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*. 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. 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.” 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. 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. 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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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.\(^\text{79}\) 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.”\(^\text{80}\) 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.”\(^\text{81}\) In this manner, Knobloch impersonates Jaroslav Hašek’s famous character Švejk from The Good Soldier Švejk, as he indicated in one of his texts.\(^\text{82}\) 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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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 her- oism 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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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.

84 Knobloch, Herr Moses in Berlin, 10.