The Second World War in Southeastern Europe: Historiographies and Debates

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In memory of Holm Sundhaussen (17 April 1942 – 21 February 2015)

Abstract. Introducing this special issue on historiographies and debates on the Second World War in Southeastern Europe, the author reflects on the conditionalities of a better balancing of research agendas in terms of the interdependencies between local dynamics and wider scales—be they the regional, national and transnational, or global dimensions of the war. She draws attention to the role the European Union has played in crafting public history, in which processes of 'internationalizing' and of 'nationalizing' the past have been entangled. She concludes that Southeast Europeanists could greatly enhance international research agendas by taking the lead in fostering a bottom-up, multiscale, and multiperspective history of postimperial, nationalizing societies at war.

It is likely that the authors of this special issue have accomplished something never before seen, for rarely if ever has a similarly comparative overview been pro-vided of the historiographical state of the art and con-

comitant scholarly and public debates pertaining to the Second World War in Southeastern Europe. Gathered here are detailed overviews by Milan Ristović of the historiography of the Ger-man occupying forces in the Balkans, and by Paolo Fonzi of the Italians; Marija Vulesica deals with the Holocaust in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, while Nadège Ragaru examines its effects in Bulgaria and Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia. Polymeris Voglis and Ioannis Nioutsikos provide the state of the historiographical art and the public debate for Greece; Slovenia is considered by Nevenka Troha; Gentiana Kera looks at Albania, while Moldova receives close attention from Svetlana Suveica.[1] In what follows I shall attempt to integrate some of the core topics that bind their contributions together as

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[1] I offer my most sincere thanks to all authors here for their insightful conversations with me during the preparation of this special section. My introductory text owes an enormous amount to them, and they have greatly stretched both my knowledge and my imagination. I am grateful also to Thomas Lutz for his valuable advice.

much as to illustrate how their findings address international research on the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Compellingly, the work of all the authors reveals how, since the political changes of the 1990s, things have not automatically evolved towards comprehensive improvement in comparison with the preceding era. This special issue's central aim is therefore to provide a foundation on which may be built further differentiation of perspectives and agendas for research designed to do greater justice to the complex, multidimensional, and often parallel social dynamics triggered in the region by the global conflagration of 1939-1945. The authors have all made quite clear that the current societies in Southeastern Europe continue to be permeated by questions of what the Second World War meant—among matters at stake are identities, memory politics and commemorative structures; how historical studies have been (re-)institutionalized; and how individuals and societies relate to others, from both domestic and international perspectives. Black-and-white narratives, simple yet a-historical 'truths' have been put forward in the service of sociopolitical interests, and have contributed to sharpening existing divisive lines.[2]

To be sure, ever since the early 1990s a new historiography of World War Two has been emerging, more concerned with economic, social and cultural history and more focused on local, 'bottom-up' approaches. It has been spearheaded both by local historians and those working in western Europe or the United States,[3] and the contributors to this special issue are living proof of the process. Nevertheless, in global scholarly debate and following transformations that have occurred over the last twenty or so years, historians working on matters pertaining to wider Southeastern Europe have remained somewhat on the side lines. The reasons are multilayered and cannot be attributed only to the region's 'usual' role as one of the most neglected areas of Europe. As these authors show, more often than not academic budgets have been too parsimonious to allow scholars to do the sort of travelling necessary to consult the archives that would enable them to achieve certain standards. Indeed, access to archive material has not always improved over the last three decades, and what is more, archival materials are themselves endangered because money for their proper maintenance has been lacking. In addition, postsocialist historiographies everywhere

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[2] These processes have been duly documented, cf., for example, the decade-old Michal Kopeček, ed, Past in the Making. Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989, New York, Budapest 2008; or the more recent Ulf Brunnbauer, Historical Writing in the Balkans, in: Axel Schneider / Daniel Woolf, eds, The Oxford History of Historical Writing, vol. 5: Historical Writing since 1945, Oxford 2011, 353-375.

[3] Generally on the economic, social and cultural aspects of the Second World War, and including both questions of remembrance and stakes for a future research agenda, cf. Michael Geyer / Adam Tooze, eds, The Cambridge History of the Second World War, vol. 3: Total War. Economy, Society and Culture, Cambridge 2015.

have evolved within state-induced nationalizations of research agendas. In effect, over the span of a single generation, intellectual spheres of interest have been reduced by processes which have all too often done little else than raise the hurdles traditionally in place and which have prevented the proper perception of anything beyond scholars' own national 'backyards'. Greece, the only non-postsocialist society featuring here, has contributed its share by its urge to be perceived as 'non-Balkan', or 'western'. To that end Greece has largely ignored the histories of its neighbours, preferring to look outwards intellectually only towards the western hemisphere, thereby encouraging strongly self-referential thinking about its own history.

This special issue is a result of the German-French network project 'New Approaches to the Second World War in Southeastern Europe' (2015-2016), which focused on Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania.[4] It was jointly financed by the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur l'Allemagne (CIERA, Paris), the Chair for Southeast European History at the Humboldt University (Berlin), the Centre Marc Bloch (Berlin), the Centre d'Études Turques, Otto-manes, Balkaniques et Centrasiatiques (CETOBAC, Paris), the École française d'Athènes and the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS, Regensburg). The project revolved around a core group of French and German scholars, namely Xavier Bougarel, Nathalie Clayer, Paolo Fonzi, Hannes Grandits, Nadège Ragaru, Sabine Rutar, and Marija Vulesica. Until his untimely death a few weeks after the network's first meeting in Paris in February 2015, the late Holm Sundhaussen (Berlin) was the project's senior advisor in its initial phase. The core group were joined by senior researchers from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Serbia, and Slovenia; these were Sonila Boçi, Masha Cerovic, Gentiana Kera, Tchavdar Marinov, Milan Ristović, Drago Roksandić, Nevenka Troha, and Polymeris Voglis. Furthermore, twelve doctoral research-ers from seven different countries were invited to present their work and so to become part of the newly established international network.

The project's goal was twofold. First, there was a wish to establish a critical review of the existing historiography of World War Two in Southeastern Europe, and to formulate a pertinent research agenda befitting the integration of the region into European and global historiography. Secondly it worked towards bringing together scholars whose approach to economic, social, and cultural history is empirically 'bottom-up', emphasizing the war's local dimensions. This special issue addresses the first of those two goals, while a forthcoming collected volume will attend to the second and will include chapters by five of

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[4] My sincerest thanks to Hannes Grandits and Xavier Bougarel for their invitation to par-ticipate in this network. I found the discussions hugely illuminating and they greatly helped me to move my own research towards a decisive track.

the senior scholars and six of the participating doctoral researchers.[5] Together, the two publications will invite scholars and the European public space(s) to engage the Southeast European societies in more comprehensive and comparative ways in what has recently been called the continuing and 'crucial cultural labour of the Second World War'.[6]

The 'Third Front' of the European World War

The authors of this special issue demonstrate how certain academic traditions are common to the Southeast European societies, even if idiosyncratically so, and even more that it is those very traditions that qualify them to be valued as intrinsic to international developments in research on the Second World War. It seems high time, therefore, for the war regimes in the region to be better integrated into European and global history. As the 'third front' in the war in Europe, the region experienced a history that is not only complementary to that of the other European war theatres, but which can open eyes to the complexities of multiethnic, multireligious societies. It will lay bare the internal ideological conflicts that occurred in the face of the ongoing all encompassing national socialist and stalinist 'societal project of transformation', that 'clash of radical and, indeed, revolutionary projects, to remake societies, fuelled by mobilizing peoples'.[7] Southeast European narratives speak not only to those of the other formerly occupied East European societies, such as Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic countries, but to others too, among them Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Norway.

Establishing the history of the wider Southeast European region more firmly within a European and global framework would enhance war histories from elsewhere too. In Southeastern Europe partisan warfare went beyond frontal assaults between regular armies. There in particular the Holocaust needs to be read in a context of destructive attacks on other ethnic and religious groups. How civil wars were intertwined with the World War and with the occupation regimes has remained one of the most controversial issues. The ethnoreligious complexities, loyalties and allegiances were constantly challenged and recomposed. In the border zones of this 'third front', several regions were subjected to changing war fronts, among them Ukraine, Bessarabia, and Transnistria, while others, like Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece, were subjected to one occupational regime after another, as was the case after Italy's capitulation in September 1943, whereupon the Germans took over everywhere.

