Regions of Memory
Transnational Formations

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Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies

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The nascent field of Memory Studies emerges from contemporary trends that include a shift from concern with historical knowledge of events to that of memory, from 'what we know' to 'how we remember it'; changes in generational memory; the rapid advance of technologies of memory; panics over declining powers of memory, which mirror our fascination with the possibilities of memory enhancement; and the development of trauma narratives in reshaping the past. These factors have contributed to an intensification of public discourses on our past over the last thirty years. Technological, political, interpersonal, social and cultural shifts affect what, how and why people and societies remember and forget. This groundbreaking series tackles questions such as: What is 'memory' under these conditions? What are its prospects, and also the prospects for its interdisciplinary and systematic study? What are the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools for its investigation and illumination?

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Contents

Partisan History and the East European Region of Memory

A. Dirk Moses

Introduction

Memory wars have been underway in Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union and recovery of national independence by East European countries, including the three Baltic states (Wawrzyniak and Pakier 2013). These wars are waged on various battle fronts: in domestic politics, interstate relations, and European Union agencies and forums. In the first, new national museums, memory institutes, and memorials depict these countries as successively invaded by the Soviets and the Nazis, victims of "double occupations" (Maier 2001–2002; Rohdewald 2008; Blaive et al. 2011). One of them—in Vilnius, Lithuania—even deploys a broad definition of genocide to advance the "double-genocide thesis," in which their countries were victims of two genocides, one by the Nazis, and another by the Soviets. In propagating such imagery, conservative political and cultural elites posit their nations as indigenous peoples occupied for much of

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101

the twentieth century by their powerful neighbours—mainly by Germany and Russia—which attempted to subjugate and/or destroy them in various ways: by killing, deporting, and imprisoning designated political enemies and by importing Germans or Russian-speaking settlers.

The broad definition of genocide is inspired by theories of totalitarianism that circulated among anti-communist émigré activists. Not by coincidence, they echo the ideas of Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959), the anti-communist Jewish-Polish refugee scholar who coined the term in his book on the Nazi occupation of Europe during the Second World War, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). There he referred to the Nazi colonization of conquered territory in conceiving of genocide as a foreign occupation executed in a settler-colonial modality that attacked the cultural as well as the biological reproduction of a nation: genocide as a technique of occupation (Lemkin 1944).

The exclusion of cultural genocide from the United Nations Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of Genocide in 1948 has not stopped some of these new memory institutions utilizing the Lemkian definition of genocide. By linking genocide and occupation, they effectively mirror the "colonial turn" in the field of genocide studies, which drew on Lemkin to highlight the genocidal process affecting indigenous peoples in the classical settler colonies of Australia and North America (Moses 2008). These institutions likewise reflect the decolonizing trend in trauma studies by registering the debilitating impact of long-term but non-monumental repressions that usually attend foreign rule (Craps 2013).

To be sure, the death tolls and coercive demographic transformations in Eastern Europe make the invocation of genocide intuitively plausible. But this deployment is highly loaded in its connection with occupation because it posits the local Christian populations as indigenous people with authentic roots, despite the imperial and colonial traditions of some East European states, let alone the mythic status of such claims in a region of multiple migrations and hybridities. In this nativist reading, Jews count as settler outsiders despite their centuries-long presence and social integration. In the 1930s, nationalist Polish governments, for example, instrumentalized growing antisemitism to economically favour Christian Poles. Then, during the Soviet annexation of the eastern part of the country in 1939, they accused Jews of disloyalty due to their alleged Soviet sympathies, a pattern also discernible in the Baltic states. This framing fatally reproduces the logic that enabled the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, namely the collaboration between East European Christian nationalists

and Nazi forces in eliminating the common "Judeo-Bolshevik" enemy (Zimmerman 2002; Himka and Michlic 2013; Hanebrink 2018). Rightwing East European diasporas and home governments similarly utilize the occupation and genocide concepts in a partisan manner against East European Jewish survivor minorities and Holocaust memory (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019). As we see in the section "Partisan Histories and the Partisan Subject" below, in doing so they invoke an ethic of cosmopolitan solidarity in European Union forums by claiming to unite Europeans as joint victims of occupation and genocide, whether by Nazis or Soviets ("double genocide"). Many commentators find this claim rings hollow when it entails displacing responsibility for the Holocaust entirely onto the Germans and blaming Jews for their victimization under the Nazis for supposedly supporting communism.

This instrumentalization of the genocide concept, which has roots in earlier émigré literature and academic work on communist crimes, has been roundly condemned by local and international critics, including from Israel (Budryte 2004; Courtois et al. 1999; Katz 2010; Freedland 2010; Zuroff 2010a). They point out the wilful blindness and/or calculated cynicism of claiming to be victims of genocide by the Soviets while occluding or underplaying the genocide their national heroes co-committed against Jewish fellow citizens immediately before and during the Nazi occupation. By contrast, at least since Jan Gross's pathbreaking book, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2000), writers, artists, politicians, scholars, curators, and activists in Poland and elsewhere in the region have been undertaking unflinching research on the Holocaust and its memorialization.

In response to these voices and their research, East European memory institutions have made adjustments to their exhibitions, and some countries have erected Holocaust memorials and Jewish museums. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (POLIN) is a product of Jewish (local and diaspora) and state partnership, which evinces a sincere commitment to Jewish history in the longue durée history (https://www.polin.pl/en/). But they otherwise remain unimpressed by the insistence that remembrance and commemoration of Nazi crimes must trump Soviet ones. After all, East Europeans respond, their countries did not invade and attempt to destroy neighboring ones. Nor did their Russian, Western, and Israeli critics have to endure decades of communist rule, with its mass deportations, denial of national statehood for the Baltic states, and political and cultural repressions.

As always in this complex region of memory, local circumstances determine the memory coordinates. Because no significant Polish partisan movement proposed collaboration with the Nazis to confront Soviet rule, Polish nationalists commemorate victims of both rather than playing them off against one another. However, they all ask: where is the Western European recognition of this suffering? Nazis have been condemned and prosecuted for their crimes, and Holocaust memorials and museums exist to commemorate their victims. Communist genocides and mass crimes, complain many East Europeans, remains scandalously "unresolved" from a pan-European perspective, despite the demolition of communist monuments, renaming of streets, restitution, and lustration (Assmann 2011).

The debate has ground to halt with each side accusing the other of committing intellectual atrocities while trivializing actual ones. Mainly conservative East European politicians and intellectuals wield anti-totalitarian memory in the guise of the "double-genocide" thesis while facing, on one front, the Russian anti-fascist narrative that condemns their states as neo-fascist and, on the other, the established Western European conviction that the Holocaust is unique and incomparable (Kattago 2009).

In this chapter, I account for this European memory impasse via the notion of "partisan history" (Friedman and Kenney 2005). It has three related features, each gesturing to different semantic connotations of the word "partisan": first, partisan history refers to the East European nationalist partisans who fought the Soviet Union, itself the sponsor of the major wartime partisan forces that fought Axis forces; second, it represents partisan—that is, highly partial—arguments to protect the exalted status of these East European nationalist "freedom fighters"; and, third, its temporal structure collapses past and present so that contemporary nationalists imagine themselves to be partisans, weaponizing memory in fighting yesterday's battles today. The genocide concept is perfectly suited for partisan history. Lemkin did not consider that his creation could be put to ultra-nationalist rather than cosmopolitan uses, although genocide, as he conceived it, is an extreme policy of conquest and occupation of nations that inevitably provokes anti-colonial resistance. What is more, it is intrinsically racialist, because it presupposes the existence of contending races potentially engaged in racial warfare. As we see below, partisan history also has gendered consequences.

