

**Bohus, Kata, Peter Hallama and Stephan Stach, eds. 2022. *Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism: Remembering the Holocaust in State-Socialist Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press. 340 pp, Illus.**

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*Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism: Remembering the Holocaust in State-Socialist Eastern Europe* makes a significant contribution to memory studies scholarship by challenging the post-Cold War consensus on Eastern European memory. According to prevailing scholarship, state-socialist Eastern Europe suppressed the memory of the Holocaust, while state-sponsored antifascism served as a mere instrument to expunge the history of Jewish persecution and genocide. This volume—edited by Kata Bohus, Peter Hallama, and Stephan Stach—reads as a response to “questioning the myth of silence” (David Cesarani), from an Eastern European perspective, as it reevaluates the region’s contribution to Holocaust memory.

Covering five countries—the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union—and spanning the entire period of the Cold War, the book offers insights into manifold cases of Holocaust memory. With many of these cases unknown in Western scholarship and long-ignored in Eastern European scholarship, it offers in-depth analyses of marginalized instances of Holocaust commemoration.

The volume is divided into four parts: historiography, sites of memory, artistic representations, and media and public debates. In Part One, Katarzyna Person and Agnieszka Żołąkowska examine Polish editions from the Emanuel Ringelblum Archive, a unique collection of documents gathered by activists inside the Warsaw Ghetto; Peter Hallama reconsiders official historiography in post-1968 Czechoslovakia; and Benjamin Lapp revisits the career of Helmut Eschwege, an outsider historian and “Jewish citizen of the GDR.” In Part Two, Kata Bohus uncovers memorial services of the Jewish communities in Stalinist-era Hungary, Gintarė Malinauskaitė presents museum practices in Soviet Lithuania as part of expansive efforts to commemorate war and genocide, and Yechiel Weizman revisits material remnants of Polish-Jewish communities and looks at examples of commemorations on a local level. In Part Three, Anja Tippner rereads *Heavy Sand*, a Holocaust novel of the socialist realist Anatolii Rybakov, Daniel Véri surveys a range of state-commissioned and noncommissioned art in Hungary between 1955 and 1965, and Richard S. Esbenschade explores some of the many Holocaust-related Hungarian novels published in roughly the same period. In Part Four, Alexander Walther follows the journeys of Heinz Knobloch, an East German journalist, into Berlin’s German-Jewish history; Miriam Schulz traces Holocaust commemorations via reading *Sovetish Heymland*, the Soviet Union’s Yiddish periodical; and Stephan Stach tracks the transfer of

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Polish-Jewish publications on the Holocaust to East Germany. Finally, Audrey Kichelewski summarizes the multifaceted conclusions of the volume.

Overall, the volume collects compelling evidence for Jewish victims being publicly remembered "*qua* Jews" (p. 209) across the antifascist states of Eastern Europe. In regard to antifascism itself, however, the volume remains inconclusive. Although the editors promise to challenge the view of antifascism as a homogeneous and suppressive regime of memory (pp. 1–2), ultimately they stop short of identifying the *inherent* possibilities of antifascism to reckon with the Holocaust and offer ways to remember it. Rather, as the title of the book suggests, they consider the countless cases of Holocaust commemoration in Eastern Europe as results of effort to "appropriate" the "official" antifascist "narrative" in order to "make room for the memory of the Holocaust" (p. 1). By assuming the "parallel development of an official antifascist narrative of the war and one that emphasized Jewish suffering" (p. 14), they reinforce some of the simplification and stigma attached to antifascist memory. Nonetheless, some of their own considerations and indeed a number of case studies selected for the volume question the dichotomy of "official" and "nonofficial" discourses.

Indeed, many of the examples of Holocaust commemoration detailed in the chapters cannot be conveniently located in opposition to or even outside of "official" antifascism. First, party policies were not constant or homogeneous across time and space, nor were nonstate positions. As Miriam Schulz clarifies: "The Soviet party line toward the Holocaust was as variable as Soviet-Jewish confrontations with it—there was neither a coherent and linear policy of suppression regarding the Holocaust in public discourse, nor was there a monolithic Soviet Jewish coming-to-terms with it" (p. 245). In the Soviet Union, efforts to commemorate the Holocaust were coming from "Jewish 'insiders' who situated themselves *within* the Soviet system" just as much as they were from Jewish dissidents (p. 256). Second, as some of the chapters demonstrate, representations of the Holocaust were indeed part and parcel of official antifascism. For instance, Stephan Stach describes how Polish-Jewish publications on the Holocaust "gained enormous popularity" in East Germany (p. 276) without being "seen as a competitor of antifascism" by the authorities. "On the contrary," he concludes, they "presented Holocaust memory as an integral part of antifascism" (p. 282). Third, even "nonofficial" agency promoting Holocaust commemoration often did so from a decidedly antifascist standpoint, such as Heinz Knobloch in East Germany toward the end of the era of state socialism. When he then faced the stigmatization of antifascism in reunified Germany, he declared that "he would prefer 'an imposed antifascism' over no antifascism at all" (p. 250–251). These examples show the social significance of antifascism throughout the era. Although commemorations certainly solidified into patterns early on and were used repeatedly as propaganda instruments, the scholarly routine of describing them as mere "narratives" and "myths" runs the risk of missing their significance.

While the volume presents a transnational panorama of state-socialist memory, the focus on local contexts rarely allows an appreciation of the international networks and organizations which were powerful in shaping state socialist memory. These networks were clearly antifascist and certainly state-controlled, yet they contributed massively to the culture of memory. Despite local contexts and varieties, antifascism created a transnational and internationalist culture. One may ask, for instance, what role did antifascism play in opening channels for the circulation of Polish-Jewish publications in and beyond Eastern Europe, including East Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, and West Germany?

This points to another concern: in an effort to shed light on Eastern Europe, the volume isolates the antifascist East from the West, and reinforces the image of antifascism as an exclusively Eastern phenomenon. Yet, antifascism did not completely disappear from the Cold War West, and it informed memory prior to the emergence of Holocaust memory as we know it. Without fully appreciating antifascism as a culture of memory, the historicization of Western Holocaust memory remains inevitably incomplete.

Although the volume sets out to revisit Eastern European memory in its proper context instead of applying Western notions of the Holocaust retrospectively and normatively, the expectation of the Jewish genocide to be perceived and represented as unique and separate resurfaces in the volume. In turn, the absence of such a separation of Jewish suffering is often considered an act of distortion or suppression. Yet what is illuminating in the record is that representing Jewish suffering in the context of Nazi imperialism in Eastern Europe did not necessarily equate to its silencing. The point is not that it enabled the inclusion of "parallel" group memories, Jewish and non-Jewish, but that it enabled the memory of *fascism*—with oppression, resistance, war, occupation, exploitation, persecution, and genocide as part of the experience of fascism.

Overall, *Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism* is indispensable reading for rethinking the history of Holocaust remembrance as it uncovers marginalized evidence and provides a more nuanced picture of Eastern European memory. The expansive material and the analyses it presents testify to the many ways the Holocaust was remembered in the era and invite us to see antifascism as more than merely a phenomenon restrained by quotation marks.