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[5] Xavier Bougarel / Hannes Grandits / Marija Vulesica, eds, Local Approaches to the Second World War in Southeastern Europe (working title; in preparation).

[6] Geyer / Tooze, eds, Total War. Economy, Society and Culture, 8.

[7] Geyer / Tooze, eds, Total War. Economy, Society and Culture, 5.

As another example, Bessarabians and Transnistrians were first recruited to the Romanian army to fight the Red Army alongside the Wehrmacht, but then in 1944 men from those same areas were recruited to the Red Army to fight their way to Berlin.[8] In Slovenia, after March 1942 some tens of thousands of men were recruited into the Wehrmacht, with the aim of preventing further strengthening of partisan resistance. The forced recruitment was in fact done to serve the occupier's Germanization efforts, but in spite of the work of a number of scholars no conclusion has been reached as to whether the limited German citizenship that was granted to the Slovenes was offered in order to facilitate their mobilization, or if it was believed rather that forced recruitment would contribute to their Germanization.[9]

This volume testifies to the myriad of similarly intricate matters which have been of existential importance for the re-establishment of the societies emerging from the war and occupation, and then too for those emerging from state socialism. Today, as the authors show, questions concerning the Second World War have remained at the core of the societies which have been struggling with legacies of state socialism—and in the case of the successor states of Yugoslavia, with new wars.[10] More often than not the sources of the different 'sides' involved in the World War still await corroborated reading from multiple perspectives.

A good number of debates focus on the topos of 'civil war', which may serve as an example to illustrate how useful it would be to re-balance the scales between local and broader perspectives. In legal terms it has long been established that a civil war is one that takes place within a single country, and is therefore not an international conflict. That then poses a problem of definition when both domestic and international forces are involved. Perhaps for Greece the question of 'genre' is the least complicated, even though there too the civil war was clearly a consequence of the World War. Yet, only the smaller part of the civil war in Greece happened actually *during* the occupation, and in fact within Greece the domestic war from 1946 to 1949 has conditioned debate on the Second World War, rather than vice versa. In many ways the wounds inflicted on Greek society by the civil war affected interpretations of violence for which the occupying

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[8] Diana Dumitru, The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust. The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union, New York 2016.

[9] Sabine Rutar, 'Unsere abgebrochene Südostecke'. Bergbau im nördlichen Jugoslawien (Slowenien) unter deutscher Besatzung (1941-1945), in: Marc Buggeln / Michael Wildt, eds, Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus, München 2014, 272-292, 287. The book is available open access, https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/220380. All internet references were accessed on 1 June 2017.

[10] On the entanglements of Yugoslav war narratives Sabine Rutar, Versponnene Fäden. Kriegsnarrative im jugoslawischen Raum, in: Boris Previšić / Svjetlan Lacko Vidulić, eds, Traumata der Transition. Erfahrung und Reflexion des jugoslawischen Zerfalls, Tübingen 2015, 133-160.

regimes are responsible, even though the deterioration of relations between Greece and Germany during the recent financial crisis was conditioned *also* by polemic centred on allegations that German compensation payments which ought to have been made, were not.[11] In Greece, the 1940s are in fact seen as a single era, a whole decade of war, brutal foreign occupation, armed resistance, and a bitter civil war. The precise 'genre' of each war is rarely questioned.[12]

The question concerning the triad 'revolution–counterrevolution–civil war' divides Slovenian society too. Clearly, what went on in occupied Slovenia was of a different nature from events for example in the Republic of Salò in Italy (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*) which Italian scholars have identified as a location of civil war fought from September 1943 to May 1945 by the Republic's fascists and the resistance movement.[13] The violent struggle between the partisans on one side and those who legitimized themselves as antipartisan forces on the other, must be read as an intentionally induced domestic conflict. Among the antipartisan forces were included not only the political enemies of the partisan liberation and resistance movement—the liberation front in conjunction with the Communist Party—but effectively all collaborationist military formations including those explicitly established to support the armies of the occupiers. Military collaborators like those could hardly have claimed to be fighting a civil war for the sake of Slovenia while actually supporting a force attacking Yugoslavia from outside.[14]

Debate runs along similar lines in Albania, and the hoxhaist, self-isolationist nature of Albanian communism has meant that until today the 'sides' in the debate appear less refined. The victorious communists themselves, and their historiographers, have insisted that the struggle was first and foremost about gaining power rather than about resisting the occupiers. The civil war had to take place, to contain those groups in Albanian society who had fought against the communists. Because the Albanian communists turned the civil war topos into a segment of their self-referential triumphalism, it has proved to be more difficult to differentiate, let alone to dismantle. To be sure, also in Albania today there are still those who would rather speak only of a war of liberation from the occupiers, of which the clashes between the different Albanian political forces

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[11] Jürgen Kilian, The Greek 'Forced Loan' during the Second World War. Demand for Reparations or Restitution?, *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 64, no. 1 (2016), 96-108.

[12] Chryssoula Kambas / Marilisa Mitsou, eds, Die Okkupation Griechenlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Griechische und deutsche Erinnerungskultur, Vienna 2015.

[13] The Republic of Salò was under the protectorate of the German Reich, but power was de facto in the hands of Mussolini and his fascists. Cf. Claudio Pavone, A Civil War. A History of the Italian Resistance, London 2013 (Italian original: Claudio Pavone, Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella resistenza, Torino 1992).

[14] Janko Pleterski, Instrumentalizacija pietete, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 2 (2014), 263-274, 270.

were simply part and parcel. But then again, here too, more and more voices have been raised in favour of more complex explanatory tropes. The examples from Greece, Italy, Slovenia, and Albania demonstrate how far it remains to be seen what will happen to the multilateral epistemic triad of 'international war – liberation war – civil war' when it comes to be studied more in terms of (comparative) economic, social, and cultural history.

Another feature marks Southeastern Europe as significantly idiosyncratic. The presence of fascist Italy as a military and occupational power, and its capitulation in September 1943 complicates any interpretive scheme that attempts to see things through a dichotomic lens of communism versus anticommunism, or nazism versus bolshevism, as has often been applied to the Soviet space. Fascism is clearly allied to nazism, to the point that the term 'nazifascism' has been coined.[15] Fascism is, however, something else. Significantly, Italian fascism, at least parts of it, served as an ideological and political model not only for Hitler but for a number of other Southeast European regimes.[16] Moreover, the Italian endeavours connect Southeastern Europe just as closely to the unfolding of the war in northern Africa as to events on the eastern front.

Both the Italian army and the Red Army therefore account for schisms that run through Southeastern Europe's war history. Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania lived through often parallel experiences of occupation characterized first by division between Germany and Italy (not forgetting Hungary and Bulgaria as minor occupying forces), and then by the retreat of the Italians and complete takeover by the Germans in September 1943. The Red Army then played a significant role in Romania and Bulgaria, both Axis countries.

Memoryscapes

In many countries, the Second World War has remained a key subject of collective debate about remembrance. The imminent final withering-away of the last generation of contemporary witnesses has triggered an unprecedented 'memory boom', a fear of losing what could have been preserved by communicating lived experience. At the same time, the demise of state socialism in Europe ensured that struggle would be renewed over the sovereignties of interpretation of the wars and mass violence of the 20th century. While the worldwide initiatives to collect the 'last voices' of testimony to the Second World War, and the Holocaust,

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[15] Cf., for example, Giuliana Chamedes, The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-Communism in the 1930s, *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 2 (2015), 261-290.

[16] Cf., for example, Wim van Meurs, The Burden of Universal Suffrage and Parliamentary Democracy in (Southeastern) Europe, in: Sabine Rutar, ed, Beyond the Balkans. Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe, Vienna et al. 2014, 161-179, on the mimicking of Mussolini's 1923 Electoral Law in Romania in 1926.

have been of great value they have also had the tendency to cause people to forget how testimonies' memories change over time, and how they too tend to be adapted to changing presents. The substance of these 'last testimonies', therefore, needs to be carefully corroborated with by both testimonies from earlier times, and written sources.