My argument has two further limbs. One, because East European memory (or memories, as they are always contested) extends to, and is

influenced by, voices in Israel and North American diasporas, created by migration and refugee flows, the East European region of memory needs to include those places. Two, those partisan histories are not self-generated or autotelic, but products of tensions with overlapping regions of memory—with Russia, which since the fall of the Soviet Union has been attempting to fashion its own region of memory in Ukraine, Belarus, and other post-Soviet states (Kozachenko 2019; McGlynn 2020), and Western Europe. These interactions need to be included in the analytical frame. For instance, the East European imperative to adopt notions like double occupation and genocide are reactions to the hegemony of Holocaust memory in the pan-European memory field they entered after the Cold War, even leading to the adaptation of its tropes (Sierp 2014; Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015; Littoz-Monnet 2012; Stone 2012; Zombory 2017; Kovács 2018; Subotić 2019). The genocide concept is also particularly attractive for states that feel threatened by Russia and are emboldened by powerful ultra-nationalist diasporas (Finkel 2010, 57), while Russia deploys the concept in relation to ethnic Russian minorities in its "near abroad" (BBC 2021).

This reframing presents an alternative to the fantasy of a unified, continental, European region of memory that the European Union (EU) likes to advance (Mälksoo 2009). At the same time, it also transcends the customary East-West memory distinction by demonstrating how the European memory conflict is the product of overlapping regions of memory, and that the East European region of memory, with its preponderance of partisan histories, extends to Israel and North American diasporas. Once the partisan investments of all participants in overlapping, nonterritorialized regions of memory are registered, I conclude, a non-partisan memory regime can be envisaged that transcends the zero-sum game in which the memory security for one side entails memory insecurity for the other (Mälksoo 2015). However, conditions within the region and its tense relations with neighbouring ones means that non-partisan history is difficult to realize in practice (Stone and Jinks 2022).

The chapter proceeds in four steps. First, it delineates the East European region of memory in relation to transnational processes of migration and diaspora-creation. For reasons of economy, it tends to generalize about the region and at the expense of its particularities. Second, it examines partisan histories and partisan political subjectivity. In part three, it addresses the partisan memory arguments and investments of the participants in the debate about mass crimes in twentieth-century Europe. The

fourth section examines partisan criticisms of these histories by local, Western European, and Israeli critics.

EAST EUROPEAN REGION OF MEMORY

On the face of it, a stable and delimited East European region of memory seems plausible based on what the historian Charles S. Maier calls "territoriality," namely "the properties, including power, provided by the bordered political space, which until recently at least created the framework for national and often ethnic identity" (Maier 2000, 808). Whereas Western Europe was constituted by nation-states with relatively stable borders that suffered Nazi occupation only for a few years, Eastern Europe was constituted by unstable territoriality. "Small nations" predominated in what historians variously call a "shatterzone," "bloodlands," and "rimlands": the German and Russian empires in the north (Poland and the Baltic states), the Austro-Hungarian Empire with these neighbours in the middle (Poland, Ukraine, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary), and to the south the Ottoman empire abutting the small Balkan states like Greece and Bulgaria (Bloxham 2008; Bartov and Weitz 2013; Snyder 2010; Levene 2013). This was the space that the English historian Lewis Namier in 1915 named "The European 'Middle East'" (Namier 1915, xiii). These borderlands of four Eurasian empires experienced recurrent cycles of invasion, civil war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide during the twentieth century: the violent substitution of multi-confessional empires by ambitious new states with contingent borders and populations, all too often based on mass expulsions of defenceless civilians, intent on domestic homogenization and in thrall to security paranoia. Traumatic collective experiences of forced migration and genocide produced partisan history. With this structural-historical difference came the attraction of rival "narratives of moral atrocity," one centred on the Holocaust in the West, another on imperialism and decolonization in Eastern Europe, much like the Global South. The former seeks to tame nationalism and Leviathan's potential for mass violence while the latter strives for territoriality to house post-Soviet nations (Maier 2000, 824).

And yet, regions of memory have transcended delimited geographical units wherever largescale movements of people constituted migration systems, namely enduring clusters of mobility—including reverse migration—that produced global diasporas connected to sending regions (Hoerder 2014; Assmann and Conrad 2010; Pakier and Wawrzyniak

2015). Such systems have constituted an element of proto-globalization for centuries, but dramatic European population growth, settler colonial expansion, and improvements in shipping and communications made the century between 1840 and 1940 an era of mass migration that greatly intensified the extent and scale of regions of memory. Diasporas extended regions of memory because migrants shuttled back and forth, exercising "flexible citizenship" and developing deterritorialized identities that encompassed an enlarged sense of home marked variously by hybridity and nostalgia, trauma, and loss (Agnew 2005).

East Europeans were no exception to this pattern. Between 1876 and 1910, poverty at home and labor demand in the Americas led to the emigration there of some 3.5 million members of the Habsburg monarchy alone: it was the leading supplier of migrants to the US (Zahra 2016). Many Ukrainian and Belarussian peasants from the Russian Empire—thus classed as Russians—went to Canada, Argentina, and Brazil (Kukushkin 2007). They—Christians and Jews—came in such numbers to the United States that nativists restricted this immigration in the Immigration Act of 1924, which also affected southern Europeans while excluding Asians entirely (Daniels 2004). In view of the squalor and exploitation they experienced in America's incipient industrial cities, about 30% to 40% of former Habsburg subjects returned (Zahra 2016, 14).

But most remained. Like other migrants, East Europeans brought with them memories of their diverse villages, towns, and cities to their new home—though not necessarily of a nation. Upon arrival, however, they were classified as members of a foreign region ("Eastern Europe," referring to former Habsburg and Romanov imperial territories) and nation ("Poles") awaiting assimilation (Stewart 1924). Over time, diasporic communities mirrored this national and regional consciousness: late-nineteenth-century Lithuanian national consciousnesses even developed more quickly among migrants to North American than in the homeland (Čiubrinskas 2010, 10). "Diasporic nationalism precedes homeland nationalism" as in some east Asian cases (Lei 2001, 360; Lei 2008, 182). For their part, post-imperial states of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Baltic countries embarked on national-building projects after the First World War, summoning their "nationals" abroad (though not Jews) to return (Zahra 2016, 114).

National and regional isomorphisms emerged from these coterminous and interacting local and transnational processes: the East European region of memory became inseparable from its diasporic imaginings,

rooted not "in a primordial, bounded space" but in projections of homogeneous peoplehood that effaced emigrants' sub-national identities and languages. This "long-distance nationalism" (Glick-Schiller 2005) is captured by the "Lithuanian Charter" of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, issued in 1949: its first clause includes the declaration that "Lithuanians scattered throughout the world make up one unified World Lithuanian Community" (LAC Charter 1949).

