

## A Present *Chiaroscuro*

John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic, eds., *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013, 778 pp.

Reviewed by  
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Post-Holocaust and post-communist scholars who ignore this heavy tome do so at their own risk. This unique enterprise is likely to remain so for some time to come. As Omer Bartov writes in his opening remarks to the concluding chapter, it is an “extraordinary new volume,” constituting “the first comprehensive and systematic examination” of post-communist “Eastern Europe’s attempts to grapple with its past” (p. 663). Whether one agrees or disagrees with some of the twenty articles covering the entire post-communist geographical map, this is the best effort to date to render both the commonalities and the differences among the actors. Of course, not all the contributions are of equal value; they could not be, given the heterogeneity of Holocaust and post-Holocaust research in this region.

The editors are respected experts: Joanna Beata Michlic’s (see below) work on the debates that rocked Poland following the publication of the Polish version of Jan Tomasz Gross’s book *Neighbors* is well known; John-Paul Himka is a widely published author on Ukrainian-Jewish history and the Holocaust in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> They write in their introduction,

1 See John-Paul Himka, *Ukrainians, Jews and the Holocaust: Divergent Memories* (Saskatoon: Heritage Press, 2009); idem, *Socialism in Galicia: The Emergence of Polish Social Democracy and Ukrainian Radicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); idem, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867–1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999); idem, “Ukrainian Collaboration in the Extermination of Jews during the Second World War: Sorting out the Long Term and the Conjunctural Factors,” in Jonathan Frankel, ed., *The Fate of*

A difficult but important aspect of the study of memory is that of “the dark past” of nations in relation to their ethnic, religious, and national minorities — the ways in which nations recollect and rework the memory of their “dark pasts” and how this memory shapes their collective identities and the social identity of ethnic and national minorities (p. 1).

“The Dark Past,” one might say, is thus synonymous with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past); however, it also refers to failure to cope with pasts of shame or guilt. It is rather a *Bewältigungserfolglosigkeit* (failure in overcoming), which implies both attempt and letdown. What then, are the *present* efforts to bring that past to light? Most of the contributions seem to indicate that the past has been neither successfully illuminated, nor is it entirely neglected. Hence my title: “A Present *Chiaroscuro*.”

The editors’ introduction refers to the communist era’s dark past, but Klas-Göran Karlsson’s article, “The Reception of the Holocaust in Russia: Silence, Conspiracy, and Glimpses of Light” (pp. 516–548), ought to be read carefully for its well-argued depiction of the reasons for the silence on the Holocaust throughout the entire former “Soviet Bloc.” Citing anthropologist Rubie Watson’s work, Himka and Michlic argue that “the socialist states failed to convince society of their interpretation of the past, and as a result ‘underground memories’ always existed and were kept alive.” This is true for “the public memory of the pre-communist and communist pasts of the majority group, understood in an ethnic sense,” but there was generally no “underground memory” among the majority groups regarding the “troubling, painful relations with Jews and other minorities during the war” (pp. 5–6). This highly important observation is applicable to the entire region. “Underground memories” erupted after the communist regimes’ demise, creating unexpected solidarities among those persecuted under communism, regardless of the ideological reason for that persecution. This in part explains the solidarity of members of the extreme Right and the democratic center in demanding and successfully promoting to a degree the condemnation of the former regime’s crimes. For Jews,

*European Jews, 1939–1945: Continuity or Contingency?* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 170–189; idem, “Dimensions of a Triangle: Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Austrian Galicia,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 12 (1999), pp. 25–48.

this has often implied the rehabilitation of their wartime persecutors and their ideologies.

Himka and Michlic describe this as “The Outburst of Competing and Discordant Memories” (subheading, pp. 6–8); I call this “competitive martyrdom.”<sup>2</sup> They distinguish two phases in this process: one ethno-nationalist and the other progressive, pluralistic, and civic. The former began immediately after the fall of communism, stressing the dichotomy between “we” the nation and “they” the communist regime. This “ethnic vision” continued to repress the memory of the Holocaust in public discourse and dovetailed with “a new wave of recycled and modified nationalistic and anti-Semitic narratives about the Jews as perpetrators during the communist period.” This rebirth of the Judeo-communism myth was particularly strong as “the key narrative” of right-wing ethno-nationalist politicians and intellectuals in the Baltic States, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Ukraine. Judeo-communism thus helps justify and minimize any acts against Jews during the Holocaust and reinforces the ethno-nationalist victimhood narrative during World War II and the communist period (p. 7).

The “progressive, pluralistic, and civic” phase that “gradually crystallized by the late 1990s and the first years of the new millennium ... aims at endorsing the complex, painful memory of the Holocaust” (p. 8). The distinction between these two phases should not be seen to imply that characteristics of the first phase vanished in the second,

2 Michael Shafir, “Rotten Apples, Bitter Pears: An Updated Motivational Typology of Romania’s Radical Right’s Anti-Semitic Postures in Post-Communism,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 7, no. 21 (2008), p. 171; idem, “Nuremberg II? Le mythe de la dénazification et son utilisation dans la martyrologie compétitive Shoah-Goulag,” *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah*, vol. 94 (2011), pp. 557–582; idem, “Political Antisemitism in Romania: Hard Data and its Soft Underbelly,” *Studia Politica*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2012) p. 598 [557–604]; idem, “Istorie, memorie și mit în martirologia competitivă Holocaust-Gulag,” in Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mișcoiu, eds., *Miturile politice în România contemporană* (Iași: Editura Institutul European, 2012), pp. 297–358. In this I follow Jean-Michel Chaumont, Alain Besançon, and Alan S. Rosenbaum: Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La Concurrence des victimes: génocide, identité, reconnaissance* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1997); Alain Besançon, *Nenorocirea secolului: Despre comunism, Nazism și unicitatea Shoah-ului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 138 (translated from the French original *Le Malheur du siècle: Sur le Communisme, le Nazisme et l’unicité de la Shoah* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); Alan S. Rosenbaum, “Introduction to First Edition,” in Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview, 2001), p. 2.

as the rest of the introduction and many of the contributions show. What Himka and Michlic have in mind is a change in the public and scholarly discourse on the Holocaust that includes “new information and new interpretations of the past, previously ignored both under communism and in émigré circles.” The dark past of the majority nations’ treatment of the Jews during the Holocaust became “a subject of historical awareness, history writing, artistic performance, and public discourse” (p. 8).

The “Jedwabne debates” in Poland, triggered by Gross’s book and meticulously analyzed by Michlic,<sup>3</sup> have yet to happen in most post-communist countries. Such a debate would place the Holocaust and relations with the Jewish minority at the center of public discourse, while posing difficult questions to contemporary national identity and the status of minorities past and present (p. 9). Post-Jedwabne Poland itself has not put that “dark past” behind it; the majority still believes “that only a small minority of Polish society did wrong to the Jews” (pp. 9–10).

Thus, it seems doubtful that we are witnessing a genuine “progressive, pluralistic, and civic” new phase willing to face the past, as Himka and Michlic seem to believe (p. 8). This, they note, stems from two reasons. The so-called “fig-leaf memory”<sup>4</sup> is a lucrative nostalgia for a past that brings tourism in and visiting Jews by seemingly endorsing multiculturalism to gain respectability and international status in the West. And, citing Charles S. Maier, they add that “the perished Jews are recast as good citizens and Jewish survivors and their descendants living in the West as welcome visitors” (p. 9).<sup>5</sup> The second reason is that the newly emergent post-communist countries strive to demonstrate

3 Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Joanna Michlic, “Coming to Terms with the ‘Dark Past,’” *ACTA* 21 (2002); Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

4 Janusz Makuch interview with Magdalena Waligórska, “Fiddler as a Fig Leaf: The Politicization of Klezmer in Poland,” in *Impulses for Europe: Tradition and Modernity in East European Jewry*, a special edition of *Osteuropa* (2008), p. 232.