Among the debated mnemonic matters have been the concepts and methods of memory research; aspects of judicial appraisals significantly influenced by the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s; political power struggles; and societal controversies such as those pertaining to payment of compensation or to the 'correct' moralities relating to the war. Not the least of them have been the particular interests of sociopolitical groups such as veterans. As Arnd Bauerkämper has convincingly shown in 'The contested memory. Remembering national socialism, fascism, and war in Europe since 1945', attempts to make sense of the Second World War must consider too the First World War and its aftermath—and he could have included the Balkan Wars of 1912/13 and the Yugoslav wars, at the other end of the timescale in the 1990s. Indeed only a broader and long durée perspective on the 20th century history of warfare makes current mnemonic controversies and cleavages adequately explainable.[17] What Bauerkämper fails to mention, however, is stalinism. Since at least the publication of Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands* in 2010 it has become obvious how much the geographic intersections of national socialist and stalinist contexts of violence have caused European memory to be permeated by disagreement about interpretation.[18] While the concept's potential for adequate historical explanation may be questionable, I would argue that in no case does it work in mnemonic terms. Controversies go beyond the Snyderian 'bloodlands'; stalinism has functioned as both ideological theme and anathema in all state socialist societies, certainly ever since Stalin's own death. Stalinism's legacy at least as much as those of nazi and other dictatorial and autocratic regimes has characterized—sometimes jeopardized—the postsocialist evolution and consolidation of democratic and pluralist societies.[19]

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[17] Arnd Bauerkämper, Das umstrittene Gedächtnis. Die Erinnerung an Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und Krieg in Europa seit 1945, Paderborn 2012, 22. Cf., to the same tune, the empirical studies linking imperial and postimperial settings, leading up to the Second World War, in Omer Bartov / Eric D. Weitz, eds, Shatterzones of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands, Bloomington/IN 2013.

[18] Timothy Snyder, Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin, London 2010. The book has attracted substantial criticism; I mention only the convincing conceptual comments by Michael Wildt, Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin by Timothy Snyder, *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 1 (2013), 197-206.

[19] Norman M. Naimark, Stalin's Genocides, Princeton/NJ 2010. Cf. on the coming to terms with the experience and memory of stalinist violence after Stalin cf. Pavel Kolář, Der Poststalinismus. Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche, Cologne et al. 2016; Sabine Rutar, ed, Nationalism and Violence in Post-Stalinist Eastern Europe, special issue of *Nations and Nationalism* (currently under review).

The Eastern Fronts

Research on the Eastern fronts has expanded exponentially over the past fifteen years, with at its centre the German–Soviet war as the single most destructive conflict in history.[20] About 45 million soldiers fought on the Eastern front, and 14 million of them perished. While recent research has profoundly altered our understanding of the 1940s, it has nevertheless remained fragmented and often preliminary on many levels and for many regions. The number, intensity, and acrimony of current debate and polemic especially, but not only, between Russia, Ukraine, and Poland, provide a link to this volume's analyses.

The decimation of the armed forces, be it in combat, in POW camps, via summary executions or other murderous policies such as mass deportation, represents only a small part of the Soviet and the Polish society's losses.[21] Even though events at the Eastern front were larger scale than in Southeastern Europe, there are many analogies, and all societies were affected similarly intensely by what they experienced. Overarching all is the Holocaust, and all the consequences of racial policies, mass shootings, the death tolls in the various sorts of camps, death as the consequence of starvation, deportation and forced labour, as well as massacres carried out in the name of antipartisan warfare.[22] Conspicuously, the two Axis allies Romania and Bulgaria each occupy a specific position with regard to the Holocaust. Romania 'ranks' second only to Germany in the number of individuals it killed, although with regard to the Holocaust Romania's 'ethnic dumping ground' of Transnistria[23] was an exception in Eastern Europe

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[20] The following section draws deeply on the lecture Masha Cerovic delivered in the framework of the above-mentioned project 'New Approaches to the Second World War in Southeastern Europe', during the project groups's final workshop in Athens, on 10 March 2016. I am grateful to her for allowing me to see her notes, and for her valuable advice. Cf. Masha Cerovic, Les enfants de Joseph. Les partisans soviétiques – révolution, guerre civile et résistance armée à l'occupation allemande en URSS (1941-1944), PhD thesis, Paris 2012.

[21] Catherine Merridale, Ivan's War. Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945, New York 2006; Anita J. Prażmowska, Civil War in Poland, 1942-1948, Basingstoke 2004; Bernhard Chiari / Jerzy Kochanowski, eds, Die polnische Heimatarmee. Geschichte und Mythos der Armia Krajowa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Munich 2003.

[22] On the interdependencies of war and genocide Norman M. Naimark, War and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941-1945, *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 2 (2007), 259-274. Cf. also the chapters in Bartov / Weitz, eds, Shatterzones of Empire; on Bessarabia and northern Bukovina Vladimir Solonari, Patterns of Violence. The Local Population and the Mass Murder of Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, July–August 1941, *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 4 (2007), 749-787; on Belorussia and Ukraine Martin Dean, Collaboration in the Holocaust. Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44, New York 2000; on Poland Tadeusz Piotrowski, Poland's Holocaust. Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947, Jefferson/NC 1998.

[23] The term is borrowed from Mark Mazower, Hitler's Empire. How the Nazis Ruled Europe, New York 2008, 355. Mazower had in turn most probably borrowed it from Alexander Dallin, 'Ethnic Dumping Ground of Romania'. Odessa, 1941-1944. A Case Study of Soviet

(beyond Poland). Bulgaria has been trying to preserve its image as a 'rescuer' of its Jews—a narrative that depends above all on the total amnesia about the more than 11,000 Jews deported from Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia. The protracted food crisis in Greece makes Southeastern Europe integral to the history of regimes of war supply and hunger.[24] Establishing a solid narrative of multilevel extreme violence is a challenge even on the most basic premises. How should victims be counted? What territories should be considered? Which borders? In what years? Which victims 'belong' to whom?

The experience of extreme violence seems to represent the single common focus of recent research tropes, not least those promoted in German research efforts and perpetuated by historians in the Anglosphere. Snyder's *Bloodlands* remains only the work to have reached widest public visibility.[25] Violence has been analysed as a protracted, repeated, multiform and all-encompassing experience; as a process, a dynamic, a trauma, a memory—and as a force destroying but also engineering societies. With the changes to the political landscape after 1990, historians have made good use of access to archives in the East, inspired by pioneering works like Omer Bartov's,[26] and by controversies like that generated by the exhibition on the Wehrmacht in Germany shown between 1995 and 1999 and then again in a revised version between 2001 and 2004.[27] As in

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Territory under Foreign Rule, Iași et al. 1998. For a concise account of Moldova during the Second World War cf. Vladimir Solonari, Die Moldauische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik während des Zweiten Weltkrieges (1941-1945), in: Klaus Bochmann et al., eds, Die Republik Moldau. Ein Handbuch, Leipzig 2013, 87-98.

[24] On Greece cf. the pioneering work by Violetta Hionidou, Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941-1944, Cambridge 2006. For a global perspective Lizzi Collingham, The Taste of War. World War II and the Battle for Food, New York 2012; on the Soviet Union comprehensively Wendy Z. Goldman / Donald A. Flitzer, eds, Hunger and War. Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II, Bloomington/IN 2015; on Ukraine Andrea Graziosi / Lubomyr A. Hajda / Halyna Hryn, eds, After the Holodomor. The Enduring Impact of the Great Famine on Ukraine, Cambridge/MA 2014; from the German perspective the path-breaking Christian Gerlach, Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944, Hamburg 1999; cf. also Christoph Dieckmann / Babette Quinkert, eds, Kriegführung und Hunger 1939-1945. Zum Verhältnis von militärischen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Interessen, Göttingen 2015; and the somewhat anecdotical Gesine Gerhard, Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich, Lanham/MD 2015, on one of the main engineers of the 'hunger plan' as part of the German war efforts against the Soviet Union, Herbert Backe.

[25] Christian Gerlach, Extremely Violent Societies. Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World, Cambridge 2010; Jörg Baberowski / Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, Ordnung durch Terror. Gewaltexzesse und Vernichtung im nationalsozialistischen und stalinistischen Imperium, Bonn 2006; Snyder, Bloodlands.

[26] Omer Bartov, The Eastern Front, 1941-45. German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare, Basingstoke, Hampshire 1985.