This notion of nationality was mirrored by the Zionist conception of Jews as a globally dispersed nation. East European Jews moved to many parts of the world, and their ideas about their birthplaces and their immigration destinations varied widely. Even so, Jewish migrants to North America from the Russian Empire did not join, say, Polish or Ukrainian organisations, but founded their own. Their relationship to Eastern Europe was also complicated by memories of poverty, antisemitic discrimination, pogroms, and then genocide. After the Second World War, and especially 1967, the affiliation to Eastern Europe as a Jewish homeland gradually moved to Israel (Kobrin 2010). The case of Israel is also a dramatic case of diaspora nationalism, created entirely by the Zionist diaspora, largely from Eastern Europe, even if also funded by western Jewish capital. Zionists agreed with East European nationalists that the so-called interwar "Jewish problem" could be solved to mutual advantage by mass emigration from Eastern Europe to Palestine (Zahra 2016, 18, 151).

It is no accident that seven of the first nine Israeli prime ministers hailed from the East European contact zone with Russia: David Ben-Gurion (born in Płońsk, Poland, then in the Russian Empire); Moshe Sharett (born in Kherson in today's Ukraine, then in the Russian Empire), Levi Eshkol (born in Orativ in today's Ukraine, then in the Russian Empire); Golda Meir (born Kiev in today's Ukraine, then in the Russian Empire); Menachem Begin (born in Brest in today's Belarus, then in the Russian Empire); Shimon Peres (born in Wiszniew, then Poland, in today's Belarus); and Yitzhak Shamir (born in Ruzhany in today's Belarus, then in the Russian Empire). By Zionism's East European origins and emigration from Russia and Ukraine of about 900,000 Jews since the 1990s, Palestine and then Israel became part of the East European region of memory (Zarembo 2017). Lapidary "diasporic intimacy" and intense "cultural intimacy" with Eastern Europe and Russia testify to diasporic Jewish and Israeli participation in the partisan histories that characterize this transnational region of memory (Boym 2001). Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial authority, for instance, initiated a major project called "Untold

Stories" that identifies and commemorates Holocaust massacre sites in the former Soviet Union, namely Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Russia (Yad Vashem n.d.).

Christian diasporic communities in particular carried on the intense anticommunism of fledgling interwar nation-states after their forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union or Soviet sphere during and after the Second World War. The regional memory regime of the unstable and contested notion of "east-central Europe" thus became associated with decades of communist rule, overshadowing the comparatively few years of Nazi occupation. For them, communist rule stood for foreign (Russian) occupation and destruction of their national cultures that they had struggled for decades to emancipate from imperial entanglements and then house in states (Zake 2000). In these circumstances, diasporic nationalism enabled a purity-corruption binary in relation to homeland (Čiubrinskas 2010). Diasporic nationalists thus policed nation-ness by vetting aberrant identities, like immigrating Lithuanians "contaminated" by Soviet life or, earlier, Ukrainians from the Russian empire who did not necessarily identify as Ukrainian. Ukrainian diasporic organisations and their later historians in Canada ostracized them as socialist or Russophiles, limiting Ukrainian-ness to immigrants from Habsburg Galicia and Bukovyna (Čiubrinskas 2013; Kukushkin 2007, 7).

What is more, diaspora communities—particularly those in which emigrés and/or displaced persons (DPs) assumed a prominent role after the Second World War—came to regard themselves as depositories of authentic nation-ness while the homeland endured Soviet occupation, with its enforced secularism, Russification, and suppression of national independence. The "real" Lithuania lived on abroad during the siege of the homeland, cultivated in family life, churches, schools, festivals, and the discipline of language retention, ready for reimportation after liberation. Free to express the nationalist perspective in the West, diasporic community leaders formulated strategies to liberate the homeland from communist rule. Exiled Lithuanians and other Baltic leaders, for example, confronted the outright Soviet annexation of their countries by claiming that the mass deportations and repressions after the war constituted genocide—much as the framing of the deportations and massacres of Ottoman Armenians during the First World War as genocide was developed later by Armenians abroad, descendants of refugees and survivors (Budryte 2004). Likewise, the interpretation of the catastrophic famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933 as a Holodomor-genocide was developed by Ukrainian nationalists in North

America, and is promoted by descendants of the ultra-nationalist "insurgents" who sought an independent state against Soviet and Nazi forces, murdering tens of thousands of Poles and Jews in the process (Himka 2015). Anticommunist liberals in the US likewise advance this interpretation (Applebaum 2018).

In the main, East European partisan histories have been nurtured in the globalized East European region of memory. But what are partisan histories apart from ethnocentric memory patterns (Brown 2019)? Partisan history will feature in any regions of memory structured by competitive and uneven state formation, imperial competition, invasion, and mass violence. The Hungarian politician and scholar István Bibó, in an essay called "The Miseries of East European Small States," wrote about the region's unstable borders as "the major source of the political hysterias" (Bibó 2015, 137). He was approaching the question of "habitus" in a similar manner to the sociologist, Norbert Elias, who traced how German state formation influenced the development of national subjectivity and political culture (Elias 1996). Bibó goes so far as to write about how "The deformation of social structure was followed by the warping of the political self and a hysterical mental condition when there was no healthy balance between real, possible, and desirable" (Bibó 2015, 154). His observation is widely applicable. As the geographical space of the East European region of memory expands to Israel and diasporas, the imaginative space contracts and calcifies into partisan history. Fittingly, one scholar includes Israel in his category of existentially uncertain "small peoples" (Abulof 2009). As a region of memory of precarious small nations, it is characterized by "victimhood nationalism" (Lim 2010).

Partisan Histories and the Partisan Subject

The meaning of the highly mythologized term "partisans" depends on the context. From Spanish, Russian, and Polish perspectives, the partisan is an antifascist irregular who fought against Spanish Falangists, German and German-allied forces before and during the Second World War. The figure performs particular memory work in Russia and Yugoslavia where the masculinist image of the Slavic antifascist warrior overshadowed Jewish and female partisan contributions (Slepyan 2006; Pavasović Trošt 2018). And in the "Great Patriotic War," these irregulars joined ordinary soldiers and the massive Soviet civilian casualties as the commemorative focus,

rather than the Holocaust, pairing immeasurable suffering with heroic resistance (Jones 2013). So pervasive was the suffering and resistance mythology that Soviet Belarus was known as a "partisan republic," a memory regime that one scholar has depicted as a "colonial discourse" imposed "on a dominated population," much of which had collaborated with the Germans during the war (Lewis 2017, 373–4; Goujon 2009). Communist partisans were also associated with national liberation in the Balkans; however, their ideal was Yugoslavian, whereas the Serbian nationalist Chetnik forces, which confronted both the German and the Soviet occupations, sought an independent nation-state. As might be expected, communist narratives about WWII downplayed, distorted, or suppressed the Chetnik narrative.

Since the end of the Cold War and disintegration of Yugoslavia into ethno-states, the anti-communist partisans have become the heroes for a different kind of partisan republic. The fall of communism between 1989 and 1991 is thus a turning point for partisan history: it is the moment when anticommunist East Europeans, not only rightwing nationalists, felt that they could finally tell their story. Whether pro- or anti-Soviet, heroization of partisans is a sign of partisan history. For the small nations and their diasporas in particular, memories of genocide and flight, and experiences of continuing exile from and occupation of imagined homelands, fuel "political hysterias," to invoke Bibó's term.

