the seizure of Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv in the summer of 1941. *Sonderkommando 1005* consisted of mainly Jewish slave laborers, who had to exhume and burn victims of mass shootings.[26] *Pamiętnik Justyny* (Justyna's diary) was the memoir of Gusta Dawidson-Drängerowa. Under her code name Justyna, she worked for a Zionist resistance group in the Krakow Ghetto. Her memoirs, written originally on toilet paper in the prison cell while she was waiting for her execution in 1943, had been smuggled out by the underground. In 1946, the Krakow branch of the Central Jewish Historical Commission published them.[27] The same branch also published Janina Hescheles' *Oczyma 12 letniej dziewczyny* (Through the eyes of a 12-year-old girl). Hiding in Krakow, Janina had written down her experiences between the occupation of Lviv by the Germans in the summer of 1941 and her escape from Janowska Street camp with the help of the Council to Aid Jews of the Polish Underground State in October 1943.[28] Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc's diary *Przeminęło z ogniem* (Gone with the fire) was published by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in 1947. The Polish title, which also served as title for the whole German collection of the five witness accounts, refers to the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto as described in the book: German forces setting the apartment blocks on fire, building by building, to drive out hiding insurgents and other Jews. The title is also an allusion to Margret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* (published in Polish under the title *Przeminęło z wiatrem* in 1938). Szac-Wajnkranc's notes begin with the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto and end on New Year's Day 1945. The author died shortly after being liberated by the Red Army. Leaving her hiding place with her liberators, she was shot by "fascist bandits"[29] that had ambushed this unit. An officer found her diary and passed it to the Jewish Antifascist Committee in Moscow, which later sent it back to the Central Jewish Historical

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26 Leon Weliczker, *Brygada śmierci: (Sonderkommando 1005) Pamiętnik* [Death brigade: (Sonderkommando 1005) Memoir] (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946).

27 Gusta Draenger, *Pamiętnik Justyny* [Justyna's diary] (Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946).

28 Janina Hescheles, *Oczyma 12 letniej dziewczyny* [Through the eyes of a 12-year-old girl] (Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946).

29 The "fascist bandits" is most likely meant to convey that the perpetrators were Polish anti-communist partisans. *Im Feuer vergangen*, 360.

Figure 12.3. Dust jacket cover of the 1958 edition of *Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto*

Commission in Poland.³⁰ The volume closes with the memoirs of Dorka Goldkorn, who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. They had originally appeared in Yiddish in 1948 and in a Polish edition in 1951.³¹ Goldkorn had passed them to Ber Mark shortly before she died in 1947.³² All five texts were translated by Viktor Mika. Arnold Zweig, a well-known German-Jewish writer and engaged supporter of public confrontations with the Holocaust, wrote the book's foreword.³³

Im Feuer vergangen was an enormous success: R&L published seven editions with 38,000 copies altogether and another publishing house, Reclam Leipzig, printed a paperback edition of another 5,000 copies. It was reviewed in dozens of newspapers and magazines in the GDR, in other German-speaking countries, and beyond.³⁴ Based on the GDR edition, an Italian, a Hungarian, a Slovenian, and a West German edition appeared.³⁵

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30 Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, *Przeminęło z ogniem* [Gone with the fire] (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1947).

31 Dorke [Dorka] Goldkorn, *Mayne zikhoynes funem oyfshtand in varshever getto* [My memories from the Warsaw ghetto uprising] (Łódź: Prasa, 1948); The Polish version appeared under the title *Wspomnienia uczestniczki powstania w getcie Warszawskim* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1951).

32 There are different versions of her death. Mark mentions in the Polish edition of 1951 that she was killed in a traffic accident. In the German version Mark states that she fell victim to a "mean fascist assassination," Goldkorn, *Wspomnienia*, 4; and *Im Feuer vergangen*, 585.

33 On Zweig's role in the debate about the Holocaust in the GDR, see Thomas Taterka, "'Alles steht auf dem Spiele': Unvergreifliche Bemerkungen zum Ort Arnold Zweigs im Holocaust-Diskurs der DDR," in *Deutscher, Jude, Europäer im 20. Jahrhundert: Arnold Zweig und das Judentum*, ed. Julia Bernard and Joachim Schlör (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 235–52.

34 Friedhilde Krause mentions that the book had been reviewed in both German states, Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg. Friedhilde Krause, "Polski zbiór dzienników, 'Przeminęło z ogniem' i jego recepcja w Niemczech (do roku 1963)" [Polish collection of memoirs, "Gone with the Fire" and its reception in Germany (until 1963)], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 93 (1975): 55–61.

35 The Italian edition contained only Noemi Szac-Wajnkrac and Leon Weliczker's memoirs and Zweig's fore-

In early 1957, R&L and the JHI also discussed the preparation of a photo and document compilation on the destruction and resistance of Polish Jews during Nazi occupation.[36] The volume was a thoroughly revised and extended version of the Polish *Eksterminacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (The extermination of Jews on Polish lands during the Nazi occupation),[37] which the JHI published in 1957. The contract between R&L and the Institute was signed in late 1957 and the publication planned for autumn 1958. It contained more than 450 items of source material—photographs; reproductions of posters and announcements made by the German occupiers and the Jewish Councils; letters from within the German administration; excerpts from diaries of Jews; other materials from the Ringelblum Archive; and an introduction. Yet, the cooperation between the Institute and the history section of R&L was not as smooth as with the literature department during the production of *Im Feuer vergangen*. The publication, entitled *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*, did not appear until autumn 1960. The first edition had a print run of 3,000 copies and was quickly sold out. The book appeared only months after the capture of Adolf Eichmann, fueling discussions on German war crimes. In reaction to the enormous public interest caused by the Eichmann trial, the second edition of 1961 had a print run of 11,000 copies.[38] A West German edition followed in 1962 with the leftist Röderberg Verlag in Frankfurt in 1962.[39]

The Censors' Verdict on the Polish Books

GDR publishers had to apply for printing permission at the Central Office for Publishers and Book Trade (Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel) at the Ministry of Culture for every book they intended to publish. Censorship was an

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word: N. Szac-Wajnkrac and L. Weliczker, *I diari del ghetto* [The ghetto diaries] (Milan: Lerici, 1966); the Slovenian translation, *V ognju preminuli: Dnevniki iz geta,* with a forward by Arnold Zweig, transl. Branko Hofman (Ljubljana: Zavod "Borec", 1967), also included Dorka Goldkorn's diary. The same was the case with the Hungarian edition *Fellázad a gettó* [The ghetto revolts] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1959).

36 AŻIH 310/200AR R&L to JHI, November 6, 1957.

37 T. Berenstein, A. Eisenbach, and A. Rutkowski, eds., *Eksterminacja Zydow na ziemiach polskich w okupacji hitlerowskiej: Zbiór dokumentów* [The extermination of Jews on Polish territory during the Nazi occupation: A collection of documents] (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 1957).

38 Bundesarchiv (hereafter, BArch), Ministerium für Kultur, Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel, Druckgenehmigungsvorgänge, DR 1/3795, fol. 185–92.

39 *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord: Dokumentation über Ausrottung und Widerstand der Juden in Polen während des zweiten Weltkrieges*, with a foreword by Siegfried Einstein (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg, 1962).

integral part of this so-called print approval process *(Druckgenehmigungsver-fahren).* During this procedure the publisher had to send in the manuscript and two opinions, one written by an editor of the publishing house, and the other by an external reviewer designated by the publishing house. Both reviews had to include an ideological assessment of the book's content. Usually, lacking both time and competence to assess the manuscript on their own, the censor decided whether or not to give permission for publication of the manuscript based on these reviews.[40]

Translations, even if already published in other state-socialist countries like those discussed here, also had to undergo this procedure. An exception was Ber Mark's book on the Ghetto Uprising, because it appeared with Dietz Verlag, which was in fact a part of SED. An office at the SED's Central Committee took care of printing permissions and censorship.[41] Mark's book thus appeared with the Party leadership's blessing, though the book's approach to the Holocaust and German perpetrators apparently differed from other GDR publications.[42] Publishing with Dietz Verlag gave Mark the status of a renowned foreign author that was helpful in his other publication projects.[43]

The two other books, published with R&L, had to undergo the usual proce-dure. According to the documents of the review process, the focus on the Holo-caust was not a problem at all for *Im Feuer vergangen*. The publisher's statement on the book mentioned the authors' Jewishness only marginally and instead inter-preted the book consistently as part of an ongoing East German propaganda cam-paign against West Germany, which presented the Federal Republic of Germany as a "paradise for war criminals."[44] The closing remarks read: "Only two of the five

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40   For a detailed description of this process, see Kurt Habitzel, "Der historische Roman der DDR und die Zensur," in *Travellers in Time and Space: The German Historical Novel/Reisende durch Zeit und Raum: Der deutschsprachige historische Roman*, ed. Osman Durrani and Julian Preece (Amsterdam: Brill Rudopi, 2001), 401–21.

