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? 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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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. 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. 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. 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.


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 memoirs, 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, 1965).
Making Sense of the Holocaust in Socialist Eastern Europe

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 Sofetish 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 antifascist 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-