[27] Cf. Gabriel Fawcett, The Wehrmacht Exhibition, *History Today* 52, no. 4 (2002), http://www.gabrielfawcett.com/articles/wehrmachtexhibition.html. The revised version of the exhibition is

other countries, in Germany too the war's history has been written mostly within the national or nation-state framework, as a history of German histori-cal agency and institutions, with German readers in mind. It has been centred on the Third Reich's military, repressive and ideological apparatus, and has drawn from largely German archival materials. Such an approach, valuable as it is, has neglected the effects on the occupied societies and the interactions between occupiers and local actors. Mark Spoerer once aptly observed that the focus on German institutions and actors risks appearing to take an interest in the occupied societies 'only as long as the Wehrmacht was present there'—an impression that should possibly be avoided, or overcome soon.[28]

During the Cold War, at the same time as the Soviets were turning it into the central myth of their historical narrative, western historians of the Soviet Union had largely 'forgotten' the Second World War, if only for practical purposes. Throughout the 1990s, then, the old narrative was by and large preserved in the post-Soviet societies, with the exception of the Baltic countries. The turn-ing point came with the new millennium, when a new generation of historians of stalinism, heralded by Amir Weiner, rediscovered the World War.[29] Weiner was of a new school of Soviet history that gained authority following Stephen Kotkin's Foucauldian reading of 'Stalinism as civilization'.[30] In terms of tempo-rality, the Second World War was seen as one episode in a continuing violent transformation of society since the First World War and the Revolution of 1917. To this as a second trope were added the entanglements between stalinism and

documented online and features also a press coverage collection, Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944, http://www.verbrechen-der-wehrmacht.de/.

[28] Cf., for example, the meticulous recent works on the German labour deployment system in various of the occupied territories, Florian Dierl / Zoran Janjetović / Karsten Linne, Pflicht, Zwang und Gewalt. Arbeitsverwaltungen und Arbeitskräftepolitik im deutsch besetzten Polen und Serbien 1939-1944, Essen 2013; Dieter Pohl / Tanja Sebta, eds, Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa. Besatzung – Arbeit – Folgen, Berlin 2013; Tilman Plath, Zwischen 'Schonung' und 'Menschenjagden'. 'Arbeitseinsatzpolitik' in den baltischen Generalbezirken des 'Reichskom-missariats Ostland' 1941-1945, Essen 2012. The volume establishing a new series published by the Independent Commission of Historians for the Reappraisal of the History of the Reich's Ministry of Labour during the National Socialist Era (*Unabhängige Historikerkommission zur Aufarbeitung der Geschichte des Reichsarbeitsministeriums in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*) con-tinues this approach, Alexander Nützenadel, ed, Das Reichsarbeitsministerium im Nationalso-zialismus. Verwaltung – Politik – Verbrechen, Göttingen 2017. That project is one of the more recent among others concerned with the history of German ministries in the national socialist era, cf. the overview in Christian Mentel / Niels Weise, Die zentralen deutschen Behörden und der Nationalsozialismus. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung, München, Potsdam 2016.

[29] Amir Weiner, Saving Private Ivan. From What, Why, and How?, *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 2 (2000), 305-336; Amir Weiner, Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution, Princeton 2001; Amir Weiner, Something to Die For, a Lot to Kill For. The Soviet System and the Barbarisation of Warfare, 1939-1945, in: George Kassimeris, ed, The Barbarisation of Warfare, New York 2006, 101-125.

[30] Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization, Berkeley/CA 1995.

nazism as 'systems of violence'.[31] The 'barbarisation of warfare' was due to the mutually radicalizing effects in the course of the war.[32] Triggered by the German attack, the Soviets reacted with defensive measures on a huge scale, which in turn called forth increased German aggression, to which the Soviets then responded with even tighter measures which engulfed their entire population. The war therefore came to be fought on the domestic front too, in an effort to wipe out all enemies, and that entanglement of the fronts of international and domestic war clearly represents another topical link to the cases in this issue.[33] The German equivalent became fully apparent in 1941-1942, when German warfare was recalibrated into a war of extermination. In the German as in the Soviet case 1941 was just the beginning of the corollary of both escalation and radicalization on a subjective and psychological level, of the process of 'brutalisation' that led soldiers on both sides to commit extraordinary atrocities.[34]

Both regimes had violent prewar histories; both saw extra-legal brutality as the normal state of affairs in a world of class war or the survival of the racially fittest; and both sides were shaped by and shaped themselves in the projection of deadly enmities. Neither dictatorship could rely on the collaboration of all of its subjects, who were neither completely nazified nor thoroughly bolshevized. War therefore radicalized soldiers, and multilevel unfettered violence was as much a prerequisite as it was a consequence of the process, intimately tied into an understanding of the Second World War as a societal conflict. On the Soviet side, the war with its chain of cataclysms was perceived as the ultimate clash that had been dreaded yet expected by the first generation to live in a socialist society. It was framed as the event that would either vindicate the system or bring it down. As a sort of 'collateral damage' a great variety of violent conflicts broke out during and after the War, behind the lines of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army along the western and southern borderlands of the European part of the Soviet Union.[35]

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[31] Mark Edele / Michael Geyer, States of Exception. The Nazi-Soviet War as a System of Violence, 1939-1945, in: Michael Geyer / Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds, Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared, Cambridge 2009, 345-395.

[32] Bartov, The Eastern Front, 1941-45; Kassimeris, ed, The Barbarisation of Warfare.

[33] Alfred J. Rieber, Civil Wars in the Soviet Union, *Kritika. Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 4, no. 1 (2003), 129-162.

[34] For the German side cf. the compelling Sönke Neitzel / Harald Welzer, Soldaten. On Fighting, Killing, and Dying. The Secret World War II Transcripts of German POWs, Brunswick/Vic. 2012 (German original: Soldaten. Protokolle vom Kämpfen, Töten und Sterben, Frankfurt/M. 2011).

[35] Bartov / Weitz, Shatterzone of Empires; and Alexander Prusin, The Lands Between. Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870-1992, Oxford, New York 2010. For regional and local accounts cf. Catherine Gousseff, Échanger les peuples. Le déplacement des minorités aux confins polono-soviétiques, 1944-1947, Paris 2015; Leonid Rein, The Kings and the Pawns. Collaboration in Byelorussia During World War II, New York 2011; Alexander Statiev, The

Amir Weiner's pioneering study *Making Sense of War* situated the Second World War firmly within the overarching feature of the Soviet enterprise, the revolutionary transformation of society from an antagonistically divided entity into a harmonious body, conflict-free. The war was followed by an acceleration of the continuous 'purification' campaign that sought to eliminate divisive and counterproductive elements. Exclusion and violence in that light were neither random nor were they preventive policing measures to delineate the boundaries of the legitimate and the permissible. Instead, they were integral parts of a continuing structuring of the community. The Soviet 'purification' drive combined the modern European ethos of social engineering with Bolshevik Marxist eschatology, although Bolshevik Marxism was not alone in its refusal to accept human nature and society as it was. Rather, the premise of the primacy of nurture over nature was encoded within the larger pan-European view of modernity, whereby increasingly intrusive political authorities sought to define and manage virtually all critical public and private spheres. The expanding welfare state and the 'cleansing' state stood at opposite ends of the new, transformative modern politics.[36]

In the words of Mark Edele and Michael Geyer the challenge lies in approaching the war between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia not as a German nor a Soviet affair but as ferocious and brutal antagonism within a wider field of European and global war.[37] This in fact makes come full circle the claim that the Balkan 'third front' is significant, as considering it more could help to differentiate such too dichotomically constructed approaches. As we have seen, the presence of the Italians adds an additional layer to the topoi of war, occupation, and resistance. In Southeastern Europe as in the Soviet territories societies were both subjects and objects of destructive efforts. There, too, existed peculiar expansive and intensive systems of violence in a war that reached both inwards and outwards in order to exterminate enemies perceived both within and outside, and to obliterate and thereby remake entire populations.[38] In Southeastern

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Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands, Cambridge 2010; Tanja Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler. Arbeiten und Leben im Donbass, 1929-1953, Essen 2010; Alexander Brakel, Unter Rotem Stern und Hakenkreuz. Baranowicze 1939-1944 – das westliche Weißrussland unter sowjetischer und deutscher Besatzung, Paderborn 2009; Tomas Balkelis, War, Ethnic Conflict, and the Refugee Crisis in Lithuania, 1939-1940, *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 4 (2007), 461-477; Karel Cornelis Berkhoff, Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule, Cambridge/MA 2004; Bernhard Chiari, Alltag hinter der Front. Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weissrussland 1941-1944, Düsseldorf 1998.