This experience is gendered in complex ways. On the one hand, it is tantamount to emasculation; the gendered coding of foreign occupation is indicated by phrases like "rape" of the nation and by the feminized status of ultimate victimhood, coveted for the sympathy and recognition of injustice it may elicit. On the other hand, the experience triggers its compensatory correction in a masculinist ethos of militarized resistance and national self-assertion to turn defeat into victory (Dibyesh 2007; Helms 2013; Barton Hronešová 2020). As a consequence, partisan history imagines politics as violent resistance: as "the act of taking the power to spill blood of the colonizer and using it himself," according to the Cameroonian theorist Achilles Mbembe (Mbembe 2017, 88). Its telos is redemption. In the case of the Holocaust, masculinist Zionist pioneers decried the supposed passivity of European Jews who went to their deaths "like sheep to the slaughter," resolving that they would "never again" be victims (Lim 2010, 147).

The resisting subjectivity of the colonized also becomes problematically racialized because it internalizes and turns back on the occupier the

ideology of cultural difference and superiority that the latter used to justify their rule (Mbembe 2017, 88). The ensuing redemptive political projects of national homogeneity have grave consequences for ethnic and national minorities: ethnic cleansing and even genocide. Because Romanians blamed their nation's plight on colonization and cosmopolitanization by Jews, ridding Romania of Jews was a redemptive act of national liberation (Bejan 2006). Such redemptive projects are based on what Mbembe calls "a conspiratorial reading of history," namely a drama populated by the stock characters of "the executioner (enemy) and his victim (the innocent)": the former incarnate "the absolute form of cruelty," while the latter are "full of virtue … incapable of violence, terror or corruption" (Mbembe 2017, 88). There is only one plot in this drama: conniving enemies who seek to destroy the prostrate nation. The enemies are all the same, irrespective of identity, because partisan history knows only friends and enemies. Thus many Israelis regard Palestinians as Nazis, despite their manifestly different subject position and motives. The partisan expresses rather than transcends the binary logic of the colonial encounter (Mamdani 2004). He cannot see how history terrorizes him, and how he repeats the violence he endured in the name of ending foreign rule and domestic betrayal (Moses 2011).

The balance between suffering and resistance is played out in different ways depending on context. In Russia, consciousness of the suffering of domestic Stalinist victims is gradually being effaced by renewed heroic narratives about the Great Patriotic War: the victim Soviet Union prevailing over the perpetrator Nazis. The government's banning of the Memorial International NGO is only the most flagrant example of this trend (Etkind 2013; Kovács 2018; Roth 2021). In the Western European variant, the redemption inheres in inhabiting the two roles simultaneously: that of the perpetrator-collaborator with the Germans while also being their victim (Assmann 2011). In Eastern Europe, memory of partisans and deportation victims is complicated in different ways. In Serbia today, the antifascist partisans are accused of war crimes and their archenemies—the anticommunist Chetnik partisans—have been rehabilitated: Tito is now portrayed as a villain (Đureinović 2020). Reviled in the many decades of communist rule, anticommunist partisans regard themselves—and are regarded by many of their conationals—as sacrificial victims for the nation, their suffering embodying the collective trauma. Those who honor their martyrdom and continue their struggle in the present are similarly terrorized. "Fighting and suffering" are the common terms in Lithuania, for

example, the former referring to the anti-Soviet partisans, while the latter includes deportation victims. Both embody the nation in part because of the postwar criminalization of partisans and silence about Soviet deportations and repression (Budryte 2004).

As embodiments of the nation in these post-communist states, partisans stand at the core of partisan history. The mission of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania in Vilnius, for instance, is to memorialize the partisans who confronted the Soviets until 1953, as well as to study crimes committed on national soil:

> The study of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Lithuania; the study of the persecution of local residents by occupying regimes; the study of armed and unarmed resistance to occupying regimes; the initiation of the legal evaluation of the activities of the organisers and implementers of genocide; and the commemoration of freedom fighters and genocide victims. (LGGRTC)

This formulation replaces an earlier hyperbolic one that authorized the Center to investigate "the physical and spiritual genocide of Lithuanians carried out by the occupying regimes between 1939 and 1990, and the resistance to the regimes," and also to "immortalise the memory of the freedom fighters and the genocide victims" (Lowe and Joel 2013, 78). This version reflected the mood that permeated the renewal of national consciousness in the late 1980s, namely during the *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* period, when space opened up to challenge the myth of Soviet liberation. Former partisans, deportees, and their families combined public remembrance of the deportations with the revival of calls for national liberation and independence that had been crushed by Soviet and Nazi occupations (Davoliūtė and Balkelis 2018). For many, the national self, recovering from the psychic shattering of that loss and suppression, imagined the new polity in ethnic terms as the titular nation's re-entry into history. The non-communist lineage required recovery, and the nation's suffering, hitherto a taboo under the Soviets, now demanded recognition. Rehabilitating the criminalized national partisans was central to this process.

In this context, the genocide concept was imported from the North American Lithuanian diaspora into the national struggle in Lithuania. Whereas exiles utilized the genocide concept to refer to deportations, local dissidents adopted it to refer to Russification. These dimensions were combined in the independence movement's adoption of the term. To

appease public opinion, the communist government appointed a commission of inquiry into the deportations that used the term as well. After the fall of communism and regaining of national independence, the genocide thesis made its way into the Center for Research on Genocide and Resistance in 1994 (Budryte 2004).

The centrality of partisan memory to the national project continues. The official Lithuanian "Partisan Honouring, Military and Public Unity Day," for instance, collapses the anti-Soviet struggle of the 1940s and 1950s into the public campaign about the current Russian threat. The chief of the defence forces said that the day is to "honour those who fought for a free Lithuania and to show for the public what protectors and defenders of Lithuania's independence and freedom are today, how and with whom they are preparing for national defence and take part in military missions outside the country" (https://kam.lt/en/partisan_honouring_military_and_public_unity_day_celebration.html). For its part, Poland has instituted "National Remembrance Day of the 'Cursed Soldiers,'" which commemorates members of the underground Home Army who resisted the Sovietization of the country after war (Plocker 2022).

As deployed in official mythologies, partisan history performs discursive and emotional magic by casting spells of displacement to excuse violence at every turn. As a victimization fable, the colonized/partisan displaces responsibility to "external forces." Whatever his excesses, the partisan regards himself as the victim, always acting in national self-defence. If the partisan breaks the moral law, imposed circumstances gave him no choice. Persecution, deportation, and murder of minorities are justified as either understandable revenge (for, say, alleged Jewish collaboration with the Soviets) or, if they are later stigmatized, as incidental to the national project.

Significantly for post-communist states, partisan history addresses the narrative dilemma of soiled national foundations, namely the fact that partisans often collaborated with the Nazis in the hope of securing national independence, or that independent statehood was even a creature of Nazi design, as in Slovakia and Croatia. As detailed in the next section, partisan history disassociates national honor and the national project from Nazi contamination by rhetorical magic tricks like "deflective negationism" (Blutinger 2010). For example, Croatian authorities erected a Holocaust memorial in the national capital, Zagreb, to commemorate the "six million victims," on the spot that the Croatian-fascist deportation of local Jews took place, implying it was solely a German project (Vladisavljevic

2019). The same aim animated the abandoned "Holocaust law" in Poland, which proposed criminalizing references to "Polish death camps." Instead, the rightwing government wants to publicize the suffering of Poles in the "Polocaust" (Koposov 2017; Hackmann 2018; Gebert 2018). The former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was pushing in the same direction when he announced at Yad Vashem in Israel that Ukraine was also a victim of genocide during the Second World War: "Ukraine, as a state that suffered from the Holodomor of 1932–1933, when millions of Ukrainians were tortured by the communist Stalinist regime that committed genocide against the Ukrainian people, reverently keeps the memory of the Holocaust victims as well" (Ahren 2019). And in late 2021, the Belarusian lower house passed a draft law, "On the Genocide of the Belarusian People," which seeks to criminalize the Nazi genocide of "the Belarusian people," conceived to include Jews and Christian citizens, thereby occluding the Holocaust in which Belarusians also participated (Rozovsky 2021).