41   Christoph Links, *Das Schicksal der DDR-Verlage: Die Privatisierung und ihre Konsequenzen* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2009), 168.

42   A recent study on Nazi perpetrators in GDR historiography highlighted Mark's book for its unusually com-plex characterization of perpetrators as well as for its focus on lower and middle rank perpetrators. Fabi-an Wendler, *NS-Täter in der Geschichtsschreibung der SBZ und der DDR bis in die 1960er Jahre* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2017), 237–39, 263.

43   To reject texts of such authors by an East German publishing house was an affront, as I was told by Hubert Witt, who worked as editor at the publishing house Reclam Leipzig since 1959. According to Witt, the mere fact that Mark authored an introduction to Witt's edited volume *Der Fiedler vom Getto* (1966) on Yiddish poetry secured its production. Author's interview with Hubert Witt, November 1, 2015, in Leipzig.

44   On the title of the pamphlet published by the *Ausschuß Deutsche Einheit* [Commission of German Unity] and the coordinating body of the campaign in 1956, see *Die Bundesrepublik: Paradies für Kriegsverbrecher, Dokumente über die Durchdringung des westdeutschen Staates mit militaristischen, nazistischen und antisem-itischen Elementen* (Berlin: Ausschuß f. Deutsche Einheit, 1956).

authors are still alive. They warn us together with the dead through their diaries to never forget the cruelties of German fascism. And we know what all five authors would have never believed: The beasts are still alive and mock their victims!"[45] The external reviewer, however, who also "strongly recommended" the publication, openly referred to the Holocaust. She described the diaries as "shocking and warning accounts of fascist atrocities against the Jews." As such, she argued, they possessed "high political value" and were "suitable for a broad readership."[46] The censorship shared this opinion in the cover letter of the printing permission, stating that the evaluation shows the book "as extraordinarily important and worth a broad distribution. We thus ask you to consider this book as a priority for your publishing house."[47] So, while the publishing house followed the official propaganda line, which did not emphasize the suffering of Jews as an important part of the antifascist struggle, the external reviewer's positive evaluation of the fact that

the book dealt with the Holocaust was highlighted by the censor as an argument for its publication. Thus, for the censor, highlighting the horrors of the Holocaust was obviously not in competition with the antifascist struggle, but a part of it.

Similarly, the document compilation *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord* did not raise any ideological problems during the printing permission procedure. The R&L editor stated in his comments that the published documents "testify, in a shocking way, to the crimes German fascists committed against the Jews in Poland during World War II and the emerging antifascist resistance." Again, this com-

Figure 12.4. Dust jacket cover of the 1958 edition of *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*

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45 BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/5120, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Im Feuer vergangen": Bemerkungen des Verlags, 155.

46 BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/5120, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Im Feuer vergangen": Gutachten Hanna Baum, 153.

47 BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/5120, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Im Feuer vergangen": Brief HA Literatur und Buchwesen an Rütten & Loening, September 5, 1958, 153.

ment ended with a gesture towards East German propaganda goals, describing it as R&L's "small contribution to the struggle against neo-fascism in West Germany."[48] The external reviewer underscored the importance of the book because it "allows to quite accurately follow the stages of the extermination of the Jewish population of Poland" and "to see the extermination of Jews in Central, West, and South-Eastern Europe by the fascists in broad outlines."[49] The review praised the manuscript for its vivid portrayal of Germany's exploitation of the Jewish workforce, showing the Jews as skilled workers on the one hand, and for emphasizing organized Jewish resistance and armed struggle on the other. All this, the reviewer concluded, was also "a strike against antisemitism, by far not yet overcome in Germany, existing in a number of residual imaginations even in our GDR."[50] To be sure, the external reviewers of both books argued from a thoroughly antifascist, communist perspective. Still, in their view, acknowledging the Holocaust as a central feature of Nazi crimes did not contradict this perspective, but confirmed it.

The Intended Role of the Books in the East German Press Debate and their Effect

So far, I have discussed how GDR publishers and state and Party administrators evaluated these books against the background of antifascist ideology. All this, however, happened before these books were printed. But how did the state-controlled media present them to East German readers? To answer this question, I analyze press reviews and reporting on these books.[51] Hardly surprising, press coverage situated the books in an antifascist narrative and in the already mentioned campaign portraying West Germany—not totally unreasonably[52]—as a safe haven for Nazi criminals.

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48   BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/3390a, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord": Bemerkungen des Verlags, 151.

49   BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/3390a, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord": Gutachten Andre Grevenrath des Verlags, 395.

50   BArch DK 1, HVB, DR 1/3390a, Druckgenehmigungsvorgang "Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord": Gutachten Andre Grevenrath des Verlags, 398.

51   My analysis is based on three newspapers: *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany), the SED national organ; *Neue Zeit* (New Time), the national organ of the East German Christian Democratic Party (loyal to the SED); and *Berliner Zeitung*, the SED organ for Berlin.

52   On the personal continuities of Nazi perpetrators in West Germany, see Eckart Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes, and Moshe Zimmermann, *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Blessing, 2010); Frank Bösch and Andreas Wirsching, eds., *Hüter der Ordnung: Die Innenministerien in Bonn und Ost-Berlin nach dem Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015).

Grete Wittkowski introduced the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in her review of Mark's book in the SED organ *Neues Deutschland* (ND) as "one of the most impressive chapters in the history of antifascist struggle."[53] Interlacing the book in the antifascist narrative, she argued that *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* "reveals the misanthropic nature of imperialism in all its heinousness," recording the "bestial cruelty and brutality of the SS hangmen." Then she turned to contemporary events:

> Today's reader won't study this documentary report without being deeply moved and shaken. Because the war criminals and Jew-murderers, those responsible for the inhumanity back then, are rehabilitated today. Bloodstained SS Bandits move into the Headquarter of the NATO-Army. Others guilty of the mass destruction of Jews, like [Otto] Bräutigam[54] and [Hans] Globke[55] are gloating over their high-ranking positions in the state. Adenauer's Ministers, government press, and Expellee Associations are again advocating for a march towards the east.[56]

Press reviews on *Im Feuer vergangen* and *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord* usually also included comments on Nazi criminals living in West Germany,[57] which were apparently demanded by press control if articles addressed Nazi crimes. This is especially obvious in cases when these comments do not match the general narrative of the review.[58] *Im Feuer vergangen* received additional attention in GDR press in the fall of 1959, when East German propagandists discovered its usefulness for the ongoing campaign against Theodor Oberländer, West Germany's Minister of Expellee Affairs since 1953. Oberländer, who had been a Nazi official

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53 Grete Wittkowski, "Der Aufstand im Warschauer Getto 1943: Zum Erscheinen des ersten umfassenden Berichts von Bernard Mark," *Neues Deutschland*, April 19, 1957.

54 Otto Bräutigam (1895–1992) had been a high-ranking officer in the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete) during the war and directly involved in the Holocaust. From 1954 to 1956, he directed the Eastern Department of West Germany's Foreign Ministry.

55 Hans Globke (1898–1973) had been a high-ranking officer in the Office of Jewish Affairs of Nazi Germany's Ministry of Interior and was, among others, involved in the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws. From 1953 to 1963 he was Undersecretary and Chief of Staff in West Germany's Chancellery under Konrad Adenauer.

56 Wittkowski, "Der Aufstand im Warschauer Getto."

57 Reviews: U.B., "Im Feuer vergangen–Dokumente aus dem Warschauer Ghetto," *Berliner Zeitung*, January 30, 1959; Dr. Hans Gieseke, "Als der Tod ins Ghetto kam... Die Tagebuchsammlung 'Im Feuer vergangen'—eine aktuelle Mahnung," *Neue Zeit*, March 13, 1959; O.G., "Faschimus—Getto—Massenmord: Zwei Bücher klagen an," *Berliner Zeitung*, February 5, 1961.