5 They cite Charles S. Maier, “Whose Mitteleuropa? Central Europe between Memory and Obsolescence,” in Gunter Bischof and Anton Pelinka, eds., *Austria in the New Europe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1993), pp. 8–18.

their adherence to the democratic “international regime” and its values, but are obviously at pains to confront collaboration.<sup>6</sup>

The Introduction’s important subsection “Double Genocide” critically discusses the alleged “symmetry between Nazi and communist crimes” and the theory’s role in post-communist perceptions of the Holocaust. The authors note that the theory “was born and is most pronounced in the Baltic States” (pp. 17–18). It is “a powerful tool in the hands of right-wing ethno-nationalists” and could “have a detrimental impact on the process of coming to terms with the dark past.” Double genocide advocates believe the Holocaust is “exaggerated” and “obfuscates the suffering of other people,” and this belief is reinforced by the emphasis on supposed Judeo-communism (p. 18). The editors’ analysis of the double genocide theory’s role would have benefited from reference to the work of Dovid Katz, who, I believe, first coined the term “Holocaust obfuscation.”<sup>7</sup>

Whereas Holocaust denial and Holocaust trivialization are condemned internationally, competitive martyrdom manages to enlist the support of figures who can hardly be suspected of antisemitism, subjectivity, ill-will, or ignorance.<sup>8</sup> Double genocide is the main pillar supporting competitive martyrdom and Holocaust obfuscation. This is not only the result of reminiscences of the “totalitarian model” that placed the Nazis and the Communists on the same plane,<sup>9</sup> but also of apparently legitimate calls stemming from Eastern Central Europe for

6 On “international regimes,” see Stephen Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” *International Organization*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1982), pp. 185–205.

7 Dovid Katz, “On Three Definitions: Genocide, Holocaust Denial, Holocaust Obfuscation,” in Leonidas Donskis, ed., *A Litmus Test Case of Modernity: Examining Modern Sensibilities and the Public Domain in the Baltic States at the Turn of the Century* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 259–277; idem, “Prague’s Declaration of Disgrace,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 22, 2009, <http://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/prague's-declaration-disgrace>; idem, “Halting Holocaust Obfuscation,” *The Guardian*, January 8, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/08/holocaust-baltic-lithuania-latvia>; idem, “The Seventy Years Declaration and the Simple Truth,” *The Algemeiner*, February 2, 2012, <http://www.algemeiner.com/2012/02/03/the-seventy-years-declaration-and-the-simple-truth/>.

8 Michael Shafir, “Wars of Memory in Post-Communist Romania,” in Oto Luthar, ed., *The Power of Memory: Post-Socialist Historiography between Democratization and the New Politics of History* (Ljubljana: ZRC Press, forthcoming).

9 See the contributions to Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

a “democratic memory” that takes into account the ordeals of nations subjected to Stalinist-imposed rule.<sup>10</sup> According to Katz, Holocaust obfuscation seeks to

Deflate Nazi crimes; inflate Soviet crimes; make their ‘equality’ into a new sacrosanct principle for naive Westerners who like the sound of ‘equality’; redefine ‘genocide’ by law to include just about any Soviet crime; find ways to turn local killers into heroes (usually as supposed ‘anti-Soviet’ patriots); fault victims and survivors, especially those who lived to join the anti-Nazi resistance.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, only Saulius Sužiedėlis and Šarūnas Liekis, “Conflicting Memories: The Reception of the Holocaust in Lithuania,” (pp. 319–351) refer to Katz’s work, though maintaining a critical distance from him. Although some view Katz as more “activist” than scholar, I do not share their view. Suffice it to mention that such eminent historians as former Yad Vashem Chairman Yitzhak Arad<sup>12</sup> confirm his analysis.

Unlike Holocaust denial,<sup>13</sup> competitive martyrdom strives to associate the Holocaust with the epoch’s Zeitgeist. Yet, while this attempt would merely add one more layer to many earlier attempts at “trivializing”<sup>14</sup> the Holocaust by demonstrating that it was just one more genocide among many in history, competitive martyrdom aims higher. Following Ernst Nolte, who perceived Nazism as being merely a response to communism,<sup>15</sup> competitive martyrdom is bent on estab-

10 A good example is Maria Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe,” *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2009), pp. 653–680.

11 Katz, “The Seventy Years Declaration.”

12 Yitzhak Arad, “The Holocaust in Lithuania, and Its Obfuscation, in Lithuanian Sources.” <http://defendinghistory.com/yitzhak-arad-on-the-holocaust-in-lithuania-and-its-obfuscation-in-lithuanian-sources/46252>.

13 On Holocaust denial, see for example Manfred Gerstenfeld, *The Abuse of Holocaust Memory: Distortions and Responses* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Institute for Global Jewish Affairs and ADL, 2009).

14 I borrow the term from Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), XI–XII, but utilize it differently. See my “Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” *ACTA* 19 (2002), p. 60.

15 Ernst Nolte, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus* (Munich: F. A. Herbing Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1997).

lishing that whatever suffering perpetrators belonging to one's own community caused to victims of the Holocaust was merely a natural reaction to the earlier suffering induced by the victims on the community and, moreover, that the number of victims of communism exceeded that of Holocaust victims. Efraim Zuroff calls this "an attempt to turn everything topsy-turvy" and "to deflect the criticism of Nazi collaboration in Eastern Europe, which was far more lethal than Nazi collaboration anywhere else."<sup>16</sup>

Himka and Michlic note that a sense of martyrdom mixed with the antisemitic themes of Judeo-communism and "Nazi Israel" aims to undermine Holocaust memory and is a volatile mixture that could negatively impact on "the integration of the dark past into mainstream historical consciousness" and on World War II memory in general (p. 18). As they note, the double genocide approach was endorsed in the June 3, 2008 Prague Declaration, and in particular the European Parliament Resolution of April 2, 2009, establishing August 23, the anniversary of the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (observed in several European countries and international organizations).

The chapters, arranged alphabetically by country, address the following: the general wartime situation and the ethnic majority's attitudes toward the Jewish minority; Holocaust memory in the communist period; the relationship between "high politics" and Holocaust memory after 1989; debates on the Shoah; Holocaust education and scholarship, including Holocaust cultural representation (literature, music, cinema, theater), grassroots memorialization projects and commemorative sites, as well as contributions from the Diaspora and local Jewish communities (p. 12). Contributors tended to concentrate on their own expertise and neglect aspects less familiar to them. On Hungary this led to two contributions; Catherine Portuges deals solely with the cinematic memory of the Holocaust.

No reviewer can do justice to the breadth of this tome; I concentrate on countries and issues where my own expertise is stronger. But I must begin by citing Polish historian Witold Kula, quoted in the book's

16 Cited in Michel Zlotowski, "EU Halts Move to Downgrade Shoah," *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 29, 2010, <http://www.thejc.com/news/world-news/43123/eu-halts-move-downgrade-shoah>. Much of what has been said above on Dovid Katz's allegedly "non-scholarly" work applies to Zuroff as well.

best contribution by Joanna Beata Michlic and Małgorzata Melchior, “The Memory of the Holocaust in Post-1989 Poland: Renewal — Its Accomplishments and Its Powerlessness,” (pp. 403–450): “In the past the Jews were envied for their money, qualifications, positions, and international contacts — today they are envied for the very crematoria in which they were incinerated” (p. 416). The success of Holocaust survivors and “second-and-third” generation survivors to make the Holocaust be perceived as the “paradigmatic genocide” has somehow created the sense that no community’s suffering will be similarly acknowledged internationally unless it is “genocidal.”

