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 Medzhbizh 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

successful in the hegemonic Russian cultural realm—this same cult arguably fostered, and potentially reinforced, a distinct way of commemorating the specifically Jewish catastrophe and experience amongst Soviet Yiddish-speakers.

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-

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, Popervâle 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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