

nung und damit auch kein Sicherheitssystem dauerhaft etablieren konnte. Um die Lage in Europa zu stabilisieren, plädieren sie dafür, „die Welt und ihre Konflikte mit den Augen der Gegenseite anzuschauen“ (S. 558) und „sich [...] an das zu erinnern, was erreicht und wieder verloren wurde“ (S. 559). Letztendlich sei die Verhandlungsbereitschaft Russlands der wesentliche Faktor in diesen Überlegungen. Sollte diese jemals gegeben sein, könne die KSZE als Vorbild für zukünftige Verhandlungen dienen. Während sich Weisskirchen in seiner Ausführung auf die Staaten Europas und dem Streben nach einer lokalen Lösung konzentriert, beziehen Brandt und Segert den Globalen Süden als neuen Akteur in der Wirtschaft und die Auswirkungen der Klimakrise auf ökologische Entscheidungen in ihre Überlegungen mit ein.

In den einzelnen Beiträgen gelingt es in hervorragender Weise, das weite thematische Spektrum abzubilden, das unter dem Begriff „Sicherheit“ zusammengefasst wird. Neben den bereits genannten Schwerpunkten finden auch die Rolle der Wirtschaft, nationale Besonderheiten in der Phase des Wandels in Osteuropa, Erklärungsansätze zum Niedergang der Sowjetunion, Entwicklungen der postsowjetischen Periode und Zukunftsperspektiven für Europa Platz in diesem Sammelband. In der Gesamtheit gelingt es, den Fokus weg von den beiden Großmächten und hin zu einzelnen Staaten zu lenken. Die Beiträge zeigen die Vielfalt der Staaten des Warschauer Paktes und ihre individuellen Probleme und Herausforderungen im untersuchten Zeitraum. Dabei stützten sich die Beiträge auf eine breite Quellenbasis und verfolgen eine umfangreiche Palette an Theorien. Neben klassischer Diplomatiegeschichte finden sich Ansätze der New Diplomatic History und Oral History, soziografische Analysen und Texte, die stark prozessorientiert sind.

Besonders hervorzuheben sind die vielfältigen Hintergründe der Beitragenden. Unter den Autorinnen und Autoren finden sich u. a. Botschafter und Diplomaten, Publizisten und Journalisten, Politikwissenschaftler und Historiker und Mitglieder diverser dissidentischer und oppositioneller Bewegungen. Dies schlägt sich sowohl im Inhalt als auch in der Gestaltung der Texte nieder. Während der Großteil den Konventionen wissenschaftlicher Beiträge folgt, sind manche Texte der Kategorie „Journalismus“ oder „Memoiren“ zuzuordnen und kommen ohne viele Verweise auf weiterführende Literatur aus. Jeweils für sich betrachtet, erfüllen die Texte jedoch hohe Standards.

Zusammengefasst bietet der Sammelband spannende neue Einblicke in die letzte Phase des Kalten Krieges sowie die aktuelle Lage Europas. Ein verbindendes Element ist die Frage nach der Gestaltung der Zukunft des Kontinents. Die Beiträge liefern dafür verschiedene Lösungsansätze. Kleine Schwachpunkte, wie die uneinheitliche Gestaltung bzw. das Fehlen von Literaturangaben am Ende mancher Beiträge oder die einmalige Verwechslung von KSZE und OSZE, sind daher kaum erwähnenswert und schmälern den Beitrag des Sammelbands zur Geschichtsschreibung dieser Epoche oder die beeindruckende redaktionelle und verlegerische Arbeit keinesfalls.

Innsbruck

Nina Hechenblakner

Kate Korycki: Weaponizing the Past. Collective Memory and Jews, Poles, and Communists in Twenty-First Century Poland (Worlds of Memory, Bd. 11.) Berghahn Books. New York – Oxford 2023. 218 S., Ill. ISBN 978-1-80539-050-3 (\$ 135,–)

In 2018, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) passed an amendment to a historical memory law that would make assigning blame to Poles or the Polish nation for crimes committed by Germans or Soviets punishable by up to three years in prison. The move sparked outrage, especially in the United States and Israel. The Western press dubbed it Poland's "Holocaust Law" and rumors abounded that it had become illegal to even talk about the murder of Jews in Poland. Frankly, for those outside Poland, this amendment made little sense, and seemed only to reinforce a stereotype of pervasive Polish antisemitism. But to those inside the country, this was just another salvo in a drawn-out battle over who controls the political conversation.

A new book helps English readers to unravel this mystery. *Weaponizing the Past* delves into the interaction between historical memory and political identity in Poland. Kate Korycki—using the lenses of political science, sociology and memory studies—argues that the interpretation and manipulation of the communist past, particularly its conflation with Jewishness, has become a potent tool in the hands of political actors since the end of communism. This book offers a compelling analysis of how historical narratives are deployed to shape present-day political realities.