Before proceeding to discuss some of the more intriguing contributions, let me share a dilemma. How does a reviewer react when his own work on the book’s subject is praised in the introduction (p. 19) and often cited approvingly in other texts and footnotes, yet is once hinted by one author to have indulged in falsification? The best way out of this dilemma is to specify that Vladimir Solonari’s article, “Public Discourse on the Holocaust in Moldova: Justification, Instrumentalization, and Mourning,” (pp. 377–402) is otherwise a very good contribution, as indeed is his book on the Romanian Holocaust.<sup>17</sup>

Solonari, who is familiar with the intricacies of Moldovan politics having served as a presidential counselor, shows in his discussion of historian Sergiu Nazaria how difficult it is to distinguish between history and politics. Nazaria is both the author of a book on the Holocaust perpetrated by the Romanian authorities in Moldova<sup>18</sup> and linked to the communist-inspired campaign of “Moldovianism.” Although the book does not impress Solonari, he commends it for drawing Moldo-

17 Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Washington and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). A few years ago, hours before my departure to a US-based conference, I received an e-mail from Mr. Solonari, which due to haste I read superficially and replied in kind. I do not recall exactly what Solonari asked, but I recall that he said, in the future he would have nothing to do with me. In his article here, he devotes six precious lines in a note accusing me of inaccurate attribution, which has nothing to do with the book’s focus (p. 401, n. 53), and he uses the term “competition in suffering” apparently to avoid saying “competitive martyrdom” (p. 393).

18 Sergiu Nazaria, *Holocaust: File din istorie (Pe teritoriul Moldovei și în regiunile limitrofe ale Ucrainei, 1941–1944)* (Chișinău: Institutul de Stat de Relații Internaționale din Republica Moldova. Asociația Evreilor din Moldova Foști Deținuți ai Ghetourilor și Lagărelor de Concentrare Fașciste. Universitatea Slavonă din Republica Moldova, 2005).



van readers' attention to certain major facts in their recent national history. Yet, he criticizes Nazaria for seeming to aim at times at legitimizing Moldova's existence vis-à-vis Romanian claims to Moldova, which "undermines his own academic credibility" (p. 399). The major recurrent themes in the majority's master narrative "are the victimization of the Romanian nation and its heroic struggle against foreign oppression" (p. 385). Since the Holocaust of Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jews does not fit into this framework, it was generally ignored, except by historian Anatol Petrencu, who, Solonari shows, indulged in exculpatory "explanations" of Romania's policies in Bessarabia from 1940 to 1944. Those familiar with Romanian Holocaust deniers and trivializers are bound to recognize these arguments.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, Solonari fails to heed the editors' insistence on the necessity for contributors to familiarize themselves with events in neighboring countries, as reflected in his references to Romania.<sup>20</sup>

Circulating the contributions among the authors might have resolved some of the lacunae, for Felicia Waldman and Mihai Chioveanu's "Public Perceptions of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Romania" (pp. 451–486) discusses what Solonari omitted. However, Waldman and Chioveanu would have benefitted from some updating. The absence of a section on double genocide and its significance is glaring. They devote scant attention to the subject. Other subjects could be updated as well. In a 2013 book, the authors should not err by saying that in defiance of the recommendations of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania no national memorial or museum has been established (p. 470), when in fact a memorial was inaugurated in October 2009. Nonetheless, this article has much relevant information that makes it worth reading.

The three contributions on the Baltic States are distinctly uneven. One was apparently written so hurriedly that the author did not take

19 Shafir, "Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization.'"

20 He cites Dennis Deletant's *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) on the circumstances surrounding the formation of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, but omits the important interview given by former President Ion Iliescu to the Israeli daily *Haaretz* in which he trivialized the Holocaust, triggering an international scandal that pushed Iliescu to mend his image in the West. For details, see Michael Shafir, "Negation at the Top: Deconstructing the Romanian Holocaust Denial Salad in the Cucumber Season," *Xenopoliana*, vol. 11, no. 3–4 (2003), pp. 94–99.

time to check her footnotes. As a result, Cas Mudde, the author of an important book on extremism in Central and Eastern Europe,<sup>21</sup> is transmogrified into “Cadde Mus” (p. 317). Far more importantly, double genocide, which plays a prominent role in these states, is treated unevenly. Bella Zisere’s “The Transformation of Holocaust Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia” (pp. 300–318) never mentions the subject as such, although it is suggested. Zisere mentions that the Latvian scholarly community and media “often refer to the myth of Jewish support for the Soviet regime in 1940,” and that Latvian Jews are sometimes called Soviet *tanku bučotāji* (tank kissers) (p. 304), a Nazi propaganda aspersion.<sup>22</sup> Zisere also refers to the polemics around the legitimacy of comparing “the Jewish genocide and the so-called Latvian genocide,” under the Soviets following the 1940 occupation (p. 304). She mentions that every conference on the Holocaust in the Baltic States provokes intense discussion on the legitimacy of comparing the fates of local Jews and the majority nations, “and more specifically, on whether the series of deportations committed by the Soviets in 1940 could be classified as genocide” (pp. 304–305). She notes that today’s overtly antisemitic political movements are small and justify their antisemitism by claiming that the Jews betrayed Latvia in 1940. Yet, she emphasizes, this image also “persists in the collective memory of many native Latvians who use it to explain away collaboration with the Nazis” (p. 307). Latvian émigré historians had made these claims earlier, and since independence “their works have become easily accessible nationwide” (p. 307).

Zisere treats Latvian public support for veterans of pro-Nazi units and Nazi collaborators far too leniently. Though she believes this public support is not necessarily antisemitic, some Jews in Latvia, especially Holocaust survivors, view it as such (p. 308). The main issue, she says, “. . . is the annual March 16 Latvian Fighter’s Day parade in the center of Riga, organized by members of the former Latvian Legion.” She mentions that these parades are usually held with the authorities’ approval, “but met considerable opposition from Russian-speaking Latvians, including both Latvian Russians and Latvian Jews” (p. 308), implying a

21 Cas Mudde, *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2005).

22 See Jög Zägen and Reiner Steinweg, *Vergangenheitsdiskurse in der Ostseeregion: Auseinandersetzungen in den nordischen Staaten über Krieg, Völkermord, Diktatur, Besatzung und Vertriebung*, Band 2 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), p. 283.

mere clash of memories, which is undoubtedly part of the story. But what Zisere overlooks is that support for this march by mainstream parties, generally not considered extremist, may expose their true colors. For example, the For Fatherland and Freedom Party, formed in 1993, considered moderately conservative, and a government coalition leader in 1997–1998, merged with the far-right All for Latvia Party in 2011, forming the National Alliance. Several scandals have surrounded this formation for its support of the march. As Zuroff stressed in 2009, this party’s public homage-paying to the Latvian SS Legion does not reflect “harmless nostalgia,” but is rather part of an “insidious plan to gain recognition for a perversely distorted version of European history which will officially equate communism with Nazism.” This would transform nations with a high percentage of Nazi collaborators in genocide into victims of a supposed genocide and cover up these countries’ failure “to prosecute their own Nazi war criminals.”<sup>23</sup>

Zuroff shows that whereas march supporters claim that the Legion’s men were patriotic soldiers who “fought against the Soviets and had no connection to SS crimes,” this is barely a partial truth. In fact, whereas the Legion itself did not participate in Holocaust crimes, many of its men had actively participated in murdering Jews before the Legion’s establishment in early 1943, by which time nearly all of Latvia’s 90,000 Jews, as well as many tens of thousands of Jews in Belarus, had been murdered by Latvian security police units. Many of these murderers, including from the infamous Arajs Kommando, subsequently volunteered to join the Legion.<sup>24</sup> Yet, mainstream Latvian politicians, including current President Andris Bērziņš, defend the march because the Legionnaires allegedly deserve respect, not condemnation. Bērziņš said in 2012 that these men were conscripted into the Waffen-SS, went to war to defend Latvia, and “were not war criminals,”<sup>25</sup> omitting that

23 Efraim Zuroff, “The Nazi Whitewash,” *The Guardian*, September 28, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/28/eric-pickles-tories-latvia-nazi>.