Since 1991, East European partisan states control the future and the past, and (understandably) obsess about border security *vis-à-vis* Russia, the challenge on the eastern front. Security anxiety also extends to memory, which political scientists call "ontological security": "the idea that distinct understandings of the past should be fixed in public remembrance and consciousness in order to buttress an actor's stable sense of self as the basis of its political agency" (Mälksoo 2015, 222). The two forms of security are linked. It is no coincidence that the Ukrainian ultra-nationalists who fought against Soviet forces (and murdered Jews and Poles) are being honoured in Ukraine today, while the state is engaged in a struggle with Russian-backed separatists in its Donbass territory since 2014 (Dreyer 2018) and an invasion since February 2022. Yesterday's partisan struggles continue into the present. The battle over memory is existential for the partisan for another reason as well: because partisan history is so partial, the partisan subject is constitutively fragile. Inconvenient facts that expose partisan history's magic tricks are "normative threats" that need to be vanquished. The battle on the western front is Europe's prioritization of the Holocaust.

Double Genocide, Double Occupation, and the Uniqueness of the Holocaust

Many East European research centres, museums, and memorials embody and express the now well-known "double occupation" and "double genocide" theses, namely the proposition that the nations between Russia and Germany suffered two genocides, one against Jews by the Nazis and another against the majority population by the Soviets. An accentuated version of these theses codes Jews as the perpetrators of the initial Soviet genocide by casting them as supporters of the Soviet invasion and by depicting Bolshevism as essential Jewish. By emphasizing the crimes of communism, it is a species of totalitarianism theory that likewise affiliates Nazi and Communist regimes as similarly anti-liberal.

National Memory Politics

The three Baltic state museums adopt this conceptualization. The one in Vilnius undertakes study of the "Sovietisation of Lithuania," which began in 1940 when the "destruction of its political-social and economic structure, and cultural and traditional spiritual values ensued and enforcement of the Communist worldview and ideology in society started." The process continued after the Nazi occupation between 1941 and 1944 with "Soviet political and economic reprisals, terror, unjustified massacre of civilians (crimes against humanity), deportations, suppression of spiritual life, Russification of society, and coercive acts in modern Lithuanian history" (GRRCL). That is why the Vilnius center absorbed the "Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights" in 1997 (known as the "Museum of Genocide Victims" until 2018), and why its Latvian and Estonian correlates are called the "Museum of the Occupation" (Weiss-Wendt 2008).

The language of empire saturates the exhibitions. Take the Latvian Museum of Occupation, which expresses anxiety about the Russian-speaking colonists who dilute the indigenous population after its wartime losses (Nollendorfs 2008, 211). It divides the century into three occupation experiences, each receiving equal attention; in the book of the museum of some 200 pages, the Holocaust receives two pages as an episode of the short Nazi occupation. To be sure, in the brief discussion of genocide, the murderous totality of the Holocaust is noted but Latvians also suffered genocide because the Soviet occupation aimed to substitute the indigenous culture with what it calls "A new breed of Russian-speaking,

deracinated and culturally homogenized 'Soviet person'—*homo Sovieticus*"
(Nollendorfs 2008, 108). Since 2018, a new law limits the use of Russian
in public school instruction, much to the consternation of the Russian
minority and neighboring Russia (Kim 2018).

In general, mourning is expressed for the consequent loss of cultural
traditions and development opportunities. Consider the statement by
Andrius Grikienis, a spokesman for Lithuania's mission to the EU, in
2010: "During the first years of Soviet occupation, Lithuania lost more
than 780,000 of its residents. 444,000 fled Lithuania or were repatriated,
275,697 were deported to the gulag or exiled, 21,556 resistance fighters
and their supporters were killed and 25,000 died on the front." In com-
parison, "More than 200,000 citizens of Jewish origin were killed by
Nazis and their collaborators," he said. The point is clear: Lithuanians—a
category that excludes Jews—suffered greater losses than Jews
(Phillips 2010).

A description of the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and
Anticommunist Resistance in Sighet, Romania, opened by a private initia-
tive in 1997, communicates the basic sentiment.

> The Memorial Sighet was established as a reminder of the atrocities commit-
> ted by the communist regime—for years the populace had been brain-
> washed to create the so-called "New Man" through the rewriting of history
> and poisoning the memories of generations. Moral and civic values could
> only be recovered if the collective consciousness is duly recuperated. Sighet
> prison was chosen because it was the first of many political prisons set up in
> Stalinist times and because it was where the country's political, spiritual and
> cultural elite of the pre-war democracy was exterminated. An International
> Study Centre was established here because out of all of the former commu-
> nist countries, Romania's experience had been the longest and most pain-
> ful—from the long years of suppressed resistance to Ceausescu's obscene
> "Golden Epoch". (Memorial Sighet 2013)

The museum is dedicated to the victims of totalitarianism, and the study
centre to communism. Unlike most other East European states, Romania
was not occupied by the Nazis, so its mass murder of Jews cannot be
ascribed to the Germans. Accordingly, the memory fixation is on commu-
nism, and Jewish experiences are not really part of the equation.

Typical of partisan history here is the temporal framing: collapsing the
Nazi and Soviet periods into one extensive category of undifferentiated
"occupation regimes" that both committed genocide. In this operation,

the Soviet "occupation" is implicitly more significant, because it attacked local Christian culture *for decades* whereas the short-lived Nazi presence murdered mainly those supposed Soviet allies, Jewish citizens. These meanings are contained less in memorials and monuments than in the discourse about them, which conveniently obscures the fact that Christian-national partisans—those immortal freedom fighters—were often the same forces that helped the Nazis exterminate local Jews or even took the lead, beginning the killing after the Soviets fled and before the Nazis arrived. This point is made by critics of the double genocide thesis in Lithuania in particular (Katz 2018). Similarly, when the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry invokes Lemkin as a supporter of its interpretation of the Holodomor-as-genocide, it refers to him as an "American lawyer" (neither Polish, nor Jewish) and refrains from linking Ukrainian partisan heroes to the Holocaust (MFA). Lemkin, who lost 49 members of his family in the Holocaust, would hardly have approved of this version of anti-colonial nationalism (Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2019; Lim 2021). Invoking genocide in this manner is partisan history.

The major crime of the twentieth century for partisan history, then, is the brutal occupation of the nation, first the Soviet occupation, interrupted by the brief Nazi one, followed by the lengthy Soviet domination until the early 1990s. For example, in the Vilnius genocide museum, a single room is dedicated to the Holocaust, and it is a relatively recent addition. For Poles, occupation was compounded by partition between the Soviets and Nazis in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the perfidious epitome of totalitarian aggression against the smaller nations of the bloodlands. This experience, rather than the Holocaust, is the axis of the twentieth century. Since Jews are not classed as compatriots or co-nationals, their experiences hardly figure.

