

Pakier, Małgorzata; Stråth, Bo (Hrsg.): *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. Oxford: Berghahn Books 2010. ISBN: 978-1-84545-621-4; 372 S.

**Rezensiert von:** Berthold Molden, Institut für Geschichte, Universität Wien

The volume „A European Memory. Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance“ is one of the most interesting among the many recent publications in the much-discussed field of potentially transnational European politics of history and memory. It is the product of a seminar series held at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence in 2007 co-organized by the book's two editors: the historian Bo Stråth, then professor for European history at the EUI, and the film and memory historian Małgorzata Pakier, at the time a PhD-student in Stråth's team. The other authors participated in the workshops either as students or as invited experts and cover a wide range of topics structured in the six parts of the volume. These sections indicate central realms of current debates in European social memory studies: theoretical problems of normativity in the analysis of public memory and politics of history; and the four empirical fields most intensely discussed in academic and political debates – the memory of World War II, Holocaust memory, the memory of Communist rule, and the memory of colonialism.

In the beginning, the editors pose the open question „A European Memory?“ and define the terrain on which the 21 rather short essays are about to uncoil. They leave no doubt that the mnemonic arena of Europe is a highly political field in which recollections and representations are elements in the strategies of interested actors trying to establish hegemonies in the (trans-)national memory cultures of the continent. They once again distinguish between history and memory in order to define historians as but one more group of actors in these relations of forces, and yet equipped with the crucial quality of critical analysis. They briefly tackle some central controversies within memory studies, mark Avishai Margalit's model of ethical and mnemonic communities as their single most important con-

ceptual reference point and arrive at a rather consensual conclusion – one that, in terms of European politics of history, might be called historico-politically correct: „to work not towards a European collective memory in the singular, in a homogenising and essentialising sense, but towards the construction of European collective memories in the plural, which strive for a growing understanding of diversity“ (p. 13). In short, they seem to put their scholarly efforts in the service of a heterogeneous European *politeia*.

The first section, „Normative Perspectives and Lines of Division of European Memory Constructions“, is opened by Jan-Werner Müller's general observations on the often normative process of representing Europe in social memory. He states that the development of common principals in the representation of the past is more likely than that of a genuinely shared memory of all Europeans. Despite his skepticism concerning a transnationalization of memory, he does observe the disappearance of national memories. Klas-Göran Karlsson neatly historicizes European memory politics since the 1970s, in particular since the above-mentioned Declaration on European Identity, contextualizing the efforts to invest the structural integration of European politics with the creation of an engaged or at least European citizenry. He calls this cultural integration the Third Wave of Europeanization and identifies different (existential, moral, ideological, political, academic) „uses“ of history. In addition to this categorical map, Stefan Troebst comes up with a brief spatial cartography of European memory cultures, checking Halecki's three historical regions – Western, Central, and Eastern Europe – on their applicability for the memory of the Holocaust and Stalinist repression. Wolfgang Kaschuba, on the other hand, comments on the Eurocentric nature of a potentially emerging global canon of mnemonic icons. The second section, „Towards a Fluid Conceptualisation of Memory Constructs“, contains more contributions that are theoretical. Heidmarie Uhl introduces her interpretation of the well-known metaphor of memory as a palimpsest, in example the overwriting of media containing previous meaning, and James Kaye reflects on photographic representations

of twentieth century history.