24 Ibid. On the Latvian Legion and the marches, see Shafir, “Istorie, memorie și mit,” pp. 343–344. On the destruction of Latvian Jewry during the Holocaust, see Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944* (Riga and Washington, DC: The Historical Institute of Latvia in association with The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1996); Bernhart Press, *The Murder of the Jews in Latvia 1941–1945* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

25 “Latvian President Defends Nazi Commemoration,” *YNet News*, April 3, 2012, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4197991,00.html>.

about one-third volunteered and participated in sending 90,000 Warsaw ghetto Jews to Treblinka.<sup>26</sup>

Both Latvia and Lithuania honor their Nazi collaborators. A monument commemorating local Latvian Waffen SS was unveiled in Bauska in September 2012.<sup>27</sup> In June 2013 the Saeima unanimously passed a law forbidding public display of Nazi symbols; however, it was not enforced when Latvian Legionnaires proudly displayed their symbols on March 16, 2014. At the same time, PM Laimdota Straujuma warned her cabinet ministers to stay away from the march and fired Environment Minister Einars Cilinskis for disobeying.<sup>28</sup> Yet, the law ties in with the double genocide approach, as it also forbids the public display of Soviet-era symbols.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in July 2014, President Andris Bērziņš promulgated a constitutional preamble, passed by the Saeima, honoring Latvia's "freedom fighters" and condemning both "the communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes and their crimes."<sup>30</sup> *Chiaroscuro*.

Lithuanian Activist Front veterans march twice a year in Kaunas and Vilnius to commemorate their wartime defense against the USSR. February 16, 1918, marks the restoration of Lithuania's Independence, while March 11, 1990, marks the nation's post-communist restora-

26 Efraim Zuroff, "Don't Rehabilitate the Guilty," *Haaretz*, January 13, 2012; <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/don-t-rehabilitate-the-guilty-1.407063>; Ronald Binet, "Will Intellectuals in Western Countries Continue Their Silence on Latvia's Glorification of Hitler's Waffen SS?" *Defending History*, March 19, 2012, <http://defendinghistory.com/32817/32817>.

27 Alexander Welscher, "Latvian Memorial Sees Waffen SS as Freedom Fighters," *Business Recorder*, September 26, 2012.

28 "Latvian Minister to Be Fired for Endorsing SS Vets," *JTA*, March 14, 2014, [http://www.jta.org/2014/03/14/news-opinion/world/latvian-minister-to-be-fired-for-endorsing-ss-vets?utm\\_source=Newsletter+subscribers&utm\\_campaign=f4bf25b745-JTA\\_Daily\\_Briefing\\_3\\_14\\_2014&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_2dce5bc6f8-f4bf25b745-26654549](http://www.jta.org/2014/03/14/news-opinion/world/latvian-minister-to-be-fired-for-endorsing-ss-vets?utm_source=Newsletter+subscribers&utm_campaign=f4bf25b745-JTA_Daily_Briefing_3_14_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_2dce5bc6f8-f4bf25b745-26654549); "Latvian Minister Faces Sack in Nazi Memorial Row," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/14/latvia-minister-einars-cilinskis-nazi-memorial-row>.

29 "Latvia Bans Nazi, Soviet Symbols at Public Events," *Haaretz*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/jewish-world-news/latvia-bans-nazi-soviet-symbols-at-public-events-1.531094>; "Latvia Bans Soviet and Nazi Symbols," *Pravda.ru*, June 20, 2013, <http://english.pravda.ru/news/world/20-06-2013/124897-latvia-nazi-soviet-symbols-0/>; "Latvia Bans Soviet, Nazi Symbols," *RIA Novosti*, June 21, 2013, <http://www.en.rian.ru/russia/20130621/181788657/Latvia-Bans-Soviet-Nazi-Symbols.html>.

30 *The Baltic Course*, July 8, 2014.

tion of independence.<sup>31</sup> The Front was a short-lived resistance organization created in 1940 to liberate Lithuania after the Soviet occupation. It planned and executed the June 1941 uprising and established the short-lived Provisional Government of Lithuania, but Germany disbanded the government and banned the Front in September. The Front's antisemitic (and anti-Polish) policies are well documented. Its members subsequently formed various military units; some participated in the liquidation of local Jews and joined the murderous Nazi Bataillon Schutzmannschaften that operated in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. And like the Latvians, they participated in the July-September 1942 Warsaw ghetto deportation to Treblinka. They also served at Majdanek and fought partisans in Russia.<sup>32</sup>

Participants displayed modified Nazi symbols at many of these marches — a 2008 law forbade public display of Soviet and Nazi symbols — some shouting “Jews out” and “Lithuania for the Lithuanians.”<sup>33</sup> A Klaipeda court overruled the ban in May 2010, finding that wearing

31 Olga Zabłudoff, “YIVO, Lithuania, and Lies about the Holocaust,” *Algemeiner*, February 13, 2014, <http://www.algemeiner.com/2014/02/13/yivo-lithuania-and-lies-about-the-holocaust/>.

32 Sara Shner-Neshamit, “Jewish-Lithuanian Relations during World War II: History and Rhetoric,” in Zvi Gitelman, ed., *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 169–171 [167–184]. On the Lithuanian Holocaust, see Yitzhak Arad, “The ‘Final Solution’ in Lithuania in the Light of German Documentation,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 9 (1976) pp. 235–272 and *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: KTAV, 1980); Dov Levin and Zvie A. Brown, *The Story of an Underground: The Resistance of the Jews of Kovno in the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2014); Dov Levin, *Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University and Yad Vashem, 1975); Harry Gordon, *The Shadow of Death: The Holocaust in Lithuania* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992); Kazimierz Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary 1941–1943: A Bystander's Account of a Mass Murder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Karen Sutton, *The Massacre of Jews in Lithuania: Lithuanian Collaboration in the Final Solution 1941–1944* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2008); Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011).