58 On the function of press control in the GDR, see Jürgen Wilke, *Presseanweisungen im 20. Jahrhundert: Erster Weltkrieg—Drittes Reich—DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 256–309.

and an influential expert on Eastern Europe before and during the war, was particularly targeted by East German propaganda since mid-1959 because of his supposed involvement in massacres in Lviv in the summer of 1941. At that time, during the German attack on the Soviet Union, he had served as an *Obersturmbannführer*[59] in the SS-Batallion *Nachtigall*, which arrived in the city some days after the German invasion. East German propaganda claimed that Oberländer had been involved in the murder of several hundred Jews during the Lviv pogrom and the shooting of about 3,000 Jews some days later.[60] In October 1959, *Neues Deutschland* noticed that these crimes against the Jews of Lviv were among those described in two of the five memoirs of *Im Feuer vergangen*. Janina Hescheles described the pogrom, in

Figure 12.5. Newspaper advertisement for *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*

which her father was murdered, in her "Diary of a 12-year-old girl." Leon Weliczker also described the pogrom and other massacres in the "Death Brigade." *Neues Deutschland* published excerpts of Weliczker's memoirs under the title "A Survivor of the Bloodbath: Oberländer is a Murderer!" A month later, a longer article placed *Im Feuer vergangen* in the context of the Oberländer campaign, extensively quoting from Weliczker's and Hescheles' accounts. The article closed with an appeal to the publisher to hasten the next edition of the now sold-out book.[61] R&L published three more editions in 1960 alone. When in April 1960 a show trial against Oberländer was staged in East Berlin, R&L director Else Man-

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59 The SS rank Obersturmbannführer is equivalent to Lieutenant-Colonel.

60 While members of the Nachtigall battalion had indeed participated in the pogrom, the shooting was in fact committed by another German unit, Einsatzgruppe C. On the anti-Jewish crimes after the occupation of Lviv, see Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt: Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 304–79.

61 "Ein Überlebender des Blutbades: Oberländer ist ein Mörder!," *Neues Deutschland*, October 6, 1959; Werner Müller, "So hausten die Oberländer," *Neues Deutschland*, November 17, 1959.

ske-Kraus proudly wrote to Ber Mark: "[T]he Jewish diaries 'Im Feuer vergan-gen' undergo one edition after the other and played, as you have surely read, an important role in the accusation against Oberländer."[62]

The publication of *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord* in late 1960 took place in the aftermath of Adolf Eichmann's capture and transfer to Israel (see figure 12.5). For its second edition, the publisher placed ads in *Neues Deutschland* and *Berliner Zeitung* titled: "For the Eichmann trial: Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord, Doc-umentation on the Mass Extermination and Resistance of Jews in Poland."[63]

All three books were embedded in the broader East German political cam-paign against West Germany and former Nazis in its government. This use of the books aimed at turning them into propagandistic weapons on the ideologi-cal battlefields of the Cold War. However, the success of this undertaking is doubtful. The "polemical moment" against West Germany only had a marginal effect on these books, mostly restricted to their forewords or introductions and the press coverage on them.

More importantly, despite the political context in which they were pub-lished, the books were significant in documenting the mass murder of Polish Jews from personal, documentary, and scholarly perspectives. The reporting about these books in the context of the campaign against West Germany surely increased their publicity among East German readers, but nonetheless the books still conveyed essential information on the Holocaust. Kata Bohus demon-strates a similar effect in the case of Hungarian press coverage of the Eichmann trial which, according to government guidelines, depicted West Germany as a refuge for Nazi criminals. The Hungarian press reports on the Eichmann trial, like the press coverage of the books published in the GDR discussed here, might have aimed at reinforcing anti-Western resentment among their readers, but at the same time, they also confronted them with the history of the Holocaust.[64] As I will show in the following sections, there is good reason to believe that the positive impact of the books on the GDR's public in its confrontation with the history of Nazi crimes was greater than the propagandistic purposes the books might have had in Cold War politics, though these two aspects do not necessar-ily contradict each other.

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62 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin IIIA, Dep. 38, Nachlass Rütten & Loening, Manske-Kraus to B. Mark, April 27, 1960, fol. 107.

63 See *Berliner Zeitung*, May 8, 1961.

64 Kata Bohus, "Not a Jewish Question? The Holocaust in Hungary in the Press and Propaganda of the Kádár Regime during the Trial of Adolf Eichmann," *Hungarian Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (2015): 737–72.

The Perception of the Books

The three books by the JHI introduced a new perspective into literature and into the public discourse on World War II: the Jewish perspective. Though all publications were included into the political narrative of antifascism, the perspective of the authors made them unique. In all books, Jews appeared as victims who were not persecuted and murdered for their political belief, their resistance to Nazi rules, or as random victims of German brutality. The publications made it clear that they were murdered for being Jews. This acknowledgement of a particular Jewish victimhood was especially important to Jews and communists of Jewish descent among the readers of these books.

Some of them actively participated in the promotion of these books and in the debate of their content, like Grete Wittkowski, who reviewed Mark's book; Arnold Zweig, who wrote the foreword for *Im Feuer vergangen*; Stephan Hermlin, who mentioned the book in a speech later published in the literary monthly *Neue Deutsche Literatur* (ndl);[65] and Victor Klemperer, who wrote a lengthy review for the same journal. Less prominent Jews also expressed personal affection for these publications. Rosa Kahn for instance, the copy editor of Mark's *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* wrote to Mark:

> Since 1928 I am an active communist, I was born as a Jew and a Pole, though I grew up in Berlin. My birthplace is Oświęcim,[66] where my parents and siblings most probably perished after having been expelled from Germany. Thus, I felt pride and satisfaction when I read that the Jews of Warsaw did not allow to be willingly led to the slaughter, but heroically fought under the leadership of the old communists and the Polish Worker's Party.[67]

While Rosa Kahn's statement might seem to perfectly fit an antifascist narrative on the first glance, on second glance it remains unclear if the reason of her pride was her Jewishness, her communist beliefs, or both.

These books were important not only for dedicated communists among GDR's Jews, but also for those with less clear ideological bonds. This is expressed

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65 Stephan Hermlin, Ludwig Renn, and Henryk Keisch, "Die Bücherverbrenner von gestern sind die Atommörder von morgen: Aus der Gedenkveranstaltung des Deutschen Schriftstellerverbandes zum 25. Jahrestag der faschistischen Bücherverbrennung." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 6, no. 7 (July 1958): 148–49.

66 The Polish name of the town Auschwitz was used in the German original.

67 AŻIH 310/188AR, Letter of Rosa Kahn to B. Mark, May 3, 1957.

in the opening quote of this contribution from Hermann Simon, a member of the religious Jewish community of the GDR. Born in 1949, Simon became founding director of the Berlin Foundation New Synagogue Berlin / Centrum Judaicum in 1988. As the son of two professors at Humboldt University who were members of East Berlin's Jewish community, he remembers that the book was available "on virtually every bookshelf of our friends and acquaintances at that time" and, at least with his parents' copy, was also regularly read.[68] Simon's account demonstrates the importance of this book for East German Jews. Probably a large part of East Berlin's small Jewish community were among the acquaintances of Simon's family.

For East German Jews, whether religious or not, the book signified that there was a place for their story and their experience in the GDR's antifascist narrative on World War II. In a symbolic way it gave meaning to their own suffering and that of their families, acknowledging them as rightful citizens of the state and justifying their decision to settle in the socialist German state. Yet, the meaning of *Im Feuer vergangen* and the other books from the JHI for East Germany's Jews can neither explain their success nor does it demonstrate a broad perception of these books.

Considering the high social position of Hermann Simon's parents, they certainly had friends and acquaintances from outside of the Jewish community. According to Simon, many people without any connection to the Jewish community or Jewishness also possessed and read *Im Feuer vergangen*. The diary collection facilitated identification beyond the Jewish community, especially for the younger generation of East Germans who experienced the war only as children or not at all. Friedhilde Krause, for instance, was very touched by the collection, especially by Janina Hescheles' memoirs. The daughter of a Lutheran pastor and a member of interwar Poland's German minority, she turned to communism in the late 1940s. She explained in her memoirs:

> Reading the experiences of this girl I kept thinking that I could have had the same fate, as both of us were of almost the same age—Janina born in 1930 and me born in 1928—lived in Poland, had both experienced the occupation of our homeland by German fascists. The only difference, neither earned by me nor deserved by Janina, was that she was persecuted as a Jew, and I could be free as a German. Already back then and encouraged by my parents, I ex-

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68 Simon, "Ihnen und der Gemeinde alles Gute," 351.

perienced this situation as it emerged in my homeland after the fascist troops invaded Poland as something very bitter. Namely, how one group of humans was privileged and the other exterminated, though they had lived together before, relying on each other peacefully and in friendship.[69]

To read the story of a peer who was condemned to death only for being born Jewish while Krause could live safely because she was born German was deeply emotional. Reading accounts like this on Nazi atrocities gave the GDR's antifascism a precise purpose in her eyes. Krause not only published scholarly articles on the broader reception of the diary collection,[70] but even got in touch with Janina Hescheles and the two eventually became friends.