However scandalous this memory politics may appear to many in the West, it is explicable in light of the memory taboos that obtained under the Soviets. After all, one could not talk about the Holodomor until the late 1980s; nor has any Russian authority apologized or been prosecuted for mass crimes. Given the magnitude of the trauma, it is hardly surprising that in 2006 Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko established the correlate of the Israeli Yad Vashem: the Institute of National Memory, which assessed the Holodomor as genocide. Nor is it surprising that many in western Ukraine want to rehabilitate the reputation of wartime insurgents who fought for an independent Ukraine, a desire now vouchsafed by a law since 2015 ("On the Legal Status and Honoring the Memory of Fighters

for Independence of Ukraine in the XX Century") that declares the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) as "independence fighters" and that criminalizes the questioning of their legitimacy (Katchanovski 2014; Luhn 2015). As a result, streets are renamed after their leaders who were antisemites and Nazi collaborators (Cohen 2017). The commemoration of the notorious Soviet execution of Ukrainian political prisoners in Lviv in June 1941 exhibits partisan memory by attributing the ensuing anti-Jewish pogrom to criminal elements rather than to Ukrainian nationalists (Himka 2015).

In Hungary, the Orbán government employs characteristically partisan gestures to deal with the uncomfortable fact that Hungary was a Nazi ally and that Hungarians enthusiastically worked with German occupiers to deport half a million Jewish Hungarians to Auschwitz in 1944 as part of their "Greater Hungary" war aims (Segal 2016). The 2011 constitution proclaimed that the country's independence was lost between March 1944 (the Nazi Occupation) and May 1990 (the end of communist rule), homogenizing the enemy and disavowing responsibility for the fate of Jewish Hungarians (Rév 2018, 610). Leading politicians and nationalist politicians narrated the fact that Hungarian soldiers fought the Soviets alongside Nazis as noble Christian crusade to defend the West against Bolshevism, a cause unconnected to the incidental wartime alliance. In fact, so this partisan history goes, Western Europeans abandoned the Western cause by siding with Stalin, leaving Hungary with little diplomatic room for manoeuvre. By virtue of the eventual German invasion, the country became the innocent victim of both anti-Christian, totalitarian regimes. What is more, there was no rupture in 1945, like in Western Europe: foreign occupation continued till the end of the communist regime. Ukrainian historiography of the war comes to similar conclusions (Dreyer 2018, 560). So does historiography in Croatia after 1992, though it is complicated by the criminalizing of the communist partisans and Serbian chetnik forces, heroization of the Croatian nationalists (that is, Ustasha fascists) who were confronted with "tragic choices" in their striving for national independence (Pavasović Trošt 2018).

The European Union

The same politics played out in European Union institutions. The "double genocide" thesis was popularized by East European political leaders

and intellectuals in the "Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism" in 2008, and then given official recognition a year later in a European Parliament resolution on "European Conscience and Totalitarianism" that condemned "totalitarian crimes" (Neumayer 2019). The resolution is an outright challenge to the Western European belief in the uniqueness of the Holocaust, represented by an earlier declaration, the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, signed by 46 governments in 2000. The Stockholm Declaration became the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which is committed to promoting Holocaust memory as the foundation of a common European memory culture. As "unprecedented," declares the IHRA, the Holocaust "fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization" and "will always hold universal meaning." Accordingly, "it must be forever seared in our collective memory" as a warning against "genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia" (IHRA). In this mode, Holocaust memory stands at the core of anti-racist education and genocide prevention. Passed 55 years after the liberation of the death camps, the Stockholm Declaration was regarded by EU elites as compensating for decades of official silence about the Holocaust. Already in 1995, they had debated making 27 January— the day in 1945 that Soviet troops entered Auschwitz—an official day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, an idea taken up ten years later by the United Nations. In the place of failed efforts to provide an integrative EU memory based on common heritage, the Holocaust would now serve as Europe's foundation myth, the negation of its stated values (Diner 2004; Littoz-Monnet 2012).

This is not how East European states that emerged from communist rule saw matters. When ten of them joined the European Union in 2004, the opportunity arose to influence the continental memory regime. Conservative anticommunist governments among them could not regard 1945 and the liberation of the death camps as the European foundation moment because that year also marked the reimposition or commencement of nearly fifty years of Soviet domination. During 2008, conservative East European members of the European Parliament organised a conference and working group on "United Europe-United History" that led to the foundation of the "Reconciliation of European Histories Group," an informal all-party group of the European Parliament dominated by anticommunist East Europeans politicians. By reconciliation, it meant establishing a common approach to Nazi and Soviet crimes that sought equal

treatment of all victims of totalitarian violence. As might be expected given its orientation, the group opposed a proposed EU ban on the Nazi swastika because not also banning Soviet symbols would represent a double standard. In the same year, the European Commission, then chaired by a conservative Slovenian government, held public hearings on "Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes," and published a report coupling Nazi, fascist, and Stalinist crimes (Toth 2010, 8–10).

With supportive signals from the European Commission, which now sought to forge common European symbols, East European governments sponsored the 2009 European Parliament resolution on "European Conscience and Totalitarianism" that insisted on East European distinctiveness: those "countries have experienced both Communism and Nazism," meaning that "understanding has to be promoted in relation to the double legacy of dictatorship borne by these countries." Because the resolution had to gain a majority, it made passing reference to the "uniqueness of the Holocaust," but its burden was to counter the IHRA monopoly on the lessons of history by insisting that European integration and combatting "undemocratic, xenophobic, authoritarian and totalitarian ideas and tendencies" required the recognition of both Nazi and Communist crimes as Europe's "common legacy." It similarly undercut the centrality of antisemitism in the IHRA's anti-racism pedagogy by strategically adopting a generic victims' perspective to sideline perpetrator ideology in the evaluation of mass crimes: "from the perspective of the victims it is immaterial which regime deprived them of their liberty or tortured or murdered them *for whatever reason*" (EPD 2009, Emphasis added).

The non-hierarchical coupling of the Holocaust and Soviet crimes was continued in the "Platform of European Memory and Conscience," which was duly established as an NGO in 2011 pursuant to the EU Parliament resolution and the energy of the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, who then held the presidency of the European Parliament (Toth 2019, 17). Dominated by East European states, the platform is dedicated to "initiatives at the European level with a view to giving *indiscriminate treatment* to all crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as to their victims" (PMEC. Emphasis added). The coupling of Nazi and Soviet crimes thus undercut the concession to the Holocaust's uniqueness in the 2009 resolution.

As an alternative pan-European day of remembrance, the Prague Resolution proposed the "European Day of Remembrance for Victims of

Totalitarian Regimes" on August 23, the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. According to the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, it aims to commemorate the victims of mass deportation and extermination, as well as to promote democracy, peace, and stability in Europe," and was first officially undertaken in Warsaw in 2011 "under the auspices of the Polish Presidency" (INR). Setting this date as a new European remembrance day was momentous: 2009 marked the seventieth anniversary of the notorious treaty between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that assigned the three Baltic states to the latter and divided Poland between them. The pact had long been remembered in the affected countries as the beginning of their subjugation, whether by Germans or Russians. Even those East European countries not subject by the pact, like the Czech Republic and Hungary, supported this date in the Prague Declaration, because it generally symbolized Nazi and Soviet hegemony that affected them all. What is more, the end of communism between 1989 and 1991 was referenced by its serial imposition as of 1939 (Sierp 2017).