[36] Weiner, Making Sense of War.

[37] Edele / Geyer, States of Exception.

[38] The literature on demographic engineering and forced population transfers is vast, I mention only the overviews Matthew Frank, Making Minorities History. Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe, Oxford 2017; Philipp Ther, The Dark Side of Nation States. Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe, New York, London 2014.

European societies too, the fusion of interior and exterior war turned people into pawns in the hands of both sides, as much as locals also had an eye to the main chance in aligning with one or the other. Finally, and consequently, the current 'memory wars' and the 'popularization of history' show many analogies between the formerly Soviet space and wider Southeastern Europe, and Polish-Ukrainian-Soviet history is only one of the more conspicuous examples of controversies about matters such as changes to borders, ethnic 'cleansing', and seemingly irreconcilable cultures of remembrance.[39]

Memories as Social Knowledge

In the whole of Europe the central mnemonic figures of the 20th century wars were—and more often than not still are—dichotomically intertwined. There are winners and losers, perpetrators and victims, heroes and martyrs.[40] All are implicit in every nationalist discourse, but not only in those. In order to grasp analytically the entanglements among them, Reinhart Koselleck's 'spaces of experience' that condition 'horizons of expectation'[41] remain as relevant as his concept of the 'contemporaneity of the uncontemporaneous' (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*).[42] With regard to the Second World War that means that 'numerous primary experiences […] have been repressed or consolidated in the various spaces of consciousness, or that they have been integrated into new contexts of meaning which can no longer be easily connected with the original, primary experience'.[43]

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[39] Cf. Mischa Gabowitsch / Cordula Gdaniec / Ekaterina Makhotina, eds, Kriegsgedenken als Event. Der 9. Mai 2015 im postsozialistischen Europa, Paderborn 2017; Bogdan Musial, Sowjetische Partisanen 1941-1944. Mythos und Wirklichkeit, Paderborn 2009; Mark Edele, Soviet Veterans of the Second World War. A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991, Oxford 2008; Nathalie Moine, La commission d'enquête soviétique sur les crimes de guerre nazis. Entre reconquête du territoire, écriture du récit de la guerre et usages justiciers, *Mouvement social* 222, no. 1 (2008), 81-109; Elazar Barkan / Elizabeth A. Cole / Kai Struve, eds, Shared History – Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet–Occupied Poland, 1939-1941, Göttingen 2007.

[40] Arnd Bauerkämper limits himself to the somewhat asymmetric triad 'victors, victims, and martyrs', Bauerkämper, Das umstrittene Gedächtnis, 370.

[41] Reinhart Koselleck, 'Erfahrungsraum' und 'Erwartungshorizont' – zwei historische Kategorien, in: Reinhart Koselleck, Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten, Frankfurt/M. 1989, 349-375. For a critical reading cf. Peter Osborne, Expecting the Unexpected. Beyond the 'Horizon of Expectation', in: Maria Hlavajova / Simon Sheikh / Jill Winder, eds, On Horizons. A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art, Utrecht 2011, 112-128.

[42] Reinhart Koselleck, Einleitung, in: Reinhart Koselleck, Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 9-18, 9.

[43] Reinhart Koselleck, Erinnerungsschleusen und Erfahrungsschichten. Der Einfluß der beiden Weltkriege auf das soziale Bewußtsein, in: Reinhart Koselleck, Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik. Frankfurt/M. 2000, 265-286, 275.

'Nesting orientalisms',[44] in the guise of certain forms of othering motivated by ethnocentrism and methodological nationalism, have made it difficult to unveil these Koselleckian layers of consciousness. The narrowing of historiographical agendas to the needs of the nation state, which has had to make up for much of what has been left blank by the disappearance of the state socialist ideological superstructure, has in fact caused difficulties for the evolution of a history-writing that thinks inclusively, relationally, and in terms of process. Such history-writing positively insists on being complex, but simultaneously reflects on its communicative and collective dimensions, on the potentials of public history, which necessarily includes selection and simplification or better, crystallization.[45]

This special issue argues that, while the manifold analyses of 'collective memory' that have been part and parcel of the 'memory boom' might have correctly assessed how memory is crafted into social knowledge, it is the work of historians—independent, methodologically and empirically sound— that substantially contributes to consolidating democratic societies; providing always that there is space for communication and discussion of their findings. Only if societies can handle multiple and complex perspectives, such as negotiations about core monuments, will they avoid falling easy prey to simplistic 'truths'. Over recent decades the boundaries between research and advocacy have become too porous, challenging many a historian's definition of their craft and professional ethics. The growing range of actors who are confident that they hold the truth about the past has confronted professional historians with a conundrum. Are we to acquiesce in this trespass onto the ground of our professional ethics? Is it the price we must pay for perhaps preserving or even gaining the sort of social visibility that other protagonists might claim in our place? Or must we fight for an autonomous field for Historical Studies at the risk of becoming marginalized? To conclude on an optimistic note, the flourishing of public controversies on 'history' might be seen as a necessary precondition for the strengthening of public interest in what makes the past divisive; and for creating a generation of scholars who will provide innovative if not integrating pieces of research. If this volume manages to bundle energies pointing towards that goal, it will have accomplished its task.

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[44] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms. The Case of Former Yugoslavia, *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995), 917-931.

[45] Pertaining to the Second World War cf., for example, Serge Noiret, Il ruolo della Public History nei luoghi della guerra civile italiana, 1943-1945, *Ricerche storiche* 43, no. 2 (2013), 315-338; Mark A. Wolfgram, 'Getting History Right'. East and West German Collective Memories of the Holocaust and War, Lewisburg/PA 2011. On the post-1990 'history wars' cf. Jeremy Black, Contesting History. Narratives of Public History, London 2014, 167-201. More generally, see Hilda Kean / Paul Martin, eds, The Public History Reader, London 2013; James B. Gardner / Paula Hamilton, The Oxford Handbook of Public History, Oxford 2017.

The Enlarged European Union's Role

The enlarged European Union has played a significant role in how European memory of the Second World War has changed over the last quarter of a century. With the demise of state socialism the Council of Europe and other EU institutions saw restoring 'historical truth' in Eastern Europe as an urgent matter, and building democracy demanded a departure from the socialist 'uses' and 'misuses' of the past. Furthermore, the violent collapse of Yugoslavia prompted fears that re-emerging nationalisms might threaten peace in all of Europe. Offering a many-voiced version of divisive events was expected to facilitate national reconciliation and guarantee space for pluralistic memories, albeit they be based on common European core values.[46]

However, attempts to contrive, or 'engineer' a common European remembrance have fallen victim to the 'law of unintended consequences'. One thing that was underestimated was just how deep was the 'void of making sense' left by the demise of state socialism, especially when accompanied by war and violence. Identities were now in flux, insecure, and vulnerable, which in turn rendered societies susceptible to the seeming simplicity of politically motivated 'economies of truth'.[47] The European Council issued an invitation in 2011 to member states to 'raise or support initiatives aiming at informing and educating the public about Europe's totalitarian past, as well as to conduct research projects, including those with an international dimension'. There was also an insistence that there could be 'no reconciliation without truth and remembrance',[48] and the Council's initiative gave politicians and state actors even more encouragement to advocate that there should be a 'one and only' historical truth and that it should be remembered 'properly'. Indeed, most of the European and international recommendations rest upon the belief that conflicted memories can and should be reconciled, however difficult the task. In fact the real challenge most probably lies elsewhere, in recovering all the voices that were once lost, so that there can be a thorough exploration of the diversity of sources available, and necessary conversations can be carried on without prescribing where they should lead.

Bilateral commissions are certainly able to establish or support dialogue intended to reach a mutual 'officialized' understanding of history, but they provide strong evidence of the difficulties involved. As the example of the Italian–Slovenian commission on both countries' history between 1880 and 1956

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[46] Cf. Henri Rousso, Les dilemmes d'une mémoire européenne, in: François Dosse / Christian Delacroix / Patrick Garcia, eds, Historicités, Paris 2009, 203-221.

[47] Cf. Brunnbauer, Historical Writing in the Balkans; and Maria Todorova, ed, Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory, London 2004.