33 Dovid Katz, “Over 1000 Neo-Nazis Fill Main Vilnius Boulevard on Lithuanian Independence Day,” *Defending History*, March 11, 2012, <http://defendinghistory.com/over-1000-neo-nazis-fill-main-vilnius-boulevard-on-lithuanian-independence-day/32439>; Efraim Zuroff, “The Threat of Baltic Ultra-nationalism,” *The Guardian*, April 3, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/apr/03/baltic-far-right-eu>; “Lithuania Court Acquits Teen Who Wore Nazi Uniform,” *KansasCity.com*, October 23, 2008, <http://www.kansascity.com/451/story/856478.html>.

swastikas was not grounds for prosecution, as they were “a valuable symbol of the Baltic culture, an ancient sign of our ancestors, which had been stolen from them and treacherously used by other peoples.”<sup>34</sup>

The Lithuanian government does not officially endorse these marches, but government funding helped reinter wartime Provisional Government Premier Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis (died in US exile in 1974) in Kaunas on May 20, 2012.<sup>35</sup> The ceremony was attended by two former presidents, Vytautas Landsbergis and Valdas Adamkus, who had honored him posthumously in 2009 with Lithuania’s highest award.<sup>36</sup> Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis signed the order for the expulsion of Jews from Kaunas to the Seventh Fort, where they were murdered, and a subsequent order to transfer the surviving Jews to the Kovno ghetto within four weeks.<sup>37</sup>

Sužiedėlis and Liekis’ article, “Conflicting Memories” (pp. 319–351) could not, of course, cover post-publication events, but the trends were clear. The authors focus on the clash of Jewish and Lithuanian memories, ostensibly attempting to “comprehend” both sides, yet regarding the Lithuanians, their style does little more than hint. They ar-

34 “Lithuanian Court: Swastika Not Nazi Symbol,” *Virtual Jerusalem*, May 21, 2010, [http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/judaism.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2827:lithuanian-court-swastika-not-nazi-symbol&catid=29:judaism-main-articles&Itemid=2827](http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/judaism.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2827:lithuanian-court-swastika-not-nazi-symbol&catid=29:judaism-main-articles&Itemid=2827); “A Lithuanian Court Has Ruled That a Swastika Is a Part of the Country’s Historic Legacy and Not a Nazi Symbol,” *Jewish Journal*, May 21, 2010, [http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/lithuanian\\_court\\_swastikas\\_a\\_historic\\_legacy\\_20100521](http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/lithuanian_court_swastikas_a_historic_legacy_20100521).

35 “Wiesenthal Center: Lithuanian Government Emboldens Neo-Nazis,” *The Jewish Press*, March 2, 2014, <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/wiesenthal-center-lithuanian-government-emboldens-neo-nazis/2014/03/02/>. Marchers in Kaunas and Vilnius in 2014 carried his portrait. See “Lithuania Blasted for ‘Glorifying’ Hitler Ally,” *Forward*, February 28, 2014, <http://forward.com/articles/193594/lithuania-blasted-for-glorifying-hitler-ally/>; Efraim Zuroff, “Standing Up to Anti-Semitism in the Baltics,” *Tablet Magazine*, March 28, 2014, <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/167625/baltic-neo-nazi-nationalists>.

36 “Shock of 2012: 1941 Nazi Puppet Prime Minister Reburied with Full Honors,” *Defending History*, December 31, 2012, <http://defendinghistory.com/new/34584>; also “Lithuania Blasted.”

37 Dovid Katz, “Would a ‘Jewish Museum’ in Vilnius Graywash the Lithuanian Holocaust?” *Defending History*, July 7, 2013, <http://defendinghistory.com/would-a-jewish-museum-in-vilnius-graywash-the-lithuanian-holocaust/55902>; idem, “For Seventh Year Running, Neo-Nazis and Ultranationalists Given Center of Vilnius on Independence Day,” *Defending History*, March 11, 2014, <http://defendinghistory.com/seventh-year-running-neo-nazis-ultranationalists-center-vilnius-independence-day/64617>.

gue that addressing the Nazi and their Lithuanian collaborators' genocide of the Jews would be facilitated if the public saw an openness to critical research on the Soviet role on the Eastern front (p. 344).

This seems particularly directed at Katz and Zuroff, both of whom have nonetheless expressed empathy for the Baltic people's suffering under Soviet rule while objecting to reinterpretations of history that legitimize perpetrators. Sužiedėlis and Liekis argue that Katz and Zuroff "claimed that Soviet crimes were not genocidal in nature," without mentioning the "scholarly literature on the topic" or explaining "why the historiography of comparative totalitarian systems was somewhat suspect or illegitimate" (p. 343). Yet, the authors themselves do not much refer to the scholarly debate on the alleged genocidal nature of Soviet-type regimes. For example, they might have mentioned Yehuda Bauer, whom they call the "preeminent authority on the Holocaust" (p. 335). In connection to the Prague Declaration, Bauer, who does not avoid comparison, argues that Soviet rule in the Baltics can by no means be viewed as "genocidal."<sup>38</sup>

Sužiedėlis and Liekis correctly insist that most Lithuanians remember the war differently from the West, mainly due to "chronological limits." Dating World War II 1939 to 1945 has little relevance to the majority population's experience; "more ethnic Lithuanians were killed in the war's aftermath (1945–1953) than during the six preceding years." Consequently, "The Grand Alliance narrative, with its emphasis on the positive role of the Soviet Union, has little resonance in the Baltics, creating unique political difficulties when dealing with the historical context in which the Holocaust, or, for that matter, any aspect of the war must be located" (p. 325). This difference in experience and perspectives "encourages a tendency to see the Holocaust as a Western obsession, making it difficult to appreciate the gravity of the Shoah and its centrality to the nation's history" (p. 326).

These are accurate points, as is their assertion that Lithuanian émigrés played a prominent role in developing this perspective, which

38 Yehuda Bauer, "Reviewing the Holocaust Anew in Multiple Contexts," *Institute for Global Jewish Affairs*, May 1, 2009, [http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=3&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=624&PID=0&ID=2927&TTL=Reviewing\\_the\\_Holocaust\\_Anew\\_in\\_Multiple\\_Contexts](http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=3&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=624&PID=0&ID=2927&TTL=Reviewing_the_Holocaust_Anew_in_Multiple_Contexts); idem, "Remembering Accurately on International Holocaust Remembrance Day," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 25, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Features/InTheSpotlight/Article.aspx?id=166776>.

resonated powerfully in the post-1990s. Most émigrés rejected the Western war narrative, “including the enormous sacrifice of the Soviet people ... and many failed to fully appreciate Nazism’s genocidal nature.” Their own narrative was based on intense anti-Soviet attitudes “and a denial of native participation in the murder of the Jews, accompanied at times by open or disguised anti-Semitism.” Rather than denying the Holocaust as such, they generally insisted “that the native killers constituted but a ‘handful of rabble’” (p. 328). Indeed, this representation of the Shoah (by no means solely Lithuanian) is one of several forms of what I call “deflective negationism.”<sup>39</sup>

The authors’ apparent attempt to avoid “delicate” issues seems inappropriate. For example, they mention the “rehabilitation controversy of September 1991” (p. 330) without explaining the controversy beyond referring the reader to a few articles in a footnote.<sup>40</sup> The uninitiated reader cannot know that the controversy flared over the rehabilitation of wartime criminals condemned under the Soviet regime that marked the first steps on the road to Holocaust obfuscation. Not only were those criminals rehabilitated (some ten percent of the 50,000 pardoned), but some even received compensation for time spent in prisons or camps. After much procrastination, due to Israeli protests the authorities cancelled 225 of the rehabilitations, but denied access to files to the Israeli side in a joint commission that never functioned.<sup>41</sup> President Landsbergis criticized a *New York Times* report, mentioned in passing by Sužiedėlis and Liekis, saying that those rehabilitated were not Holocaust perpetrators but “legally absolved as patriots of Lithuania.”<sup>42</sup> The authors also do not mention Lithuania’s failure to try any wartime criminals, although the US denaturalized fourteen and deported them back to Lithuania to be tried.<sup>43</sup> In this, Lithuania is

39 Shafir, “Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization,’” pp. 37–42.

40 Steven Kinzer, “Lithuania Starts to Wipe out Convictions for War Crimes,” *The New York Times*, September 5, 1991; Jonathan Alter and Michael Meyer, “An Updated Amnesty,” *Newsweek*, September 16, 1991.

41 Efraim Zuroff, *Operation Last Chance: One Man’s Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 95–111.

42 Robert D. McFadden, “Soviet Turmoil: Lithuanian Prosecutor Denies Rehabilitating Nazi War Criminals,” *The New York Times*, September 8, 1991, cited in Zuroff, *Operation Last Chance*, p. 102.