The readership of *Im Feuer vergangen* were not only intellectual elites. The book was also featured in a reportage on the progress of labor conditions in East Germany, published in *Neues Deutschland*. Its protagonist, the young welder Gottfried Günzel, enthusiastically praises the benefits of automation that eased working conditions since it left workers more time and energy to spend on culture and self-education: "'Only recently I read the novel *Im Feuer vergangen*,' recalls Günzel. 'It is a book on the Warsaw Ghetto. It is a must to read books like this. It is very instructive for people like me, who luckily did not get to know Nazism.'"[71] Günzel's reference to the book, mistaking it for a novel, appeared almost eight years after the publication of its first edition. Considering the context of the reportage one might assume that the book was easily accessible in the labor union libraries and read in workers' self-education circles, thus achieving a considerable outreach (see figure 12.6).

Im Feuer vergangen also appealed to readers who were situated neither in a Jewish nor in a socialist context. Hans Gieseke reviewed the collection for *Neue Zeit*, the organ of the East German Christian Democrats, from a Christian perspective. For him, the book was important because the confrontation with German war crimes was a first step toward Christian penance. He wrote:

> Who really knows what the administrator of the "German death" did to people who, like everyone else, loved their life and now had to learn to curse

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69 Friedhilde Krause, *Erlebt und geprägt: Erinnerungen aus 80 Lebensjahren* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2009), 99f.

70 F[riedhilde] Krause, "Die polnische Tagebuchsammlung 'Im Feuer vergangen' und ihre deutsche Rezeption," *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 9, no. 3 (1964): 318–25; Krause, "Polski zbiór dzienników." The Polish version provides more detail on the Western reception of the book.

71 Dieter Brückner, "Neue Kapitäne," *Neues Deutschland*, June 23, 1966.

Figure 12.6. A dedication on the first page of a copy of *Im Feuer vergangen*, which had been a present for a new member of the SED. It reads "For admission to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany," signed by the first secretary of the party organization of a Cotton Combine. Source: private.

it? One should read the book, which tells about this death. Everyone should read it, the blind, the ignorant, the credulous. We, Germans, should read what Poles write here about Germans.[72]

Im Feuer vergangen appeared during a time when Jewish-Christian Committees and the organization *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Reconciliation)[73] were emerging in East German churches, initiating a Christian path to the German "coming to terms with the past." In these circles, such a book functioned as a point of departure for reflections on guilt, atonement, and moral consequences. Gieseke's review is also a good example of how following the rules laid out by the press authorities did not necessarily entail embracing the propagandistic intentions of the censors. While his text called on Germans to undertake a soul-searching concerning their individual guilt, it dutifully included a paragraph on Nazi criminals in leading positions of the FRG, which noticeably deviated from the argumentative framework of the text.

Im Feuer vergangen, probably the most widely read of the three books, also stirred a small, though important, public literary discussion between the writer Arnold Zweig and the Romance philologist and author of *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, Victor Klemperer. In his foreword, Zweig introduced the horrors described

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72 Gieseke, "Als der Tod ins Ghetto kam."

73 *Aktion Sühnezeichen* was founded by the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany in 1958. The organization was committed to an open engagement with the history of German crimes during World War II and actively sought atonement, for instance through organizing German youth volunteers to support victims of the Nazis. See Gabriele Kammerer, *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste: Aber man kann es einfach tun* (Göttingen: Lamuv Verlag, 2008).

in the diaries and memoirs and compared them to the horrors described in Dante's *Inferno*, the first part of the *Divine Comedy*. An inferno, however, which intrudes into our daily life and our lifetime, where:

> those suffering and the perpetrators came from surroundings which form our everyday environment: Streets of towns and cities, with electrical light, water pipes and a sewage system, houses with a floor of polished wood and large windows, with telephones, warming tilled stoves or central heating. They were used to modern schools and the same kind of hospitals, universities. All victims of the barbarians who were reversed into the darkest antique slavery turn out to be human beings like us.[74]

Klemperer rejected Zweig's reference to Dante. Though he admitted that he had felt inclined to such a comparison too, he pointed out that,

> The thinking people of all times know that [Dante's *Inferno*] is poetry and thus one can conclude that also repugnant cruelty can provide an esthetical pleasure if it is conveyed by a work of art. . . . The comparison of Dante's Hell to that of the Nazis is, so to say, reversibly sinful: it sins against humanity, as it converts the victims of fascism to a mere theme of literature and it sins against esthetics as it assumes the possibility of an artwork, which is without any ethical foundation."[75]

After this strong statement, Klemperer evaluated the five diaries and memoirs of *Im Feuer vergangen* based on their differing degrees of literary arrangement. As the literary scholar Thomas Taterka has shown, Klemperer's condemnation of such a literarization of witness accounts on the Holocaust anticipated many arguments voiced in more recent discussions about ways of representing the Holocaust.[76]

Without a reliable set of instruments to measure precisely the readership of these three books, the above examples clearly show that they had a significant impact in different spheres of GDR society: the Jewish community, dedicated communists, Christian activists, intellectuals, and the working class. The col-

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74 Arnold Zweig, "Vorwort," in *Im Feuer vergangen*, 5.

75 Victor Klemperer, "Inferno und Nazihölle: Bemerkungen zu den 'Tagebüchern aus dem Ghetto,'" *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 7, nos. 9–10 (1959): 246–47.

76 Thomas Taterka, *Dante Deutsch: Studien zur Lagerliteratur* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999), 67–80.

lection *Im Feuer vergangen* seems to have especially affected readers and stirred up difficult discussions of the Holocaust on an intellectual and emotional level. These confrontations took place within the antifascist discourse of the GDR but were not solely tied to it.

Diffusion of Knowledge into Artistic, Documentary, and Educational Projects

The impact of these books on how the public perceived the Holocaust in the GDR was not restricted to their readers or those who followed the public debates they provoked. The books also conveyed knowledge about the Holocaust indirectly, inspiring new artworks and educational projects, and serving as material for historical research. This was especially true for the volume *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*. This document compilation was widely quoted by scholars in East Germany and in the West because it made documents known which were otherwise hardly accessible. Published in 1960, the book found its way into the bibliography of Raul Hilberg's groundbreaking study on the Holocaust, *The Destruction of European Jews*, which appeared the following year. Ber Mark's book on the Ghetto Uprising, in turn, remains an oft quoted source and has had an impact beyond scholarly circles.

As Manuela Gerlof has shown in her study on depictions of the Holocaust in East German radio plays, Mark's book served as source for the East German production of Wolfgang Weyrauch's *Woher kennen wir uns bloß?* (How do we know each other?) The play is a dialogue between a former Gestapo officer who helped to quell the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and a surviving insurgent who accidentally meet on the streets of a West German city. Even though the production, directed by Peter Thomas, aired only five months after Mark's book had been published, Gerlof proves that this highly edited version of Weyrauch's original script is based on Mark's description of the situation in the Warsaw Ghetto and the uprising, and differs a great deal from the original.[77]

Mark's *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto*, and probably the other two books as well, served as an inspiration and research material for the writer Klaus Schlesinger for his short story "David" about a small boy in the Warsaw Ghetto. The story was Schlesinger's literary debut and appeared in the literary monthly

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[77] Manuela Gerlof, *Tonspuren: Erinnerungen an den Holocaust im Hörspiel der DDR* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 163–71.

Neue Deutsche Literatur in 1960. The dedication of the story to Szanan Lent reveals that Schlesinger certainly read these books. Lent was the youngest fighter in the Ghetto Uprising and *Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto* and *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord* were the only books available in GDR on him.[78]

Another example of the impact of these books is *Jüdische Chronik*, a collective cantata for "alto and baritone solo, chamber choir, two speakers and a small orchestra" by Boris Blacher, Paul Dessau, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Hans Werner Henze, and Rudolf Wagner-Régeny. The project was initiated and advanced by Dessau and Jan Gerlach, who also authored the text. The setting of this composition was the Warsaw Ghetto, and Gerlach's text was partly a collage of direct and adapted quotes from an appeal of a resistance group that had been printed in Mark's book.[79]

Im Feuer vergangen inspired further artistic interpretations. In 1961, a dance theatre production on Berlin's *Volksbühne* included a scene of the Warsaw Ghetto, based on the accounts printed in the book. Notably, the Berlin production was entitled "Gone with the fire—and risen from the dead."[80] Reading *Im Feuer vergangen* inspired the graphic artist Klaus Zürner to produce a series of woodcuts, which he named after Mordechai Gebirtig's Yiddish poem "Es brennt briderle" [It burns, little brother]. In a biopic of Zürner in *Neue Zeit*, the emergence of the series was described in a somewhat kitschy way:

> Klaus H. Zürner is an artist who is not looking for refuge in ivory towers, but who firmly stands in the present with both feet. This testifies the genesis of his award-winning series "Es brennt Briderle, es brennt!" [It burns, little brother, it burns!]. When Zürner read the diaries from the Ghetto *Im Feuer vergangen*, which appeared at Rütten & Loening a year ago, he reexperienced what was done to our Jewish brothers and sisters, how the human image was defiled by the fascists. His desire to deal with the topic in graphics emerged at that moment.[81]

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78 Klaus Schlesinger, "David," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 8, no. 11 (November 1960): 105–13. On the genesis of the short story, see Jan Kostka, *Das journalistische und literarische Werk von Klaus Schlesinger 1960 bis 1980: Kontext, Entstehung und Rezeption* (Berlin: be.bra, 2015), 51–62.