[48] Council of the European Union, Draft Council Conclusions on the Memory of the Crimes Committed by the Totalitarian Regimes in Europe, Brussels, 8 June 2011, 5 and 2, http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011268%202011%20INIT.

shows, the self-imposed goal of establishing an 'official' version acceptable to both sides was difficult to reach. While many years of work by the commission did produce a joint document, the wider public in Slovenia was much happier with it than were most Italians, where reactions rather mirrored existing interpretive schisms.[49] For their part, similar Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Croatian commissions failed to establish anything even nearly as elaborate as the first commission did.[50]

As communism was 'peeled away' from national histories across the region, observers began to note how the rehabilitation of anticommunist figures included a tendency to obscure their wartime roles as collaborators sympathetic to the Nazis.[51] More broadly, this was about the persistence of cognitive dissonance between 'East' and 'West', for when it came to the crimes of the twentieth century the former communist countries were suspected of having in mind only communist crimes. The Holocaust was certainly more visible in western European memory regimes, and as the authors in this issue show, in a number of the multiethnic Southeast European countries 'hierarchies of victimhood' have indeed challenged interpretation of the Holocaust as the greatest crime in the history of humankind. The Nazis treated Slavs too as racially inferior. The claim to have suffered just as much as the Jews if not more during and after the war can claim some legitimacy, yet it is also as unproductive and disrespectful as any other sort of exercise in 'ranking' suffering. Debates like the one triggered by Jan Gross' ground-breaking account of the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland can have painful and sobering effects. Jedwabne was where non-Jewish Poles, with a certain amount of incitement but no actual

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[49] For the Slovenian variant cf. Milica Kacin Wohinz / Nevenka Troha, eds, Slovensko-italijanski odnosi 1880-1956 / I rapporti italo-sloveni 1880-1956 / Slovene-Italian Relations 1880-1956. Poročilo slovensko-italijanske zgodovinsko-kulturne komisije / Relazione della Commissione storico-culturale italo-slovena / Report of the Slovene-Italian Historical and Cultural Commission, Ljubljana 2000. In Italy, the report was published and commented on in various academic journals, for example, Relazione della Commissione italo-slovena sui rapporti tra i due paesi fra il 1880 e il 1956, *Storia contemporanea in Friuli* 31, no. 2 (2000), 9-35; Piero Delbello, ed, 10 anni per un documento. La relazione della commissione mista di storici insediata da Roma e Lubiana sui rapporti italo-sloveni fra il 1880 e il 1956. Alcune riflessioni, supplementary edition to *Tempi & cultura. Istria, Fiume, Dalmazia. Rivista semestrale dell'Istituto regionale per la cultura istriana* 9 (2001).

[50] Only the Slovene side of the Slovenian–Austrian commission published its result, and bilingually, cf. Dušan Nećak et al., eds, Slovensko-avstrijski odnosi v 20. stoletju / Slowenisch-österreichische Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert, Ljubljana 2004. Cf. herein on the Second World War Bojan Godeša / Tone Ferenc, Die Slowenen unter der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft 1941-1945, 219-268. The Slovenian-Croatian commission published no results.

[51] For a comparative perspective, cf. Muriel Blaive / Christian Gerbel / Thomas Lindenberger, eds, Clashes in European Memory. The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust, Innsbruck 2011.

participation by the Germans, brutally massacred their Jewish neighbours.[52] On publication of Gross's book bitter arguments followed in Poland over the degree of responsibility borne by Polish society for the Holocaust. The experience of having been almost literally 'ground to death' between Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union became entangled with debate about Poland's existing domestic legacy of antisemitic practice as well as about the Polish perpetrators of atrocities. Even if substantial segments of Polish society continue to refuse to acknowledge Gross' findings, while others, including the Institute for National Remembrance in Warsaw and the newly opened Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk,[53] confirm them, a narrative of sole victimhood and total denial of responsibility will no longer be possible. Recent attempts by the Polish government to impose its own 'truth' by forbidding by law any expression of Poles' involvement in the Holocaust and by taking control over how the Gdansk museum should interpret history attests to the fierceness of the whole matter.[54] In the case of the history of the Jedwabne massacre, it took the efforts of a Polish-American scholar to trigger a debate that reflected the EU's view that EU enlargement should demand that candidate countries critically rethink their national historiography, and that they should include educational policies to increase awareness of the Holocaust. The other side of the same controversial coin saw certain EU candidate states—now members—deploring what they saw as a similar sort of insensitivity among members of the EU to the effects of years of communist repression.[55]

The recently opened House of European History in Brussels provides for a forceful demonstration of just how much the EU has been captured by that reproach. The museum explicitly puts Hitler and Stalin—and today's Russia by extension from Stalin—on an equal level. If 'totalitarianism' was conceived by

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[52] Jan T. Gross, Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, Princeton/NJ, Oxford 2001. On the controversy Antony Polonsky / Joanna B. Michlic, eds, The Neighbors Respond. The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland, Princeton/NJ, Oxford 2003. Cf. Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed, Contested Memories. Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath, New Brunswick/NJ 2003; and Piotrowski, Poland's Holocaust.

[53] Museum of the Second World War, Gdansk, http://www.muzeum1939.pl. The museum's exhibition as been internationally acclaimed, cf., for example, Joachim von Puttkamer, Europäisch und polnisch zugleich. Das Museum des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Danzig, *Osteuropa* 67, no. 1-2 (2017), 3-12.

[54] Amanda Borschel-Dan, Is New Polish Law an Attempt to Whitewash Its Citizens' Roles in the Holocaust?, *The Times of Israel*, 18 August 2016, http://www.timesofisrael.com/is-new-polish-law-an-attempt-to-whitewash-its-citizens-roles-in-the-holocaust/; Polish Government Wins Gdansk World War II Museum Case, *Deutsche Welle*, 25 January 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/polish-government-wins-gdansk-world-war-ii-museum-case/a-37261074; Yehuda Bauer / Havi Dreifuss, Poles' Shoah Law Is Antisemitic, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 24 February 2017, https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/poles-shoah-law-is-antisemitic-1.433190.

[55] Emmanuel Droit, Le Goulag contre la Shoah. Mémoires officielles et cultures mémorielles dans l'Europe élargie, *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 94 (2007), no. 2, 101-120.

scholars like Hannah Arendt in an attempt to come to terms with 20th century history, the success of which Arendt herself doubted towards the end of her life, the term has been reduced today to a mere tool of sweeping and levelling political propaganda. In 2008 the House of History entrepreneurs sketched a concept for the new museum,[56] which obviously has remained the basis for the museum's exhibition until today.[57] It reads like a confused school textbook full of bits and pieces of quite unconnected 'European' events. However, any attentive reader may easily deduce the inherent political agenda of the new member states—it amounts to the effective externalization of Russia from Europe. In the document, Europe is frequently divided into 'West' and 'East' by asserting that the situation in Eastern Europe was 'completely different'[58] during the Cold War because of stalinist 'brutal violence' and 'terror' (19, point 79). It is the 'pressure exerted by the Soviet Union' that is given the greatest credit for the union of 'the nations in the West' (20, point 80); while early poststalinist history is reduced to the Soviet crushing of uprisings in the GDR, Poland, and Hungary (20, point 83). Also the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957 is significantly credited to Soviet activity, this time as a reaction to its increasing influence in rapidly decolonizing Africa (21, point 86). The erection of the Berlin Wall remains curiously uncontextualized; it was apparently just 'built' to then become 'the symbol for the division of the continent' (21, point 87). It is claimed that the structural economic changes in the West of the 1970s left the 'states of the Soviet power bloc completely untouched' (22, point 96). *Glasnost* and *perestrojka* 'found a resonance principally in the non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union' and 'in the states of the Eastern Bloc' (23, point 103). However, the 1980s again saw 'a stark contrast' between East and West (23, point 104). In 1989, 'in terms of their national history, the new states returned to the mainstream' (23, point 105), and 'reconnected with their long [nation state] history' (24, point 106). And then the document declares that with the first round of accession of formerly state socialist countries in 2004, 'the division of the continent had finally been overcome' (24, point 111).

A few weeks before this concept for a European museum in Brussels was drafted, in the midst of Slovenia's EU presidency, which it was the first of the new member states to hold, in September 2008 was issued a 'Declaration of the

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[56] Committee of Experts, House of European History, Conceptual Basis for a House of European History, Brussels, October 2008, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf.