K. divides the current post-communist political landscape into four distinct positions: the “Patriots” (PiS and its devotees), the “Liberals” (associated with the former left, SLD), the “Managers” (associated with the centrist Civic Platform, PO), and the “Objectors” (the new left, *Razem*). Though there is some overlap between the groups, the most distinguishing feature is how each one relates to the communist government, ranging from condemnation to apologetics.

The book draws on extensive research, including examination of party platforms, popular historical works, and 150 “semistructured” interviews with politicians, intellectuals, academics and activists conducted over eight months of field work (p. 6). K. compares these sources on their own and across party lines to examine the internal consistency of each party’s narrative. But before all of that, the author gives us two whole chapters focused on theory. While the strong theoretical basis may be a necessity of the field, I found the book is strongest when K. is performing meaty textual analysis.

The past matters in present-day Poland in large part because of how the post-communist regime is legitimated and who claims the right to rule it. And this fact, K. writes, “will open up the past as a political resource in the present” (p. 4). She emphasizes the active role of political elites in shaping the nation and defining “who is ‘we’ to what is ‘them’,” (p. 4) challenging static views of national identity. Nonetheless, Poles today largely imagine themselves as a narrowly ethnic nation, with the condemnation of communism inextricably linked to antisemitism.

In the four empirical chapters, K. explores how each group constructs its historical consciousness and narrative arc of the past 80 years or so. Among the four groups listed above, the Patriots control the narrative, all other groups are responding to their claims. In particular, the Patriots’ historical narrative established “communism as the worst calamity to have befallen the Poles, and it presented Jews as the carriers of that worst calamity. It therefore automatically excluded Jews from the Polish nation and made the nation itself acquire race-like foundations” (p. 86). As such, the Patriots solidified the Judeo-Bolshevik myth, accepting it as objective truth. In their usage “communist” becomes a pejorative label for a type of person, not simply someone who holds certain beliefs.

This allows the Patriots not only to portray themselves as engaged in a moral crusade against a pervasive, almost existential threat, but also to avoid confronting the uncomfortable truth that the vast majority of the people holding up the communist system were Polish Catholics, not Jews. This fact also then impacts the way that the Holocaust can be discussed. The primacy of Polish victimhood during World War II in contemporary narratives impedes the ability of Poles to see Jews as victims, since Jews are understood to be the “perpetrators” of communism. Accepting the Judeo-Bolshevik myth is an invitation to antisemitism and harmful stereotyping. But as a political strategy, it is shockingly effective. The Patriots claim that the current Polish (Third) Republic has never actually rid itself of communists/Jews, and therefore needs to undergo a cleansing.

The Managers—Jacek Kuroń and Jacek Żakowski in particular—present a seemingly pluralistic historical narrative. However, K. argues that this narrative still contains elements of guilt-allaying for uncomfortable aspects of wartime and postwar treatment of Jews. The Liberals, on the other hand, often engage in apologetics for the communist era, highlighting communist leaders’ “admirable” restraint. They also offer excuses for events like *Akcja Wisła*, the forced resettlement of Ukrainians after World War II, referencing the violence of the Volhynian massacres during the war.

The Objectors, mostly the circles around *Razem* and *Krytyka Polityczna*, offer a different perspective. K. selected the book *PRL bez uprzedzeń*¹ as most representative for this group. In it, the authors acknowledge the great achievements of the communist era in areas such as gender equality, education, and the economy. However, they reject communism as a political system. They seek to differentiate their vision of a democratic and open society from the oppressive reality of People's Poland.

While focusing on the specifics of the Polish context, K. suggests that her analysis offers insights into broader trends, particularly the rise of right-wing populism. One of the book's strongest insights is the fact that parties in Poland today "see each other [not] as political opponents but as hostile tribes" (p. 12). This is true of contexts well beyond Poland, and one might ask why in the modern world this remains the case. K.'s explanation that battles over commemoration and history are largely to blame does not necessarily apply to all other countries, but it certainly does work for much of Europe and perhaps even the United States. K. does present a strong case for the idea that Poland is a good case from which scholars can build on to research the causes and dynamics of other populist movements.

Her main contribution lies in demonstrating how memory studies can illuminate the ways that historical narratives are mobilized in politics. By examining the nuanced ways in which Polish political parties "harness their mnemonic capital," (p. 177) K. provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex relationship between past and present in the political arena. The book should find a natural audience among memory studies scholars and political scientists who are looking to understand the weaponization of the past.

Warszawa

Zachary Mazur

1 JAKUB MAJMUREK, PIOTR SZUMLEWICZ (eds.): *PRL bez uprzedzeń* [Polish People's Republic without Prejudices], Warszawa 2010.