79 On the composition, see Silvia Schlenstedt, "Die Kollektivkomposition Jüdische Chronik (1960–1961)," in *Nachkriegsliteratur als öffentliche Erinnerung: Deutsche Vergangenheit im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Helmut Pietsch, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 395–406, esp. 402–3.

80 "Sie mahnten und ergriffen," *Neues Deutschland*, March 15, 1961.

81 Georg Antosch, "Die Pieta unter den Düsenbombern," *Neue Zeit*, July 20, 1960.

Figure 12.7. Sheet 2 of the woodcut series "Es brennt, Briderle, es brennt" by Klaus Zürner. The motif is inspired by the diary collection *Im Feuer vergangen*. The passe-partout of the woodcut is inscribed with a quote from Leon Weliczker's diary, which is part of the collection. Source: private.

Zürner connected each of the woodcuts with a quote from *Im Feuer vergangen* but also situated it in the GDR's narrative of antifascism (see figure 12.7). The last picture of the series, "The Oath of Buchenwald" connected the Jewish experience with the core of East Germany's ideological foundation: The antifascists promise to never let fascism happen again. While Buchenwald was completely unrelated to the collection *Im Feuer vergangen*, it surely helped Zürner win the prize of the graphic competition on the 10th Party convention of the East German Christian Democrats.[82] Zürner's work is an impressive example of how the Holocaust could be integrated into an antifascist narrative, if only in a ritualized manner.

All three books under consideration here served the East German radio journalist Horst Grothe as sources for his feature *Sammelpunkt Shelasna-strasse*. It was broadcast by the radio station Deutschlandsender, which addressed an all-German audience and was sponsored and politically influenced

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82   Antosch, "Die Pieta."

by the GDR. The program aired shortly after the 20th anniversary of the War-
saw Ghetto Uprising. Besides the books from the JHI, Grothe drew on his own
interview with Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak, a communist resistance fighter from
Poland of Jewish descent, and audio material from the Eichmann trial.[83] The
feature extensively quoted from Noemi Szac-Wajnkrac's and Dorka Goldkorn's
memoirs, and from other documents and diary excerpts published in the com-
pilation *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*. The background information on
the situation in the Ghetto was taken from Mark's books on the Uprising.
Mark was directly quoted with a statement on Hans Globke.[84] Besides this at-
tack on Globke, the feature mentioned other Nazi criminals living in West
Germany only if their crimes were related to the Warsaw Ghetto. The feature
was squarely situated within the boundaries of what was permissible in the
East German debate on the Holocaust. Nevertheless, with its combination of
source material, music, and effects, it presented an emotionally moving depic-
tion of the situation in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The publications also inspired educators to consider their possible use in
schools. In an article on the possibilities of *Schulfunk* (school radio), Günter
Wettstädt, an educator and expert for didactics of history, used Mark's book on
the Ghetto Uprising to exemplify how teachers could develop a script for an ed-
ucational radio feature on the uprising together with senior high school stu-
dents.[85] One might assume that this suggestion was picked up at least by some
East German history teachers. Inge Unikower, another educator, was inspired
by Mark's description of underground education for moral resistance in the
Ghetto. She thus wrote directly to Mark and asked for help in compiling source
materials for the *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung*, which could serve teachers as material
for classes on this topic.[86]

The meaning of the JHI's publications for the East German understanding
of the Holocaust might be best illustrated by how *Im Feuer vergangen* shaped
the language of memory in the GDR. During the 1960s, the title of this collec-
tion became a metaphor for the destruction of European Jewry and was used in
small variations without a connection to the book. In November 1962, for in-

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83   Sammelpunkt Shelasnastrasse (Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Potsdam, Archival No. 2013258000), see also
     René Wolf, *The Undivided Sky: The Holocaust on East and West German Radio in the 1960s* (Basingstoke:
     Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 91–94.
84   The feature does not provide a source for the quote.
85   Günter Wettstädt, "Probleme des Schulfunks," *Geschichte in der Schule* 11, no. 4 (1958): 203–5.
86   AŻIH 310/190AR Unikower to Mark, May 22, 1957.

stance, *Neue Zeit* reported on a book launch event in Berlin. One of the books presented there was a collection of East European Jewish short stories which, according to the newspaper, "revived a world that had gone with the fire."[87] In his book *Der Fall Eichmann* (The Eichmann Case) of 1963, the lawyer Friedrich Karl Kaul, who had been East Germany's observer at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, named one chapter "Im Feuer verglüht" (Ignited in the Fire), in which he cited the witnesses' accounts of the mass murder in the camps.[88] It was a clear reference to *Im Feuer vergangen*. As late as 1980, the writer Peter Edel stated in his speech for the 35th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz that "it is our duty to remember those who were gone with the fire."[89]

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the three books published in the GDR in cooperation with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw had a considerable impact on East German society's reckoning with the Holocaust. They filled a gap in GDR historiography at the time and showed that there were no general ideological objections to publish accounts of the Holocaust. On the contrary, all these books were published by prestigious publishing houses and were praised by high-ranking Party officials and other representatives of the East German cultural elites. Furthermore, they were widely read and discussed, and served as resource and inspiration for further documentary, educational, and artistic reflections on the Holocaust. All this happened both despite and, as I have shown, *because* of their propagandistic use in the media campaigns against West Germany in general and against former Nazi criminals such as Theodor Oberländer and Hans Globke in particular. They functioned and were perceived as functioning within the broader antifascist historical narrative of the GDR and helped form a particular East Germany memory of the Holocaust, one informed by East European Jewish, particularly Polish Jewish, experience and brought about largely through the work of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

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87   "Erlebnis und Bekenntnis," *Neue Zeit*, November 6, 1962.

88   Friedrich Karl Kaul, *Der Fall Eichmann* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1963).

89   Peter Edel, "Lehren aus einer schweren Zeit für unseren Kampf von heute," *Neues Deutschland,* January 29, 1980.

Conclusions

Audrey Kichelewski

Making Sense of the Holocaust in Socialist Eastern Europe

How to make sense of the Holocaust? This question was crucial for many actors behind the Iron Curtain. The contributions of this book challenge the black-and-white picture that was drawn of the state-socialist past, not only in the Western world during the Cold War but also within the former People's Republics after the upheavals of 1989. The general assumption was that it was not possible during those years to elaborate any discourse on World War II without an underlying political agenda in which the Jewish experience's specificity could not fit. Yet, the careful examination of actions undertaken by various actors demonstrate that Eastern Europe did not completely suppress Holocaust historiography and memory.

To do so, the authors first focus on *how* people expressed memories of the Holocaust, underlining many understudied memorialization efforts and historical projects. Rather than seeing them as merely instrumental tools for the regime, they prove that these actions were legitimate and authentic for the actors who undertook them. Second, they reject the so-called "Eastern Bloc" as a monolithic entity, pointing to the diversity of realities within it. Third, they show how the many forms of relationship with the Holocaust that existed—memorialization efforts, literary and artistic representations—were clear evidence of the agency of their creators, upturning the traditional view that has positioned these actors as mere implementers of the rigid, top-down, ideological narrative of World War II in state-socialist countries. Despite constraints on what could be said about it or done to commemorate the Holocaust, it was possible for Eastern Europeans to try and make sense of the catastrophe, to mourn and seek to explain the massive destruction of their fellow Jewish citizens. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, this volume helps demarginalize the history of

violence and genocide in Eastern Europe. While recognizing salient specificities in the prelude, unfolding, and long-term effects of genocidal violence among East European societies, such differences do not preclude the possibility for useful comparisons to similar courses of events in other regions. There is certainly much to be gained from understanding the memory of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe since it provides useful concepts and heuristic tools to better seize traumatic memories and representation in other former "extremely violent societies,"[1] like Rwanda after the Tutsi genocide or Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge, places that share a similar past of "paroxysmal violence."[2]

Discursive Frameworks for Addressing the Holocaust

Rather than suppression, the authors of this volume put forward other ways in which memory was controlled in state-socialist Eastern Europe, such as marginalization, distortion, and the creation of alternative memories within the legitimate framework of antifascism and universalization of the Jewish experience. These concepts better explain how narratives of the fate of Eastern European Jewish victims during World War II emerged and changed. The discourses were furthermore extremely affected by the deep and long-lasting impacts of the brutalization of entire societies. Therefore, boldly articulating war experience with any mediation tool would have been too harmful and traumatic.[3] The authors argue that narratives of the Holocaust were not absent at all from the public space but were framed mostly *within* the antifascist discourse that universalized Jewish victims, rendering them not as Jews but as simply citizens. While other scholars have often mistaken—sometimes deliberately—that antifascist framework of state socialism for censorship, this book proves that this framework cannot be reduced solely to censorship, as shown by the alternative memory forged by the writers of *Sovetish Heymland* or the self-censorship of the editors

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1   A term taken from Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

2   The concept of "paroxysmal violence" (*violence paroxystique*) was first used by Christian Ingrao in his book *The SS Dirlewanger Brigade: The History of the Black Hunters*, trans. Phoebe Green (New York: Skyhorse , 2011 [2006]), 245. His study of a unit of poachers sent to the Eastern front analyzes the conditions that made it possible for them to act with hitherto inconceivable cruelty, which Ingrao describes as "paroxysmal violence."