Partisan Critiques of Partisan Histories

These partisan histories have attracted much criticism, especially from local Jewish communities and their non-Jewish supporters. A prominent critic is Vilnius-based Jewish Studies scholar Dovid Katz who collates these criticisms on his website, www.defendinghistory.com. Articles there excoriate the double genocide thesis and the barely concealed antisemitism that continues to link Jews to Bolshevism and now Russia. Why should Stalinist and Hitlerian crimes be remembered on the same day or in the same ceremony, he and the Israelis Ephraim Zuroff and Yehuda Bauer ask? These figures do not deny that Soviet crimes should be commemorated; but why conflate them with the Holocaust? In many publications, they expose the partisan histories of the region's successful national liberation movements that commemorate the Christian but not the Jewish dead and that wilfully cover up the fact that some of their national heroes were implicated in murdering Jews, and that their partisan heroic foundations of their national projects are thereby compromised. They also understandably denounce attempts to prosecute elderly former Soviet-Jewish partisans while not pursuing possible nationalist war criminals in their own ranks (Bauer 2010; Katz 2009, 2010, 2011; Zuroff 2010a,b).

From a Russian perspective, the Eastern Europe attack on the "Great Patriotic War" mythology is tantamount to blasphemy of a sacred memory that "Russians living abroad" (i.e., those who moved to East European countries under communist rule) should resist. Such resistance can be violent, as the riots attending the relocation of the Bronze Solider statue (originally "Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn") in Estonia in 2007 demonstrated (Wulf 2016). As might be expected, Russia's foreign minister attacked such moves and what he called the glorification of "the Nazis and their collaborators" (Russia Today 2012; Mälksoo 2013).

However telling these criticisms are, they too are manifestations of partisan history. For the Western European and Israeli claim about commemorating the Holocaust appropriately is not only that it is distinct in certain ways, but that it is metahistorically unique and represents a fundamental rupture of western civilization. Western civilization, so the reasoning goes, can only be reconstructed by placing memory of the Holocaust at the centre of its memory regime. Moreover, as we see with critics below, genocide should be defined in such a way that the Holocaust is effectively the only genocide in world history. This is also the position of Israel, a state founded by a national liberation movement, comprising a considerable number of Holocaust survivors, which also gained independent statehood with terroristic violence against alleged occupiers of the "homeland," in this case Palestinian Arabs and British forces. It is one thing for local Jewish communities to protest about the repression of the Holocaust and quite another for beneficiaries of ethnic cleansing with its own partisan memory regime.

A prominent proponent of this position is the historian Yehuda Bauer, born in Prague in 1926, and a Zionist partisan fighter (*Palmach*: elite "strike force" of the Jewish underground army) in the "war of national independence" in 1947 and 1948. He was an initiator of the Taskforce on International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research in the late 1990s that set its historical-philosophical agenda: "The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning." The Holocaust, he continued, was a "conscious rebellion not just against the heritage of the Enlightenment, but against all the norms and traditions of Western civilization. Its utopia was a racist hierarchy, not any sort of egalitarianism" (Bauer 2009, 2010). This is a partisan proposition for any person who endured western colonialism with its claims about civilization and universal pretensions that justified racist

utopias. It is only possible to make such statements about "civilization" by ignoring African and other anti-colonial thinkers who have long pointed to the violence of European colonialism as its condition of possibility that undermined Europe and the West's right to preach to others and to define what is uniquely evil.

These are not Bauer's views alone. Quoting his many writings on this subject, the Austrian historian Heidemarie Uhl declared in the *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* that "Indeed, Holocaust memory has become the historical foundation of the ethical and moral values in Western civilization, the basis of a Europe committed to human rights, to the struggle against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination" (Uhl 2009). The tone is a new form of the civilizing mission that western Europeans have traditionally taken in relation to their apparently backward eastern neighbours (Wolff 1994; Mälksoo 2013, 182). The symptoms of the civilizing mission are the arrogation of the right to define civilization and to then to impose it on others in the name of universal rather than particular interests. Many western states are former colonial powers that deploy Holocaust memory in a partisan way, namely as a screen memory to cover over their own colonial crimes. Great Britain commemorates Holocaust Memorial Day, for example, while its government goes to great length to deny the violence it perpetrated in putting down national liberation movements in Asia and Africa in the 40s and 50s (Satia 2022).

The obfuscation of difficult knowledge about compromised pasts so typical of partisan history is also as apparent in Israel as in Eastern Europe. A law from 2011 enables the state to revoke funding for organisations that mourn Independence Day, as do Palestinian citizens of Israel, the memory NGO Zochrot, and cinemas screening films that incurred the ire of the culture and sports minister. The underground partisan forces that attacked Arabs are remembered in street names, as is the racist rabbi Meir Kahane who inspires the far-right in Israel (Azaryahu 1992; Ben-Ami 2011; Kolodney 2016). No partisan heroes from the war of independence were prosecuted for massacres and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, a task that would be rendered most difficult by the systematic cleansing of Israeli archives. Documents that survived the coverup reveal looting—like cutting off fingers for rings—and raping usually associated with civilian and partisan attacks on Jews just a few years before (Shezaf 2019; Gross 2016). Menachem Begin and Yitzak Shamir were members of ultra-nationalist terrorist organisations (Begin of the Irgun and Shamir of the Irgun and then Lehi ["Stern Gang"]) in the 1930s and 1940s, and later became

prime ministers of the country. In these respects, Israel exemplifies East European partisan history no less than Ukraine or Lithuania.

A further symptom of partisan ethnic memory is wilful blindness to Lemkin's broad definition of genocide, which was inspired by his Jewish religious upbringing, with its conviction that the nation was constituted as much by cultural memory and religious traditions greater than bare life (Moses 2021). Lemkin's invocation of "national spirit" also reflected the perspective of small nations, and is taken up by many East European states in their understanding of genocide. Observing that this legacy is being instrumentalized by Christian nationalist politicians and intellectuals, Dovid Katz and the Jewish-Lithuanian politician Leonidas Donskis restrict the definition of genocide to the Holocaust archetype. "Whether we like it or not," declared Donskis in 2009, "the Holocaust was the one and only bona fide genocide in human history … Ultimately, it was not a garden-variety mass killing." Donskis also sought to sever genocide from any imperial occupation nexus that Lemkin posited because, he continued, "we cannot regard the history of all our civilizations as one ongoing crime and one endless genocide of some group or other" (Donskis 2009). Such anthropological optimism is an expression of the philosophy that human civilization was progressing nicely until interrupted by the barbarism of the Holocaust.

Equally partisan is the trivialization of Soviet crimes. It is entirely reasonable for Bauer, Katz, and Zuroff to insist that the Soviet victory was a liberation for Jews. But it is partisan to suggest that it was necessarily a liberation for other members of this region because the Nazis were worse; that the Soviet crimes did not entail ethnic targeting, unlike the Holocaust, and that its repressive aspects were collateral damage or an unintended side effect; that the Soviet experience was somehow a progressive and idealistic if perverted project because locals could rise to positions of authority unlike Jews under the Nazis; and that the Soviets did not start the war when in fact they also invaded Poland (Zuroff 2010a; Mälksoo 2013, 188). In this manner, an English journalist railed against the double genocide thesis because, by any measure, the Holocaust surpassed Soviet crimes: "The oppression of the Soviet years was terrible, but it was not genocide: to be arrested is not to be shot into a pit. They are different and to say otherwise is to rob 'genocide,' a very specific term, of all meaning" (Freedland 2010). An Israeli journalist made the same point in insisting that "Stalin, with all its terrible crimes, did not develop a racial theory and did not engage in the systematic slaughter of peoples" (Primor 2012).