43 Efraim Zuroff, “No Tolerance for False History,” *The Jerusalem Post*, May 1, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=174425>. One of them, Algimantas Dailide, was, however, sentenced to five years in prison, but the judges



much like Latvia, where similar rehabilitations and pardons had been pronounced and where ex-President Landsbergis found a counterpart in ex-President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga.<sup>44</sup>

Yet in one aspect, Lithuania surpassed its Baltic neighbors. Not only did it not prosecute suspected war criminals, but in line with equating Nazi and communist crimes, it launched an investigation against Yitzhak Arad, a prominent Shoah historian, former head of Yad Vashem, and a member of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, set up in 1998. Lithuanian-born Arad was a Soviet partisan and subsequently became an Israel Defense Forces brigadier-general. He published his memoirs in 1979.<sup>45</sup> Arad had nothing to hide, but in their effort to equate the Holocaust and Soviet crimes, Lithuanian prosecutors investigated him for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The investigators claimed he had served in the NKVD and participated in the liquidation of anti-Soviet resistance in 1943/44. Yad Vashem protested and suspended its participation on the joint commission and other bodies.

The prosecutors also investigated two elderly Lithuanian women who had fought with the Soviet partisans, Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky, 86, and Rachel Margolis, 87, both living in Israel. Sužiedėlis and Liekis say the investigation was “clueless” and “opened a wound at the most painful point of Lithuanian and Jewish historical imaginations, where divided wartime memories are at their most irreconcilable.” The authors say the two elderly women’s investigation was perceived *outside* Lithuania as “a cruel exercise in blaming the victims” (p. 340). Arad’s case was “reluctantly” closed in September 2008, with the prosecution insisting that “the investigation of partisan activities as potential ‘war crimes’ rested on objective legal criteria that allow the prosecution of pro-Soviet occupiers and collaborators” (p. 341).

Anton Weiss-Wendt’s contribution “Victims of History” (pp. 195–222) finds a similar situation in Estonia, where “[m]ost Estonians think of the Holocaust as a superimposed discourse that has no di-

refused to implement his sentence on grounds of age. Yet journalists who visited Dailide in Germany two years later found him in reasonably good health. Zuroff, *Operation Last Chance*, p. 110.

44 For details, see *ibid*, *Operation Last Chance*, pp.113–120.

45 Yitzhak Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mt. Zion* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979).

rect connection to their country” (p. 195). Yet, in “marked contrast to Lithuania and Latvia, very little has been published on the Holocaust in Estonia since 1991” (p. 196). The Estonian Weiss-Wendt, the author of a book on the Estonian Holocaust,<sup>46</sup> believes that this limited interest stems from Estonia being “a marginal case” in Jewish history, with a tiny Jewish population in the 1930s. Few Estonians actually witnessed the murder of the Jews, and postwar Soviet war crimes investigations in Estonia largely overlooked the Jews (p. 195). And as in Latvia and Lithuania, “mainstream Estonian journalists and historians-cum-politicians such as Mart Laar validated the émigré notion of both KGB war crimes investigations and American denaturalization trials as a hoax” (p. 196).

In an original though methodologically questionable illustration of Estonian perceptions of the Holocaust (pp. 200–203), Weiss-Wendt examines readers’ reactions to Efraim Zuroff’s efforts to bring Holocaust perpetrators to justice, as expressed in electronically submitted “vituperative” comments on articles published in two of the country’s major dailies. These responses included old stereotypes, such as “deicide, ritual murder, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* ...” (p. 201). He concludes that “[m]ost Estonians deny that their countrymen had any responsibility” for war crimes, arguing that Estonia was itself an occupied country (p. 201). Some even claimed that Zuroff is a Russian agent, whose real name allegedly is Efrem Zurov (p. 202).

Weiss-Wendt does not mention the Waffen-SS annual veterans’ marches.<sup>47</sup> In July 2013, Defense Minister Urmas Reinsalu posted a

46 Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

47 Some three-fourths of Estonia’s total Jewish population of 4,434, according to 1934 data cited by Weiss-Wendt, managed to escape to the Soviet Union; the remainder (963) were murdered on German orders, most of them being liquidated by the Estonian Self-Defense Kommandos. See Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 194. The Waffen SS Estonian division was established in January 1944 and was formed by volunteers. “While the Waffen-SS division did not participate in Holocaust crimes (it was established after the Jews of Estonia had already been murdered), its members included men who had previously been involved in killing Jews and Gypsies,” Efraim Zuroff, “Don’t Rehabilitate the Guilty,” *Haaretz*, January 13, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/don-t-rehabilitate-the-guilty-1.407063>. But “Estonian auxiliary police units were a very important part of the German murder machine against Jews in Belarus, and even in Poland and Ukraine,” according to Yehuda Bauer, “Reviewing the Holocaust.”

laudatory message — for keeping “the ideals of liberty alive” — on his ministry’s website to the Estonian Freedom Fighter Union, representing people who fought both occupation regimes, the USSR and Nazi Germany. In January 2014 Estonia buried Waffen-SS veteran Harald Nugiseks with full military honors; he was one of four Estonians to receive the Knight’s Cross, the Third Reich’s highest award for bravery in battle. He had volunteered for the division after escaping to Germany. In 1945 his division surrendered and he was sent to a labor camp in Siberia, returning home in 1958. Following independence in 1991, Nugiseks received an honorary captain’s rank from the military. Reinsalu called him “a legendary Estonian soldier whose tragedy was that he could not fight for Estonian freedom in an Estonian uniform.”<sup>48</sup> Like in the other Baltic States, Weiss-Wendt finds that “the Holocaust runs counter to the Estonian national narrative” (p 218).

Omer Bartov’s concluding chapter (pp. 663–694) is a *tour de force* that draws four main conclusions from the book’s contributions.

1. “[T]he fall of communism unleashed a confrontation with the past, in which two previously unacknowledged or marginalized historical events quickly came to compete with each other: the genocide of the Jews ... and the crimes of communism.”
2. Nonetheless, these “new attempts to come to terms with the past remained ... strongly tied to the previous two historical discourses: that of postwar communism and that of prewar nationalism and fascism.”
3. “[D]ebates about the past played different roles in different Eastern European countries’ contemporary domestic and foreign policies.”
4. “Eastern European communist and postcommunist discourses on the Holocaust always maintained a relationship of mutual influence with debates in the West” (p. 665).

48 “Estonia Allows Burial of Former Nazi Soldier,” *UPI*, January 11, 2014, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2014/01/11/Estonia-allows-burial-of-former-Nazi-soldier/UPI-92641389463793/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/01/11/Estonia-allows-burial-of-former-Nazi-soldier/UPI-92641389463793/); Leena Hietanen, Petri Kroh, “Estonia’s Last ‘Knight’s Cross’ Waffen SS Man Gets Full Military Funeral,” *Defending History*, January 12, 2014, <http://defendinghistory.com/last-knights-cross-waffen-ss-veteran-buried-in-estonia/62614/>; “Russia Slams Estonia over Honored Burial of Nazi War Veteran,” *RIA Novosti*, January 14, 2014, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20140114/186528836/Russia-Slams-Estonia-Over-Honored-Burial-of-Nazi-Veteran.html>.

In these conclusions in the first subsection, entitled “The Competition of Evil,” Bartov observes that the West’s mainly “theoretical debate over the nature of totalitarian systems” is “much more concrete and painful” in the unmitigated experience of Eastern Europe. Therefore, how each Eastern European country confronts its past is related to its perception of the Holocaust and its nation’s role in it (p. 665).