The remaining two thirds of the book are dedicated to those experiences of collective terror that make for most examples and empirical touchstones of European memory studies in general (and, as mentioned, of this volume). The section „Remembering the Second World War“ contains Stefan Berger’s overview on the diachronic development of European WWII-memory from national to partly transnationalized frames of reference and Heike Karge’s and Clemens Maier’s analyses of two regional particularities in this process: Karge writes on East and South-Eastern European politics of history, for instance concerning the self-liberation in Yugoslavia, and Maier on Danish and Norwegian commemorations of the liberation from German rule. Section four is dedicated to dynamics leading „Towards a Europeanisation of the Commemoration of the Holocaust“. Again, this section is introduced with an all-European perspective, in this case written by Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke and focusing on the post-war years and then goes into regional examples featuring special sub-foci. While Stanisław Tyszk’a article on the Czech Republic and Poland concentrates on the restitution of Jewish property, Małgorzata Pakier’s text checks an alleged Europeanization of memory cultures against the concrete case of German-Polish film discourse (the reception of the film *„Europa Europa“*), and Ruth Nattermann looks into the specifics of survivor-narratives. Tyszk’a remains skeptical towards the diagnosis of transnationalization and Pakier’s conclusion, too, is in line with the message of the introduction: One has to stick to cases and sources and be careful with universal gestures, because while the Europeanization of Holocaust memory may not be in sight, what may be aspired to by the architects of such a continental memory is but the „mutual understanding of just how different the European experiences are“ (p. 203).

The fifth section is on „Coming to Terms with Europe’s Communist Past“. Afron Rees’ summary article about „the Former Communist States“ (p. 219) mainly concentrates on Russian and Ukrainian politics of history. Under the somewhat misleading title „Eurocommunism“, Péter Apor covers the ground for

some of the other communist countries like Hungary, Romania or (Post-)Yugoslavia and is rather critical towards the neo-national denunciation and externalization of the communist regimes. The setoff of „communist crimes“ vs. „fascist crimes“ comes as the populist flip side interpretation of a historical entwinement that has also produced celebrated academic analysis<sup>1</sup>, and is a known point of attention. Senadin Musabegović’ analysis of the role of physical bodies in Yugoslavia (Tito’s body, the fallen heroes of the resistance, the victims of mass-violence) shows the merits of cultural history in the style of Sergio Luzzatto’s take on Mussolini’s physical presence and charismatic afterlife.<sup>2</sup> Western European, particularly British and French, accounts and interpretations of the communist pasts are at the center of Kevin Morgan’s article. He points out interdependences between the memory and amnesia of communism, fascism and colonialism and identifies „complicity“ and „teleology“ as central argumentative tropes in these debates. The last and final section, „Coming to Terms with Europe’s Colonial Past“, is remarkably short. It contains a good summary of the European „big case“ of French colonial memory, highlighting the impact of the Colonial on metropolitans, by Jan Jansen; and one marginal case: the inner colonization of Finish-speaking minorities in the Norwegian-Swedish-Russian borderlands, by Lars Elenius. Still, given the relative scarceness of this section, it is only fitting that Konrad Jarausch, in the volume’s conclusion, calls colonialism the „least remembered“ aspect of European history.

In defining its fields of interest and formulating research interests, this volume coincides with most of the „seven circles of European memory“ that Claus Leggewie listed in 2010.<sup>3</sup> It comes in time as a worthy and in-

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010; ; cf. Stefan Troebst: review of: Snyder, Timothy: *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler And Stalin*. New York 2010, in: *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 11.02.2011, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/id=16087>> (16.05.2012).

<sup>2</sup> Sergio Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce. Mussolini’s Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy*, New York 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Leggewie also included expulsion, immigration and the European success-story, cf. Claus Leggewie, *Seven circles of European memory*, in: *Eurozine*,

sightful reader on one of the core fields of debate in European social and human sciences, with its focus on the representations of the most deplorable parts of European twentieth century history. Interestingly, apart from communist regimes seen as perpetrators, the „memory“ of Europe’s contradictory emergence during and after the Cold War is not a systematic part of the book. Hence, controversial historico-political constellations like those surrounding the creation of the House of European history remain examples of a field of research yet-to-be integrated in such efforts. Yet, of course, the book has everything to do with this contingent intellectual, social and political history of collective representations of the European past. Many of its articles offer interesting thoughts and useful introductions, highlighting both actors and structures of „memory production“. We are not surprised to see its second edition as a paperback only two years after its original publication. It will no doubt be a handy companion in classes on politics and history in contemporary Europe.

HistLit 2012-2-172 / Berthold Molden über Pakier, Małgorzata; Stråth, Bo (Hrsg.): *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. Oxford 2010, in: H-Soz-Kult 11.06.2012.