These are debatable assertions. Over eight million people—from many nationalities and social strata—died in Stalinist gulags and famines (Snyder 2011). That a racial theory makes the Nazi crimes more grave or significant is taken for granted rather than explained. Of course, there were differences between Nazism's apocalypticism—and ultimately, self-destructiveness—and later communism, which established a stable if brutal authoritarianism in the Brezhnev years, but that was after the mass killing of the Lenin and Stalin periods.

Insisting on Holocaust uniqueness is not a politically neutral or empirical assessment. It is a normative and highly partisan one that constitutes the standpoint for Israeli critics of East European memory regimes. Representative is the head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Israel office, Ephraim Zuroff, a religious-Zionist settler (migrating from the US diaspora in 1970) who lives in the illegal West Bank colony of Efrat. His presence there is possible only by military conquest, ethnic cleansing, and permanent occupation. His invocation of Holocaust uniqueness licences this positionality by claiming a special right of self-defence that blinds him to the invasive nature of his presence. "The history of the Middle East to date has shown that the best defence is a good offence," he said (Eesti Päevaleht 2002). It enables the same partisan ethno-nationalist politics as the East European he criticizes. The commitment to Greater Israel is no different to, say, the "Greater Hungary" or "Greater Romania" aspirations: militarily executed expansion in the name of recovering heritage and historical rights—naturally as an act of self-defence (Ibrahim 1990; Segal 2016; Solonari 2010).

The intersection of Holocaust uniqueness and expansion is nowhere more evident than in these extraordinary images of Israeli forces commemorating *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) as they demolished the residential tent in the Palestinian village of Susyia in the occupied West Bank before moving on to demolish edifices in the village of Um al-Khair (See Figs. 1 and 2).

Like East European partisans, these Israeli forces think they are driving out illegitimate populations—in this case, indigenous Palestinian villagers—who represent a supposed security threat or who stand in the way of realizing historical fantasies about homeland recovery and redemption. They engaged in extensive military violence to this end during the "war of independence" in 1947–1948 and now use legalized police coercion after conquest and occupation, as shown in these pictures. As noted above, for partisan forces, all opponents are the same: even hapless Palestinian

Fig. 1   Israeli military commemorate *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) as they demolish the residential tent in the Palestinian village of Susyia in the occupied West Bank. Image courtesy of Basil Adraa, May 2, 2019, with permission

villagers represent an existential threat and can be removed in good conscience inspired by Holocaust memory: never again will Jews be victims. Indeed, all Palestinians are demonized as mortal enemy, a "demographic timebomb," much as Baltic nationalists talk about the Russian-speaking minority. Zuroff criticizes the latter but not the former discourse because he is an exponent of partisan history.

Zuroff's declared intentions in denying the applicability of genocide to Soviet crimes also exemplifies partisan history. For example, he declares that Israel should not recognize the Holodomor as genocide because it lends credence to the claims of rightwing, antisemitic East Europeans (and Nazis) about Jews and communism. "If they [Soviet crimes] were [genocide], then that means that Jews committed genocide," he declared in a telling admission that attributes historical substance to the charge of "Judeo-Bolshevism." "There were Jews—not out of any loyalty to the Jewish people, and usually Jews who left the Jewish community—who worked in the KGB, in the Communist security apparatus, and did

Fig. 2 Israeli forces in the village of Um al-Khair. Image courtesy of Basil Adraa, May 2, 2019, with permission

horrible things. It's true" (Keinon 2019). To avoid the (in my view unnecessary) implication of Judeo-Bolshevism, he insists on placing the Holocaust at the apex of human suffering. The Israeli foreign ministry motive for likewise not recognizing the Holodomor as genocide has additional intensions, namely appeasing Russia (Sokol 2018).

CONCLUSION

These cases show also that just because the partisan memory has dirty hands does not mean its mutual criticisms are invalid. Such criticisms articulate the trauma of the victims of another national liberation movement: they correct each other's blind spots. Can a non-partisan history thus be imagined? Are East Europeans—including their diasporic communities and Israelis—able to face the criminality of their founding moments without flinching and playing partisan historical games? It seems possible when one considers that the emphasis on a titular population's sufferings is likely a compensation for their long repression in public remembrance under

communism. In that sense, partisan historical theses like "double genocide" are forms of stigma management to negotiate ontological security in the face of normative remembrance hierarchies from WWII and its related genocidal practices (Adler-Nissen 2014; Mälksoo 2015). At the same time, Western Europeans would need to think in terms of learning processes rather than civilizing missions by imagining, say, the state of their nations had they been occupied by the Soviets since the 1940s with attendant persecutions and deportations. Non-partisan history and politics seem possible only when alternatives to anti-fascist and anti-totalitarian memory regimes evolve; when *all* victims—including colonial subjects—are mourned with the same emotional intensity that partisan liberation heroes enjoy (Gruber 2002; Gutman 2017).

Alas, conditions within the East European region of memory, and tensions between it and Western Europe and Russia, indicate that partisan history is unlikely to abate. A classic security dilemma, the memory security of one state represents an existential threat for another (Mälksoo 2015). Russia has been locked in a struggle with the Baltic states and Ukraine about the "Great Patriotic War" for years, and even invaded the latter in February 2022 to supposedly effect its "denazification." The Riga Museum of Occupation devotes its webpage to refuting Russian "fake news" about its partisan heroes, while Western Ukrainians rush to defend the reputation of Stepan Bandera, the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) militia that murdered Jews and Poles in an alliance of convenience with the German occupation of Soviet Ukraine during the Second World War. The Ukrainian government of the "orange revolution" had declared Bandera a "hero of Ukraine," and dedicated the year of 2019 to his honour (Rossoliński-Liebe 2014). In turn, Russia refers to the Ukrainian government as "Banderist" while refusing to acknowledge crimes the Soviet Union committed against East Europeans, let alone the Holodomor. In the Balkans, former belligerents engage in ranking victimhood—Jasenovac vs Vukovar vs Srebrenica—each standing as the "crime of crimes" for Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks respectively, each making claims to genocide and Holocaust terminology. Denial is part of this competition (Barton Hronešová 2021). Responding to the attempt of the outgoing international High Representative for Bosnia–Herzegovina Valentin Inzko to amend the state criminal code to criminalize denial of genocide, Bosnian Serb leaders engaged an Israeli Holocaust expert to cast doubt on Bosnian claims of genocide (Subotić 2022).

Partisan histories continue on the western front of the East European region of memory as well. A long-planned diplomatic initiative between

Israel and Visegrád states to strengthen rightwing populist forces in those countries was scuttled in early 2019 when Poland took umbrage at a statement by an Israeli politician about Polish antisemitism and culpability for the Holocaust (Heller 2019). Then on January 23, 2020, the Polish government boycotted the World Holocaust Forum meeting commemorating the 75th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation for giving a platform to Russian president, Vladimir Putin, to criminalize neighbouring partisan republics as former Nazi collaborators while conveniently omitting mention of the Soviet role in partitioning Poland (Pfeffer 2020). Memory conflicts like these exemplify "political hysterias" observed by Bibó. The current stalemate repeats the partisan terms of discourse that led to mass violence in the first place.

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