Albania’s Holocaust memory is substantively different from the other post-communist countries in that Albanians are proud of their nation’s conduct during the Holocaust, display no “aggressive defensiveness regarding the fate of Jews,” and their narrative does not equate communists and Jews. Thus, when their narrative strikes a similarity between Albanian victims of Albanian communist perpetrators and Jewish victims of German perpetrators, it differs from other post-communist countries (pp. 665–666). Still, Jews in Kosovo did not benefit from the *besa* code<sup>49</sup> that rescued Jews elsewhere in wartime Albania, as addressed by Daniel Perez in his article, “‘Our Conscience is Clean’: Albanian Elites and the Memory of the Holocaust in Postsocialist Albania” (pp. 25–58). Jews were sent from Kosovo to the Reich and the Albanian interior, and the mostly Albanian SS Skanderbeg Division participated in arresting Jews in Pristina in 1944, many of whom were killed in Bergen-Belsen (pp. 27–28).<sup>50</sup>

Bartov contrasts Albania with Bosnia and Serbia. “Bosnian scholarship on the Holocaust seems primarily concerned with demonstrating that similar or even worse crimes were committed in between 1992 and 1995 against Bosnian Muslims,” and Serbia engaged in “this kind of ‘comparative martyrdom,’ whereby Serbs and Jews suffered equally at the hands of their mutual enemies, the Nazis and the Croats” (p. 666). I would add that all three countries display “competitive martyrdom,” utilizing the Holocaust as the paradigmatic genocide and highlighting their own victimization. Not so the Baltic States, as an Estonian newspaper reader’s letter reflects, arguing that Jews make “good use of the Holocaust myth,” but Estonians will not “fall on our knees, begging forgiveness for nonexistent crimes. The Jews have killed Estonians and

49 *Besa* is a code of honor, the highest ethical code of Albanian Muslim society, based on which Albanian Jews and Jewish refugees alike were protected.

50 On the fate of the Kosovo Jews, see also Jovan Byford’s article, “Between Marginalization and Instrumentalization: Holocaust Memory in Serbia since the Late 1980s,” pp. 516–548.

other peoples *en masse*, which cries out for another Nuremberg” (p. 668).

Bartov insightfully explains the origins of the double genocide theory and Holocaust obfuscation: “Self-perception as victim often immunizes the individuals and nations from seeing themselves as perpetrators. This is an especially effective mechanism when perpetrators were indeed also victims of mass violence” (p. 668). He illustrates this in Hungary, where radical rightists argue that the Jews’ role in the repressive communist security apparatus “balances out the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews with the collaboration and active participation of Miklós Horthy’s regime and the fascist Arrow Cross Party” (pp. 668–669). The House of Terror in Budapest, “which restricts the Holocaust to a couple of rooms while devoting the rest of its ample space to communist crimes” (p. 669), meticulously lists Jews among the communist perpetrators but not among the victims of the Stalinist system.<sup>51</sup> For Randolph Braham, the House of Terror attempts to turn Germany’s last ally into its last victim,<sup>52</sup> an attempt furthered in 2014 with the inauguration of Budapest’s Memorial to the Victims of the German Invasion depicting Hungary as Germany’s victim, but ignoring Hungary’s responsibility and collaboration with the Nazis in exterminating Jews.<sup>53</sup>

Bartov cites Ukrainian nationalists, “especially from western Ukraine and the North American Diaspora,” as an example of how glorifying wartime nationalist organizations neutralizes charges of their involvement in genocide. Nationalists see the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) as independence fighters and heroic resisters of Soviet rule, rejecting

51 Michael Shafir, “Hungarian Politics and the Post-1989 Legacy of the Holocaust,” in Randolph L. Braham and Brewster S. Chamberlin, eds., *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 276–277. This museum shares minimization of the Holocaust and highlighting the Gulag with other museums. See Ljiljana Radonic, “Equation vs/as Europeanization? Holocaust and Gulag in Post-Communist Memorial Museums,” a paper presented at the Association for the Studies of Nationalities World Convention, New York, Columbia University, April 24–26, 2014.

52 Randolph L. Braham, “Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust,” in idem, *Studies on the Holocaust: Selected Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), vol. 2, p. 208.

53 See Eva Balogh, “The End of Hungarian Sovereignty on March 19, 1944?” *Hungarian Spectrum*, January 2, 2014, <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/01/02/the-end-of-hungarian-sovereignty-on-march-19-1944/>.

“accusations of their complicity in crimes against Poles and Jews” (p. 669). John-Paul Himka in “The Reception of the Holocaust in Post-communist Ukraine” notes that President Viktor Yuschenko (2005–2010) made OUN and UPA members national heroes, and institutions under presidential control promoted this myth, denying Holocaust complicity (p. 640). Thus, the president made the notorious antisemite Lev Lukianenko, who blamed the Jews for the Holodomor (famine, 1932/33), into a “Hero of Ukraine” in 2005 (p. 652).

I am not sure that Bartov is correct that “the myth of the *Żydokomuna* (Judeo-communism)” is most prominent in Poland (p. 670). It can easily be found in books in Bucharest bookstores and its coded idiom is often utilized by supporters of the Hungarian ruling Fidesz Party.<sup>54</sup> As Bartov himself writes,

With the Holocaust as the measuring rod of evil, one can always end up by saying that communism, led by the Jews, was just as bad, if not worse. The success of such tactics in Hungary can be measured by comparing the crowded halls of the House of Terror, which uses the Holocaust as a foil to the evils of communism, with the silent spaces of the Holocaust Memorial Center (p. 681).

In the subsection “Break and Continuity,” Bartov examines the break with the communist narrative and continuity of pre-communist views. Whereas the GDR’s antifascist worldview and the Federal Republic’s cult of the resistance are gone, the discredited idea that the Nazi genocide originated in Bolshevik crimes, which sparked the 1980’s *Historikerstreit* (historians’ dispute) in West Germany, has gained followers. Pre-Nazi German history and the model of totalitarian struggle remained, leading to a return to old models that asked if the Holocaust resulted from singular German attributes, from the evils of totalitarianism, or at least from “mutually reinforcing, murderous inclinations of two insatiable dictators,” placing Hitler’s crimes on a par with Stalin’s (pp. 673–674).

54 See for example, Eva Balogh, “Mária Schmidt’s Revisionist History of World War II and the Holocaust,” Part II, *Hungarian Spectrum*, June 10, 2014, <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/maria-schmidts-revisionist-history-of-world-war-ii-and-the-holocaust-part-ii/>; idem, “Undisguised Anti-Semitism of Viktor Orbán’s Chief Ideologue, the Historian Mária Schmidt,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, June 29, 2014, <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/undisguised-anti-semitism-of-viktor-orbans-chief-ideologue-the-historian-maria-schmidt/>.

Bartov notes the “curious similarity” between the old communist model of talking only of all victims of fascism and the recent Western inclusive model of war and genocide that “rejects the ‘ranking’ of victims.” He cautions that this can correspondingly exclude specifics, even when it is clear that Nazis had murdered Jews as Jews.

Bartov also challenges the claims that only a small number collaborated with the Nazis. On the contrary, “large groups of dedicated nationalists tried to implement their own agendas, quite independently of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, striving to create ethnically homogenous states, both by collaborating in mass murder and by initiating their own actions of ethnic cleansing and massacres.” The reunification of Germany “symbolized particularly well the manner in which old perspectives of the Holocaust on both sides of the Iron Curtain were refashioned in order to fit the new political context of a post-Cold War period” (p. 674).

