Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism

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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.” 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. Despite these deformations, the uprising is evidently told as a story of Jewish suffering and heroism. 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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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.
prepare a German edition as early as October 1953, 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.

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, 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.”

\[\text{Figure 12.2. Dust jacket cover of the 1957 edition of } \text{Der Aufstand im Warschauer Ghetto}\]

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.

The collection \textit{Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto} was published by \textit{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. 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.


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 AZIH 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.\(^{16}\) *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 Kraków 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 Kraków 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 Kraków, 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 *Przemienilo 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 *Przemienilo 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


\(^{27}\) 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.
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. Goldkorn had passed them to Ber Mark shortly before she died in 1947. 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.

_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.

Based on the GDR edition, an Italian, a Hungarian, a Slovenian, and a West German edition appeared.

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30 Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, _Przeminęło z ogniem_ [Gone with the fire] (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1947).
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.
34 Friedhilde Krause mentions that the book had been reviewed in both German states, Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. 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. 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), 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. A West German edition followed in 1962 with the leftist Röderberg Verlag in Frankfurt in 1962.

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


36 AZIH 310/100AR R&L to JHI, November 6, 1957.
38 Bundesarchiv (hereafter, BArch), Ministerium für Kultur, Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel, Druckgenehmigungsvergänge, DR 1/3795, fol. 185–92.