[57] Cf. the recent interview with the museum's curator, Tanja Vovk van Gaal, Marco Abram, The House of European History, *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa*, 4 March 2017, https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Europe/The-House-of-European-History-178791.

[58] Committee of Experts, House of European History, Conceptual Basis, 18, point 71; and 19, point 79. For the sake of brevity, I mention all subsequent references to the document above in the body text.

European Parliament on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism'.[59] Since 2009, that Day of Remembrance has been observed on the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact, and it refers among other things to protests in the 1980s organised by exiles from the Soviet sphere of influence and to the 'Baltic Way', for which on 23 August 1989 'approximately two million people joined their hands forming a 600 km long human chain through the Baltic countries, thus demonstrating their unity in their efforts towards freedom'.[60] Even though this European Day of Remembrance is committed to democratic and liberal values it has contributed to cementing cognitive dissonances between 'East' and 'West', for the memory of stalinist and communist violence in general has stood at the forefront of commemorative events, and with the exception of Sweden only formerly state socialist East European countries have taken it up officially. The fact that Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, and that the Soviet Union suffered the largest number of deaths in the Second World War has lain awkwardly as an obstacle on the path to the levelling of national socialist and stalinist crimes. The very fact that a Day of 'European' remembrance so constructed categorically excludes Russia, as does the Brussels House of History, is alarming.[61]

In the East European states a myth has been fostered of collective victimhood under several, but equally horrible, dictatorships. With it, not only has remembrance of the victims of stalinism become part of the European memory canon, but the victims of both national socialist and stalinist violence, in another effective 'ranking' enterprise, have been placed at an explicitly equal level. The political intention is to excuse domestic populations; their role must be as victims of horrific repression by outsiders; it was all the fault of Stalin or of Hitler. Any participation by domestic society is therefore negated; any responsibility for what happened is likewise externalized. The point is only proved by the acrimony of the debates, like those in Poland about the massacre at Jedwabne, if memory so constructed is challenged.

Further strong evidence of the European dimensions of what is at stake is that Italy had been the first to institute a Day of Remembrance (*Giorno del Ricordo*), in 2004, which seems in essence to have been the predecessor of the Slovenian-sponsored EU initiative four years later.[62] Every year since 2005, the

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[59] Declaration of the European Parliament on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, Brussels, 23 September 2008, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0439+0+DOC+X-ML+V0//EN.

[60] The Baltic Way 1989-2014, History, http://www.thebalticway.eu/en/history/.

[61] Cf. Kristen Ghodsee, The Left Side of History. World War II and the Unfulfilled Promise of Communism in Eastern Europe, Durham 2015.

[62] Parlamento Italiano, Istituzione del 'Giorno del ricordo' in memoria delle vittime delle foibe, dell'esodo giuliano-dalmata, delle vicende del confine orientale e concessione di un

anniversary has been commemorated of the peace treaty signed between Italy and Yugoslavia on 10 February 1947, and along with it the victims have been remembered of the *foibe* and the 'exodus' from Istria and Dalmatia. Throughout the war people were killed or their already dead bodies were disposed of by throwing them into the deep pits, called *foibe*, that perforate the karstic landscape of Trieste's hinterland, especially on the Istrian peninsula. The practice first reached a peak after the Italian capitulation in September 1943, and then again at the war's end in May 1945, and several thousand people arrested by the Yugoslav authorities in the region were executed in the same way, or died later in prisons or camps in Yugoslavia. The peace treaty between Italy and Yugoslavia assigned the larger part of the Istrian peninsula to Yugoslavia, triggering a large-scale emigration which in Italian collective memory is known as the 'exodus from Istria'. That remembrance is decidedly monoethnic, even though many Slovenes and Croats were among the emigrants. The Italian efforts at 'engineering of memory' have interpreted history to match political interests, which have favoured leaving fascist violence to oblivion and making communist violence the essence of all evil.[63]

This Italian self-stylization as victims happens on a level analogous to that in East Central and Southeastern Europe, in spite of its different substance. That is especially true of the country's eastern border, where the 'evil forces' are Tito's partisans, the 'communists at Italy's back door'. The fascist violence that preceded the communist riposte is thereby belittled, and the motif is a regional variant of the myth of the 'good Italian' (*italiani brava gente*) who, unlike the average German, was quite incapable of committing any sort of atrocity. That image, although scholars have dismantled it as thoroughly as they have the myth of the *Resistenza*, continues to condition much of the Italian public memoryscape. The combination of both explains away much of the amnesia created around the violent Italian regimes in the Balkans during the war,[64] a forgetfulness which scholars have attributed to a conscious strategy of self-

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riconoscimento ai congiunti degli infoibati, Legge 30 marzo 2004, n. 92, pubblicata nella *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 86 del 13 aprile 2004, http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/04092l.htm.

[63] Cf. especially the study accomplished as a Slovenian–Italian–Croatian cooperation, Jože Pirjevec / Nevenka Troha / Gorazd Bajc / Darko Dukovski / Guido Franzinetti, Foibe. Una storia d'Italia, Torino 2009. A Slovene translation was published in 2012, Fojbe, Ljubljana 2012. See also Raoul Pupo, La più recente storiografia italiana di frontiera: alcune questioni interpretative, *Acta Histriae* 20, no. 2-3 (2012), 293-306.

[64] Cf. for a more elaborate presentation of the Italian politics of memory Sabine Rutar, Epistemologische Grenzen und europäische Zeitgeschichte am Beispiel der nordöstlichen Adriaregion, *Europa regional* 22, no. 3-4 (2015), special issue 'Zur Zeitlichkeit räumlicher Konstrukte. Grenzen und Regionen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart', 192-206, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-459994. Comprehensively on the Italian eastern border, Marina Cattaruzza, Italy and Its Eastern Border, 1866-2016, New York/NY, London 2017 (Italian original: L'Italia e il confine orientale, 1866-2006, Bologna 2007).

exculpating denial propagated by Italy's postwar elites.[65] As Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann have noted, war experience is often narrated by soldiers as a 'history of suffering'—one that systematically downplays individual agency and personal responsibility for the unfolding of violence. In Italy such sanitized memory patterns received strong legitimization from above.[66]

Local Dimensions of the War

As the authors who contribute to this issue so clearly demonstrate, the relationship between local developments and the 'big picture' works on many levels. While study of local dimensions is necessary for a thorough understanding of the microdynamics of violence and social practices aimed at survival, it does not suffice for an analysis either of occupying policies or of resistance. A broader perspective is required, which can relate local phenomena to developments on national and transnational levels.

The motif of 'killing neighbours' mentioned above in the context of the Holocaust in Poland illustrates the point. The subject has been intricately woven into analyses of violence in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s since Cornelia Sorabji's reflections on 'terror and territory' in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995,[67] and especially since Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel edited their compelling *Neighbors at War* in 2000.[68] The dismantling of the powerful myth of self-ascribed victimhood in Poland was triggered at about the same time by Gross' book—same motif, different war. Recently, with explicit reference to Gross's work and to that of Omer Bartov, Max Bergholz has undertaken a painstaking reconstruction of the mass violence that took place in the village of Kulen Vakuf, near the town of Bihać in northwestern Bosnia, part of the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War. Bergholz shows how ethnic identities were shifting before, during, and long after the violence, confirming Brubakerian notions of 'ethnicity without groups'.[69] Bergholz's detailed reconstruction is certainly a valuable contribution especially in a context like Bosnia, which

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[65] Filippo Focardi, Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale, Roma, Bari 2013.

[66] Thomas Kühne / Benjamin Ziemann, Militärgeschichte in der Erweiterung. Konjunkturen, Interpretationen, Konzepte, in: Thomas Kühne / Benjamin Ziemann, eds, Was ist Militärgeschichte?, Paderborn 2000, 9-46.

[67] Cornelia Sorabji, A Very Modern War. Terror and Territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in: Robert A. Hinde / Helen E. Watson, eds, War – a Cruel Necessity? The Bases of Institutionalized Violence, London 1995, 80-93.

[68] Joel M. Halpern / David A. Kideckel, eds, Neighbors at War. Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, University Park/PA 2000.

[69] Max Bergholz, Violence as a Generative Force. Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community, Ithaca/NY 2016. Cf. Rogers Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups, Cambridge/MA 2004.

has recently experienced war, mass violence, and genocide once again, and since the Dayton Peace Accords of 1995 has lived with institutionalized ethnic 'groupisms' built into the very fabric of its state. Bergholz correctly identifies the dynamics—both destructive and generative—of mass violence, and thus adds on to many other studies who have accomplished analogous endeavours. He leaves aside the Holocaust as a frame of reference.