In the Baltic States, following the Soviet experience, a nationalist narrative that includes victimization by the Soviets but not “Jewish victimization by the Nazis (and locals)” has displaced the Holocaust. The Soviet and Jewish narratives are not “in harmony with the nationalist perception” (p. 675). Similar nationalist perspectives have taken hold in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova. While conservatives “try to rehabilitate regimes and movements that collaborated with Nazi Germany,” outside pressures and leaders’ political savvy “prevent those resurrected ghosts from dominating the scene ... while [some of] the intelligentsia, not least the historians<sup>55</sup> move very hesitantly ... toward historically valid representations of the past” (p. 676).

The states of former Yugoslavia followed several paths. In Slovenia, the old communist ideological approach actually combined with the new nationalist view, “as reflected in President Milan Kučan’s statement that ‘the fate of the Jews was also intended for us.’” “Us” “included the collaborationist Home Guard” and contradicted both the Slovenian argument that no Holocaust took place there, and the absence of historical evidence of Nazi plans for a Slovenian genocide (p. 676). Meanwhile, Bosnia-Herzegovina has largely adhered to the former

55 On the Romanian historians, see my recent “Unacademic Academics: Holocaust Denial and Trivializers in Post-Communist Romania,” *Nationalities Papers*, 2014, forthcoming, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.939619>.

communist approach, with no public recognition of the Holocaust and little discussion of it in schools (p. 677).

Serbia rediscovered “the genocide of the Serbs by the Independent State of Croatia,” and saw the Holocaust as “a fellow genocide” that would help draw “international attention to the Serb case.” After President Slobodan Milošević’s fall, “the new glorification of the Chetniks ... required marginalization or even denial of the Holocaust” (p. 677). As Jovan Byford notes (p. 547, n. 50), since December 2004 Tito’s partisans and the Chetniks are legally equal before the law, and both now receive pensions. Recently, the Belgrade Appeals Court ordered a lower court to reconsider its decision against rehabilitating Milan Nedić, the collaborationist premier of the wartime Serbian puppet government, who committed suicide in prison in February 1946.<sup>56</sup>

Croatia, under the antisemitic nationalist Franjo Tuđman, attempted a total rehabilitation of the fascist Ustaša state, despite its perpetration of the majority of non-German killings of Serbs, Jews, and Roma in the war. Tuđman’s death in 1999 halted this, but the revision of history textbooks remains incomplete, and “public opinion is still split” between condemnation of the Ustaša and demands for punishment for communist crimes (p. 677). Competitive martyrdom is thriving.

In the subsection “Instrumentalization,” Bartov comments on the “often unpredictable and bewildering ways” in which the Holocaust has been instrumentalized, produced, and discarded in domestic debates as needed (pp. 677–678), and invoked “to legitimize competing nationalist projects” and delegitimize enemies, as happened during the 1990s conflict in former Yugoslavia. Such comparative martyrdom “may simultaneously include marginalization and denial” (e.g., some Serbian historians), or resentment at the perceived monopolization of suffering by Jews during the Holocaust (e.g., Bosnia). Some Bosnian

56 Gordana Andric, “Serbia to Mull Rehabilitation of Nazi-Backed WWII Leader,” *BalkanInsight.com*, August 8, 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-to-reconsider-rehabilitation-of-nazi-backed-ww2-leader>. The judicial rehabilitation of the Chetnik leader Dragoljub [Draža] Mihailović, sentenced to death for Nazi collaboration and executed on July 17, 1946, has been pending before the Belgrade High Court since 2006. “High Court in Belgrade Postpones Decision on Rehabilitation of Draza Mihailovic,” *In Serbia*, December 24, 2013, <http://inserbia.info/news/2013/12/high-court-in-belgrade-postpones-decision-on-rehabilitation-of-draza-mihailovic%E2%80%8F/>.



scholars assert that Bosnia's fate was worse than the Jews', since as a result of the genocide Bosnian Muslims almost lost their state, whereas the Jews "presumably acquired theirs" (p. 678). We see this in Ukraine in Yushchenko's assertion that the Holodomor was a "deliberate genocide" by the Stalinist regime, imputing Jewish responsibility, which can "counterbalance" and explain Ukrainian complicity in the genocide of the Jews. The number of Holodomor victims is often inflated to six and even ten million (Bartov cites recent research estimates of 2.5 to four million), in "a transparent attempt to show that it was the equivalent of or worse than the Holocaust" (p. 678).

Perhaps the most incisive subsection, "The Holocaust as Obstacle" addresses the recent arguments that scholarly and public

focus on the Holocaust has diverted attention from the many other victims of war and genocide in the twentieth century, that by concentrating on Nazi crimes we have been distracted from the crimes of communism and their relationship to those perpetrated by Hitler's regime, and more generally, that the dominant Eurocentric perspective has marginalized similar crimes in Europe's colonial empires and obscured their links to modern genocide in Europe and elsewhere. Finally, a politically charged argument contends that the preoccupation with the genocide of the Jews has obstructed criticism of Israeli occupation policies because of Israel's recognized status as the successor state of the Holocaust (p. 683).

Bartov says that the book's articles demonstrate that these supposedly new arguments are not new in Eastern Europe and are largely "attempts to instrumentalize the Holocaust in the service of political and ideological agendas." In Eastern Europe, speaking of the relationship between Nazism and communism and portraying the alleged inverse role of Jews in the two systems is a transparent "intentional obfuscation, and talk of Judeo-communism can be traced back ... to prewar integral nationalism, fascism, and anti-Semitism" (pp. 683–684).

This is reflected in contemporary Hungarian pronouncements that make Jews complicit in communist crimes and conceal "Hungarian government complicity and active participation in the persecution and murder of Hungarian Jewry" and obscure "the widespread wartime sympathy in Hungary for Nazi Germany." Bartov cites historian Mária Schmidt as an example. She "denounced the 'double standard'

applied to the Holocaust and communism, complained that too much attention was being paid to the former, and urged that the term Holocaust be applied also to communist crimes” (p. 684). Similar denial, marginalization of the Holocaust, and accusing Jews of complicity in Soviet crimes can be found in other countries. “[A]ppeals for balance in this context often simply imply blaming the victims and praising the perpetrators” (pp. 684–685).

“In much of Eastern Europe, popular and intellectual anti-Semitism is far more clearly linked to views about the Holocaust than in the West,” Bartov notes (p. 685). For some in these countries, “the very insistence on speaking about the Holocaust generates the kind of hatred that had originally propelled it” (p. 686).

No question could be more relevant in the context of “Operation Protective Edge” launched by Israel against Gaza in July 2014 than that posed by Bartov in this subsection: “Why are such sentiments translated into anti-Israeli, and by extension, pro-Palestinian views?” In Eastern Europe, while anti-Zionism may be a “leftover of the communist period,” it has clear roots in fascist and prewar antisemitic discourse. Yet, he adds, “arguments about the Holocaust’s propensity to obstruct our view from the alleged crimes of the Israeli state have become quite common in Western Europe as well.” The difference between West and East seems to lie in the political identity of those who advance the argument — more the Left in the West, and the Right in the East (p. 686). In the East the anti-Zionist discourse is really “about transferring guilt from the perpetrators of the Holocaust and their accomplices to the victims, and it is about attributing one’s sense of victimhood to the Palestinians” (pp. 686–687). The “reality of Israeli occupation policies, which has little to commend it, is irrelevant to this polemic. Instead, this is a parallel image of the Jew as a Bolshevik: Judeo-Bolshevism in Europe and Judeo-Zionism in the Middle East are the levers with which the obstacle of the Holocaust must be removed” (p. 687).