3   On the concept of "brutalization," see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). On the long-lasting effects of World War II on Polish society, see Andrzej Leder, *Polen im Wachtraum: Die Revolution 1939–1956 und ihre Folgen* (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2019).

who published the Ringelblum Archive. However, censorship did exist and did prevent the publication of certain works or the expression of Jewish suffering in certain ways—for instance, in the case of state-funded art projects about the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary, or in the case of GDR historian Helmut Eschwege who encountered difficulties when he tried to describe explicitly the fate of Jews in his broader narrative of the war.

Yet, this censorship was not as total or as top-down as it has often been imagined to be. Rather than only taking the form of the censor's black marker, censorship more ambiguously took place in the form of self-censorship, self-constraint, and adaptation to official discourse. Such was the case for many of the painters, sculptors, writers, filmmakers, journalists, and historians discussed in this volume, who thrived to tell their story in their own way. The creative virtue of (self-)censorship, that boundaries enhance creativity and artists pass on messages despite constraints,[4] appears to be quite important in other fields too, such as with journalists like Heinz Knobloch. As Alexander Walther underscores, Knobloch challenged the conventionally impersonal history of the destruction of European Jewry in his books by presenting a very personal narrative and addressing the controversial issue of responsibility, although in veiled language. Similarly, Anatolii Rybakov used voids in the construction of his novels to help the reader understand the unspeakable. If literature can be defined by an attempt to embody and individualize the expression of universal emotions and situations, then its mission could still be fulfilled among talented artists who acutely used that essence of literature—and art in general—to tackle the potential distorting effects of an imposed and dominating universalistic war narrative.

Thus, censorship of Holocaust discourse was not total. Many chapters in this book analyze the existence of discursive places for the memory of the Holocaust, be it through the critical reception of a work of art or a book. Historical research and publication projects, often looked down upon by Western scholars, did occur behind the Iron Curtain, though historians were linguistically cautious in presenting the results and complied to an extent with the official or sometimes unofficial demands of the state in exchange for access to archives. Peter Hallama, for instance, highlights the leading role played by historian Miroslav Kárný in publishing sources on the Nazi persecution in the Czech lands and publicizing the history of Jews in the region and particularly

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4   See for instance on Soviet literature Luba Jurgenson, *Création et tyrannie* (Cabris: Éditions Sulliver, 2009).

in the Theresienstadt ghetto. Similarly, the authorities in Hungary and Poland permitted important publications on the Holocaust, some of which even gained international importance, like many diaries of Jewish survivors and collections of documents from the Ringelblum Archive published by the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland.

The universalistic and antifascist narrative also did not prevent the commemoration of Jewish victims specifically, even if they were not openly presented as such. Even in the Soviet Union, commemoration sites appeared throughout the period, like the Ninth Forth Museum in Kaunas analyzed by Gintarė Malinauskaitė, testifying to a particular Soviet narrative of the Holocaust. Indeed, there was a great diversity and inconsistency in official state-socialist policies towards Jewish memorial sites: sometimes allowing for important landmarks like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Monument or the Babyn Yar memorial, while other times desecrating important sites, like for instance building a market over a Jewish cemetery and World War II murder site in Parczew, Poland. This volume invites further, much-needed historical research on local initiatives to make sense of these spaces in times when Holocaust memory was still embedded in other local memories of violence and wars.[5]

To be sure, the prevailing narrative in state-socialist countries often resulted in a twofold discourse: one aimed at a domestic audience and the other an international one with the intent of giving the regime the best image possible abroad. For Western audiences, or for major official events, the state would strongly emphasize the antifascist narrative, whereas it could allow for a less heroic, more pluralistic, and empathic narrative for local audiences and smaller events. A similar pattern held for memory discourse on other traumatic events. More broadly, double standards were common use to present abroad the domestic social issues communist governments were facing, especially during political upheavals. This duality led to discrepancies and inconsistencies in policy and attitude. Daniel Véri demonstrates the differences between the Holocaust monuments mainly for international audiences at former concentration camps (Auschwitz and Mauthausen), and the plans for monuments that were not built, and were less centered on antifascism and focused more on specifically Jewish victims, and which eventually found their way into domestic art collections and were discussed in Hungary. Conversely, there were times when specifically discussing

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5   For the Soviet Union, see Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union*, transl. A. S. Brown (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018).

Jewish victims of the war was implicitly authorized for selected audiences, such as with publications that were clearly for an international Jewish/Yiddish audience, like *Sovetish Heymland* in the USSR, or publications from Jewish communities in Czechoslovakia and Poland that were only issued abroad in English and German.

A surprising but crucial finding of this collection is that the prevailing antifascist narrative was neither a prison for memory nor an eraser of it. On the contrary, this framework unexpectedly paved the way for voicing some of the earliest expressions of Holocaust memory, at least among intellectuals, who were both deeply embedded in this antifascism and the most in dialogue with it. As Stephan Stach and Peter Hallama have previously pointed out, the antifascist narrative has fostered practices of "counter-history" (*Gegengeschichte*). The dissidents exposed falsifications in order to delegitimize official history.[6] Even some left-wing political opposition groups could challenge the socialist master narrative.[7] Similarly, many reference works (books, films, essays, monuments) that have contributed to the elaboration of a specific Eastern European Holocaust historiography and memory can be viewed as alternative interpretations of World War II by shedding light on so-called "blank spots," namely the Jewish experience, even if their authors were not labelled as dissidents as such. These productions and practices surely gain in meaning and complexity when considered as a form of non-agonistic "counter-history". In this respect, the concept of "multidirectional memory,"[8] referenced repeatedly in this volume, proves useful for explaining the multiplicity of memory narratives, which can be seen as interdependent rather than exclusive and in competition. In this approach, the "Jewish experience" is not muffled by a "national" one but a part of it, with the same amount of agency and similar patterns of transmission.

One question remains, raised by Richard S. Esbenshade about Hungary but easily applicable to the rest of Eastern Europe. Did the still skewed narratives and representations of the Holocaust he identified in Hungarian literature actually manage to provide a greater "shared space" between Jews and non-Jews? In other words, did they really keep "division and antisemitism at bay," or did they

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6   Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach, "Gegengeschichte–Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens," in *Gegengeschichte: Zweiter Weltkrieg und Holocaust im ostmitteleuropäischen Dissens*, ed. Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015), 9–28.

7   For the Polish case, see Andrzej Friszke, *Anatomia Buntu* [The anatomy of rebellion] (Kraków: Znak, 2010).

8   Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

fail to bring about a consensus in the memory landscape, as the heated, post-1989 debates over World War II memory still prevailing in this part of Europe would perhaps indicate?[9] Could these narratives, framed within antifascist lines, provide a forum to discuss local responsibilities for the Holocaust or rather, did they stifle debate, provoking its resurfacing since the 1990s?

Eastern Europe in its Diversity

This volume, by bringing together case studies on various countries in Eastern Europe—the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union, including Soviet Lithuania—allows us to see some similarities in the region as a whole and thus a kind of specificity regarding the Eastern European understanding of the Holocaust, while also highlighting some striking differences hitherto overlooked in historiography.

