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. On July 27, 1942, she was deported to Theresienstadt, and died in April 1943.

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.

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?” 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.


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

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.”

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.” 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.”

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.”

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.
63 Marion Fuckas, Aktennotiz, January 10, 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

65 Günter Grimm, Gutachten, January 3, 1984, BArch, DR 1/2324, 186.
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.2.6463.
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.


\(^{71}\) AdK, Berlin, Archiv Verlag Volk & Welt, no. 2987, 3–4. In 1989, Rütten & Loeing 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). 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, 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.