I would emphasize here that the situation in any of the occupied societies cannot be described simply as a summation of local developments, instances of mass violence among them. The resistance movements were a transnational phenomenon in occupied Europe, and their development was conditioned by the overall course of the war. Collaborative forces meanwhile were inextricably linked to the occupiers and thereby to the themes of their policies, among them the racial ones.

The complexity of Southeast European war settings is compelling. Much the same sorts of questions may be applied there as have been mentioned above for the post-Soviet space: 'What territory is under consideration? Which borders? Which years? And how do we count victims?' We may even ask, 'Who was a victim, and of what or whom?' All those questions apply to all societies in the region, but are particularly pertinent to Yugoslavia, territory which as an effect of the wars of dissolution in the 1990s was divided among seven states which correspond only tenuously to territorial arrangements during the Second World War. The Yugoslav successor states have adopted historiographies induced strictly by the establishment of the new nation states. Even if it has not been officially demanded of them, scholars have still been expected to give 'historical legitimacy' to the now-independent states of the former Yugoslavia, with the unavoidable effect of limiting research horizons. There has been a concomitant loss of interest in any research that might cover the entire Yugoslav territory, let alone other parts of Southeastern Europe—or beyond. Along with other matters concerning the general phenomenon of 'historical revisionism', the already sporadic examples of engagement in research that looks beyond national or even Yugoslav boundaries have almost become 'historiographical incidents'. Given this circumstance of nationalized historiographies, it becomes even more important that scholars focusing on local settings should consider them carefully within the context of the global war, in order to counteract nationalizing and provincializing tendencies. Local tendencies need to be on the agenda, but not placed there by nationalists; rather they must be there because of internationalizing research agendas.

This problematique may be extended to the other contexts at stake. For example, what territorial scope should be adopted for research on the Holocaust? Perhaps it should be concentrated at the level of the prewar states? In the case of wartime Yugoslavia that would mean the need to cover events that took

place in five occupation zones. Or should we take the wartime boundaries as the starting point? Then the Bulgarian occupations zones in Greece and Yugo-slavia would have to be studied in isolation from the German occupation zones there, or the Italian occupation zone in Vardar Macedonia. In that case, is it not maybe better to encompass all of Ottoman Macedonia, that is all three of Var-dar, Aegean and Pirin Macedonia, regardless of the different fates of the three regions during the war, and particularly the fates of their Jews? But whatever the research choice there is little doubt that the spatial framework adopted will affect both the identification of actors and factors in the unfolding of the war and the Holocaust, and the assessment of links between anti-Jewish measures, competing national projects, and the overall conduct of the war.

Given the extreme temporal dynamics of the war, the sheer rapidity with which social relations were subjected to change, the resulting fleeting present, saturated with violence as it was, might well have depended on a radicalized selective (re-)appropriation of many available pasts, in continued attempts to 'make sense' of the present, and, ultimately, to exercise power. How did the organization, exercise, and diffusion of power change during the war years? How did prewar politics 'prepare' a given society for war? What was the impact of the war on the rationality of government after the war was over, when more often than not societies were left in states of acute polarization? How was au-thority established in the war's aftermath? What kind of mechanisms allowed those who took over power to do so, and how did they attempt to mould loyal, or at least obedient citizens? How much fear and terror was transferred into the postwar era? What kinds of subjectivities were created by antagonistic modali-ties of power? And how does all that connect, in the Koselleckian sense, to the production of social knowledge, and memoryscapes?[70]

Inquiries into the social production of knowledge can shed light on how comprehension, commemoration, and remembrance of given events have been affected by the changing combinations of local, regional, and international political configurations. Assessing the national lenses that have been applied can illuminate how the evolving national, European, and broader international entanglements have affected how the past has been chronicled and remembered. Such competitive efforts to craft new historical narratives cannot be studied in isolation from the growing transnationalization of the writing and remembrance of the war and the Holocaust. Nor, more specifically, should they be isolated

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[70] Foucault's work on 'governmentality' is an obvious reference here, yet Foucault did not include war in his reflections, cf. Michel Foucault, Power, edited by James D. Faubion, New York 2000, 341.

from the role of the Holocaust as a 'foundational past' in the West as well as in other parts of the world.[71]

In the face of ever increasing involvement of European institutions in history and memory on the one hand, and on the other hand the emergence of a mosaic of 'memory entrepreneurs' who wish to endow their reading of the past with official authority, ultimately the current processes of 'internationalizing' and 'nationalizing' of the past should not be seen as opposite processes, for they have always run in parallel and worked in tandem. After 1989 the promotion of national readings of wartime experiences has been attempted precisely through the utilization of international arenas and sources of legitimacy.

Sources permitting, among the most promising recent approaches that could enhance research into Southeast European contexts are those that focus on soldiers' experiences,[72] on the interdependence between (shifting) loyalties and radicalization of social contexts,[73] and on taking the occupied societies (*Besatzungsgesellschaften*) rather than the regimes which occupied them as the starting point of intellectual curiosity.[74] During the war, social norms were under a constant stress test, which called for very flexible adaptation of actions, decisions, and choices. Importantly, the term 'occupation' marks a conceptual difference from 'peacetime' and the notion of relative security the word implies. The violence of extreme times forced individuals to develop 'strategies of accommodating to a state of confusion'.[75] It confronted them with 'no option of non-involvement'[76] and all too often with 'choiceless choices',[77] to quote two concepts established in the field of Holocaust Studies.

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[71] Alon Confino, Foundational Pasts. The Holocaust as Historical Understanding, Cambridge 2011.

[72] Neitzel / Welzer, Soldaten. On Fighting, Killing, and Dying.

[73] Christoph Kreutzmüller / Michael Wildt / Moshe Zimmermann, eds, National Economies. Volks-Wirtschaft, Racism and Economy in Europe between the Wars (1918-1939/45), Newcastle 2015; Martina Steber / Bernhard Gotto, eds, Visions of Community in Nazi Germany. Social Engineering and Private Lives, Oxford 2014; Michael Wildt, 'Volksgemeinschaft', Version 1.0, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 3 June 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.569.v1.

[74] Tatjana Tönsmeyer, Besatzungsgesellschaften. Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Erfahrungsgeschichte des Alltags unter deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten Weltkrieg, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 18 December 2015, http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.663.v1. In the field of (South) East European (forced) labour history such a reversal of perspectives has started happening, pioneered by Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler; and taken up by Sanela Hodžić / Christian Schölzel, Zwangsarbeit im 'Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien' 1941-1945, Münster 2012; and Rutar, 'Unsere abgebrochene Südostecke'.

[75] Jan Philipp Reemtsma, Vertrauen und Gewalt. Versuch über eine besondere Konstellation der Moderne, Hamburg 2008, 66-67.

[76] Doris Bergen, What Do Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Contribute to Understanding the Holocaust?, in: Myrna Goldenberg / Amy Shapiro, eds, Different Horrors, Same Hell. Gender and the Holocaust, Washington 2013, 16-37, 21.

[77] On the concept of ‚choiceless choices' Lawrence L. Langer, Versions of Survival. The Holocaust and the Human Spirit, Albany 1982, esp. 72.

Conclusion

This special issue seeks to establish a basis upon which various academic cultures with their often parallel topoi will be able to converse more seriously with each other about the economic, social, and cultural history of the war, and not conditioned first and foremost by a nation-state framework. As its authors demonstrate, research on World War Two in Southeastern Europe needs to be better balanced in terms of the interdependencies between local dynamics and wider scales—be they the regional, national and transnational, or global dimensions of the war.

Scholars on the war in the Soviet Union have been guided by a dichotomic German–Soviet interpretive framework, thereby adopting the imperial frames and, on a smaller scale, those of the occupied territorialities as suggested by the archives. While this may have helped them to largely avoid the problem of postcommunist nationalization tendencies, their approach has still proved to be unsatisfactory, as the acrimony of Ukrainian–Polish–Russian debates clearly show, and also, albeit less remarked, those in Moldova. Southeast European-ists could greatly enhance international research agendas by taking the lead in fostering a bottom-up, multiscale, and multiperspective history of postimperial, nationalizing societies at war.