The first striking difference is that, though the antifascist framework and the issue of censorship would at first glance appear to be a shared and distinctive feature binding the expressions of memories of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, a closer look at each country shows the crucial importance of national contexts. Whether the country had been allied with the Third Reich during World War II, the presence of prewar communist activists and wartime antifascist resistance, the overall civilian casualties in the war and the fate of the Jewish population in particular, the level of antisemitism historically—all these factors played a role in determining the degree to which the antifascist narrative was implemented, and the manner in which it was used to legitimize the socialist regimes in the name of patriotism and heroism. The contributions in this volume demonstrate how crucial it is to approach Holocaust memory and historiography of Eastern Europe within their political and social context rather than treating the area as a monolith. The heroic antifascist narrative was neither equally powerful nor equally discriminatory towards the Jewish experience in every country. The difference between Poland and the GDR is quite illuminating here, especially when it comes to the translation of documents related to the Holocaust, as shown by Stephan Stach. Important Polish books on the Holo-

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9   On this issue, see John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic, eds., *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013); Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, eds., *History, Memory, and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak, eds., *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

caust were translated into German because of the explicit Jewish dimension that was perceived in them. Their publication was considered a part of the antifascist struggle, not as a competitor to it.

A second important finding highlighted by the chapters of this book is the complexity and evolution that characterized this prevailing narrative scheme, which was far from uniform across Eastern Europe. The antifascist framework could have opposite meanings at the same time (heroism vs. victimhood) when it was used to describe Eastern European societies and their attitudes during the war. Moreover, the chronology of antifascist memory and the constraints upon it were not as homogenous as it might seem at first glance. Major political events marked turning points in antifascist discourse: the implementation of Stalinism at the end of the 1940s, the Thaw in 1956 up to the beginning of the 1960s, or the post-1968 normalization all impacted the nature and expression of the antifascist narrative and its inclusion (or exclusion) of the Jewish experience.[10] Indeed, the antifascist framework could function very differently in different countries simultaneously. For instance, when the theater play about Anne Frank opened in Hungary in 1957 it was meant to renew antifascist discourse because the 1956 Revolution was being portrayed as a fascist one by Kádár's propaganda.[11] Anne Frank's diary was supposed to remind Hungarians of the dangers of fascism. However, the same period in Poland, marked by Gomułka's ascension to power, was the beginning of a short phase in which the Stalinist narrative of World War II declined, leaving more opportunity to voice the Jewish experience.[12] Meanwhile in the GDR during the 1960s, the antifascist framework shaped the authorized books on the Holocaust to a much greater extent, preventing for instance the publication of Helmut Eschwege's historical analysis, which was meant to accompany his anthology of sources on Jewish persecution. Indeed, a closer look at the dynamics within the antifascist narrative, as analyzed in this volume, reveals that the beginning of the 1960s saw a "memory

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10   For the dynamic evolution of the memory of the Holocaust, see for the Polish case Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); and for the Czech lands, see Peter Hallama, *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer: Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015). For a general perspective, see Muriel Blaive, Christian Gerbel, and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Clashes in European Memory: The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2011), especially section 1.

11   Kata Bohus, "Anne and Éva: Two Diaries, Two Holocaust Memories in Communist Hungary," *Remembrance and Solidarity: Studies in 20th-Century European History* 5 (2016): 97–114.

12   Audrey Kichelewski, "A Community under Changes and Pressure: Jews in Poland, 1957–1967," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 21 (2008): 159–86.

boom," although it appeared in different forms across the region, such as in literature through novels and published testimonies related to World War II, in historical scholarship,[13] and even more in commemorations. To be sure, the memory of the Holocaust was generally positioned in terms of heroes and martyrs, a narrative in which the particular fate of Jews did not have much of a place. Yet, the narrative of "parallel fates" and "shared fighting and heroism" at least enabled the inclusion of Jews in this reconstruction of memory. Even during the earlier period of the 1950s, often associated only with Stalinism and the silencing of narratives of Jewish victimhood, needs reevaluation, as shown both in the Hungarian example by Kata Bohus and in the attempts made by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw to have volumes from the Ringelblum Archive published despite censorship.

Another point concerning the periodization of Holocaust memory is the need to place this narrative within a much broader timeframe in order to better grasp its specificity. Especially important in this aspect is the interwar period, if not even the nineteenth century, as illustrated by the examples of prewar Hungary or Lithuania described in this volume. These periods did much to shape relations between Jews and non-Jews in Europe and saw the crystallization of antisemitism in its various forms and expressions, resulting in conceptual frames later used to describe the Jewish fate during World War II, such as depicting Jews alternatively as "victims of fascism" or antifascist "war heroes." As such, it is crucial to consider the political and broader social context of each country in order to better analyze the many processes at work after the war, when the narratives surrounding Jews were forged.

Lastly, this collection points to the importance of the circulation of narratives, motives, books, actors, and ideas within state-socialist Eastern Europe. These case studies invite researchers to undertake more systematic comparisons in order to grasp which models circulated, where they originated from, and which patterns were specific to which countries. This collection also tries to make clearer the differences in how antifascist discourse was articulated between the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe. Here, rather than the conventional narrative of the top-down way in which the Soviet Union enforced its ideology and dictated a monolithic model of remembrance (or not re-

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13   In Poland, for instance, while very few books about the Holocaust were published (in Polish) from 1949 to
      1955, more than 40 volumes of memoires, histories, and literature appeared between 1956 and 1962 (Bernard Mark, *Męczeństwo i walka Żydów w latach okupacji: poradnik bibliograficzny* [Martyrdom and struggle
      of Jews in the years of occupation: Bibliographic guide] (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1963).

membering), it might be more useful to see Holocaust memory as a complex network of expression and translation that circulated around all of Eastern Europe and beyond, and was not simply imposed.[14]

Making Sense of the Holocaust with Agency

Acknowledging the circulations of patterns of memory also enables us to envision them as creative or even liberating forces rather than merely as repressive frameworks for the silencing of expressions of Jewish suffering during the war. Writing about the journal *Sovetish Heymland*, Miriam Schulz compares the "ethnic autonomy" allowed in the USSR when it came to certain memories of the war, though always within the limits of the assimilatory goals of the Soviet Union, to "the old *Bundist* principle of '*doikayt*' (hereness)." Doing so, she points out that at least parts of the Jewish world could take ownership of anti-fascist interpretative frameworks after the Holocaust and turn them into useful tools to cope with the trauma and loss of mass destruction. Embracing the heroic narrative of the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union, the national resistance movement in Poland, or the antifascist struggle in Hungary or the GDR may have been a positive attempt by Jewish individuals and groups to make sense of the immense destruction endured by their community and an expression of their agency.

This volume points to many examples of how Jewish survivors took on active roles in commemorating their communities and families. The fact that they did not simply endorse the instrumentalization of the Holocaust by communist regimes but rather participated in the process complicates our current understanding of the period. It would be naïve to believe that the antifascist narrative of the war was inclusive: it did not consider the specific suffering of each category of the victims it claimed to defend. Such a universalizing narrative could not offer a proper expression of the Eastern European Jewish experience of the war, even though there were important intersections where a shared history of Nazi oppression could be articulated. But it would be equally erroneous to be-

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14   For a development of this argument for Soviet writings, see Ksenia Kovrigina, "Le témoignage impossible? Écritures de la destruction des Juifs en URSS" dissertation, Université de Paris, 2019, chap. 1. For the same argument concerning Soviet writing in Yiddish, see Miriam Schulz "*Eynikayt*: Early Soviet Yiddish Writing on the Holocaust as a Means of National Inclusion?," paper presented at the conference "Nationality in War 1789–1991," Paris, Établissement public du Palais de la Porte dorée and the Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration and the National Archives, December 4, 2015, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3s7tsn.

lieve that the state manipulation of Holocaust memory was constant and that it deprived Jewish survivors of all agency. The common dual image of Eastern European Jews as either victims or accomplices of state socialism is somewhat misleading. As these essays illustrate, antifascism was a genuine and sincere part of postwar Jewish identity.[15]

The case raised by Katarzyna Person and Agnieszka Żółkiewska in their chapter about the publication of texts from the Ringelblum Archive reveals that sometimes self-censorship was due more to reasons internal to the Jewish community than to external political pressure. A closer look at Jews' own agency in making sense of the Holocaust can enable us to understand certain statements they made and positions they took. Jewish survivors and their descendants were positioned in a specific social narrative not of their own making, but often managed to mold it in a way that made sense of their "national" catastrophe through the lens of their own experiences, while embracing the appropriate vocabulary for Eastern European Jews. Focusing on agency may help us grasp the blending of seemingly divided memories: a quiet, if not almost secret, Jewish memory restricted to local and small circles of survivors versus an official, universalistic, and antifascist public memory of the Holocaust. Violating the master narrative of collective suffering and redemptive sacrifice of societies oppressed by Nazism was only admissible within an internal Jewish discourse. The presence of many Jewish actors in both public and private commemorations and memorialization efforts is evidence of a new postwar Jewish identity. For these Jews, the commemoration of the particularly Jewish suffering during World War II was not in opposition to their simultaneous expressions of patriotism and love for their Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, or Czech homelands.

Indeed, for many Jewish survivors living in this part of Europe, the universalist antifascist narrative could be liberating, a more satisfying way of making sense of their catastrophe than a religious understanding might have been. And such contrasting interpretations of the Holocaust were by no means unique to that side of the Iron Curtain.[16] For Jewish survivors and their descendants everywhere, the issue of how to properly articulate memory was central. Despite

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15   For an analysis of this phenomena among East German Jews, see Sonia Combe, *La loyauté à tout prix: les floués du 'Socialisme réel'* (Paris: Éditions du Bord de l'Eau, 2019).

16   For the French example, see Simon Perego, "Commemorating the Holocaust during the First Postwar Decade: Jewish Initiatives and non-Jewish Actors in France," in *Before the Holocaust Had Its Name: Early Confrontations with the Nazi Mass Murder of the Jews*, ed. Regina Fritz, Éva Kovács, and Béla Rásky (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 223–39.

very different political contexts, survivors on both sides of Europe, in Israel, and in the US all initially suffered a lack of consideration, if not distortion of their voices by the societies they lived in.

Demarginalizing Eastern Europe

This last point leads us to the need to rethink the issue of Holocaust memory within the Cold War context but also to demarginalize Eastern Europe, as many of its supposedly distinctive features are evident in other parts of the world.

First, some of the commemorative efforts in state-socialist countries served a communicative purpose mainly oriented toward a Western audience. Their function was to display that the commemoration of the Holocaust was not suppressed and that the Jewish communities of these areas had not been deprived of their religious and cultural autonomy. Such international-facing forms of memory, though certainly propagandistic, circulated from one side of the Iron Curtain to the other, a process that has still not been properly acknowledged and studied. For instance, one can think about trials of perpetrators that were conducted after Nuremberg, like the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem or the Frankfurt-Auschwitz trial in West Germany, which had their own respective ideological agendas, both domestic and international. Witnesses and archival documents were brought as evidence from Eastern Europe for these trials. Trials conducted in Eastern Europe also had political purposes and with equally important circulations of actors, evidence, and patterns of representation of the Holocaust and Jewish victimhood that have not yet fully been explored and understood.[17]

Second, many chapters in this collection demonstrate not only that there was a clear understanding and analysis of the Shoah in Eastern Europe, but also that many concepts that were deemed to have emerged first or only in the West were very much present there as well. For example, one could think about the

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17   For a closer examination of these East-West circulations during trials of perpetrators, see the research project headed by Vanessa Voisin, "Nazi War Crimes on Trial: Central and Eastern Europe," Agence Nationale de la Recherche, April 27, 2020, https://anr.fr/en/funded-projects-and-impact/funded-projects/project/funded/project/b2d9d3668f92a3b9fbbf7866072501ef-32826d5476/?tx_anrprojects_funded%5Bcontroller%5D=Funded&cHash=e7abdd01cddf26e001216d8edaa3f196. See also the special issue of *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, no. 214 (2021) on the trials of war criminals in Eastern Europe, with a focus on transnational dimension, especially articles by Jasmin Söhner, "Un 'châtiment inéluctable'? Le concours soviétique apporté aux enquêtes ouest-allemandes sur les criminels de guerre et les criminels nazis, 1955-1969," 185–207; and Mate Zombory, "Documentation historique pendant la guerre froide: L'histoire du livre de Jeno Levai, *Eichmann en Hongrie* (1961)," 231–55.

notion of being both a survivor and a historian, and how that dual role impacted how the history of the Holocaust was written;[18] or the concept of a bystander, certainly a subject of visual art in socialist Poland and Hungary; or the idea of "living with" the neighbors and the dead, maybe not explicitly articulated as such but surely felt, as clearly evidenced by Yechiel Weizman's article on Polish neighbors' feelings about local Jewish cemeteries.

Third, this book's thorough examination of the effects of the memorial schemes at work in Eastern Europe, with all their constraints and political and social demands, could spur a much-needed reevaluation of Western historiography and memory of World War II and the Holocaust, first to question its ability to fully grasp how this history unfolded in Eastern Europe, and second because Western memory of the Holocaust was also not immune to official narratives and to political imperatives. As historian Pieter Lagrou states,

> As far as the historiographical landscape is concerned, until the early 1970's at least, Eastern and Western Europe were not worlds apart.... In both cases, political obedience was paramount, individual freedom limited and any interpretation incompatible with the doxa of their bread masters, professional suicide."[19]

If the discursive antifascist framework for addressing the Holocaust in state-socialist countries indeed prevented the expression of Jewish experience in its diversity and complexity, so did the Western framework, which did not fully acknowledge Jewish experience for many other reasons, for instance because of the need to build unified societies after the war or the political necessities of the Cold War.[20] Comparing Eastern and Western representations and politics of memory would surely highlight many similarities, among them the strongly gendered nature of discursive frameworks on both sides, as was the case, for instance, in Soviet Lithuania.

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18   For a research project that focuses on survivors as historians and writers living on both sides of Europe, see Aurélia Kalisky's German Research Foundation project, *Early Modes of Writing the Shoah: Practices of Knowledge and Textual Practices of Jewish Survivors in Europe (1942–1965)*, French National Research Agency and the German Research Foundation, Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.zfl-berlin.org/project/early-modes-of-writing-the-shoah.html.

19   Pieter Lagrou, "Demobilising Europe, 1989–2009: Deconstructing and Resuscitating Cold War Historiography," EURHISTXX, The European Network for Contemporary History, 2008, https://difusion.ulb.ac.be/vufind/Record/ULB-DIPOT:oai:dipot.ulb.ac.be:2013/65987/Holdings.

20   On the Western lack of empathy for some categories of victims, especially Jewish victims, see Mary Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

All in all, this rich volume undoubtedly marks a significant milestone in overturning the continued image of Holocaust memory as simply neglected or misinterpreted under state socialism. From the end of the war on, Eastern Europeans raised important questions and issues about its memory, but scholars have failed to acknowledge this history because it was largely unofficial and often not explicit. On both sides of the Iron Curtain, agents of memory carried out policies that may have had much more in common than was proclaimed by the ideologies they supposedly bore. Sadly, though on both sides of Europe the motto "Never Again" was common after the Holocaust, such memory politics failed in building peaceful societies[21] and did not help Europe reach consensus on interpretations of its recent past when it was eventually reunited after 1989–91.

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21 For an analysis of memory politics and its origins and functions, see Sarah Gensburger and Sandrine Lefranc, *Beyond Memory: Can We Really Learn from the Past?*, trans. Katharine Throssell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

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GROWING IN THE SHADOW OF ANTIFASCISM

Reined into the service of the Cold War confrontation, antifascist ideology overshadowed the narrative about the Holocaust in state-socialist Eastern Europe. This led to the Western notion that in the Soviet Bloc there was a systematic suppression of the memory of the mass murder of European Jews. Going beyond disputing the mistaken opposition between "communist falsification" of history and the "repressed authentic" interpretation of the Jewish catastrophe, this work presents and analyzes the ways the Holocaust was conceptualized in Eastern Europe.

The authors provide various interpretations of the relationship between antifascism and Holocaust memory in the state-socialist countries, arguing that the predominance of an antifascist agenda and the acknowledgement of the Jewish catastrophe were far from mutually exclusive. The interactions included acts of negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing. Detailed case studies describe how both individuals and institutions were able to use antifascism as a framework to test and widen the boundaries for discussion of the Nazi genocide. The studies build on the new historiography of state socialism, focusing on everyday life and individual agency, revealing the formation of a great variety of concrete, local memory practices.

" An insightful exploration of the relationship between the memory of the Holocaust and antifascism in Eastern Europe in the midst of Cold War. By focusing on historiography, sites of memory, artistic representations, media, and public debate, *Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism* fills a critical gap in the literature and offers a dynamic, nuanced picture of a continued engagement with the Holocaust beyond suppression and marginalization."

Natalia Aleksiun, Harry Rich Professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Florida

" This multifaceted, transnational volume on the shaping of Holocaust memory in the shadow of antifascism in Eastern Europe is a most welcome contribution to the growing literature on the dynamic interaction between history, politics, and memory of the Holocaust in postwar Europe. Through cutting edge research incorporating many heretofore largely unexamined sources, this timely volume demonstrates the multiple ways in which Holocaust survivors and other activists in Eastern Europe created a space for Holocaust memory within antifascist frameworks, and highlights the critical role local, grassroots, and bottom-up initiatives under state socialism in the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR played in the shaping of memory, even within political frameworks often perceived to limit possibilities for expression."

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