"Us" as Perpetrators and Collaborators in Post-Socialist Memorial Museums in the Era of Victimhood

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When it comes to characterizing different actors in World War II, there is a striking difference between academic discussions on and museological representations of the various wartime subject positions. While museum exhibitions often still resort to a simplistic distinction between victims, perpetrators, and witnesses, in scholarly writing, this triad has long been questioned to propose a new set of categories. Scholarship critically reworked the older term "bystanders" (Darley and Latané 377) by adding categories like "facilitators and beneficiaries" (Fulbrook 7), "participating observers" (Janicka 138), or "implicated subjects" (Rothberg 1). The new terms emphasize that, for example, watching an execution is by no means indifferent witnessing, but participation in the crime. I argue that memorial museums do not reflect the complexity of the scholarly debates: the medium of exhibition is always based on selective curatorial choices and can never achieve the complexity of a historical study (Macdonald and Fyfe). Also, in many countries, the "we" as perpetrators and collaborators remains the most difficult topic to incorporate into national history and, consequently, into memorial museums.

In some contexts, and to some degree, those scholarly discussions resonate in recently reworked permanent exhibitions, especially in Germany and Austria. At the Mauthausen concentration camp memorial, the tour now foregrounds the involvement of the local population, and, instead of starting inside of the camp as before, it now begins outside, looking at the soccer field where SS men played—against local teams and watched by the local population—next to the death camp. The 2013 permanent exhibition discusses not only Austrian perpetrators, but also intermarriages between SS men and local women. As the case of Germany shows, if you cannot portray your country as a victim, there is an obvious profit from acknowledging the perpetrator position and creating a new, proud national identity based on this "negative memory" (Koselleck 27) of the crimes committed, not suffered, by one's own community.

Yet, in the museums that this article focuses on, those dealing with World War II in post-socialist European Union member states, the situation is more complex because a self-critical confrontation with the past clashes with the rewriting of national history after 1989. The problem with the current era of victimhood (Rousso 32) in Europe is that national memory politics view the crimes committed by one's own collective as standing in the way of the narrative of national victimhood. The critical acknowledgement of Nazi collaboration and/or economic profit from the Holocaust by the majority population is perceived as a threat to one's collective and/or individual identity.

The starting point for this special issue was the assumption that, in the post-socialist space, the narratives of victimhood at the hands of two totalitarian regimes of Nazism and Stalinism have dominated the politics of memory and, until recently, have left the questions of local perpetration, collaboration, and complicity in the Holocaust and state socialism largely

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unaddressed. I test this hypothesis by confronting it with findings from my long-term research project about post-socialist World War II memorial museums.

In my project, I analyzed museums in *all* post-socialist EU member states, from Estonia to Croatia. I was especially interested in how the respective countries used the museums in order to communicate with "Europe" during the EU accession talks and often opened new or changed permanent exhibitions. (Radonić, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg*) I have argued that there are two ways in which post-socialist memorial museums "communicated with Europe" in this phase: One group of museums explicitly referenced "Western standards," "invocated" Europe on the text level, and tried to prove their "Europe-readiness" by copying Western musealization techniques and by revealing "our" perpetratorship and collaboration as a kind of entrance ticket to the EU. I am not projecting a normative concept of "Europeanness" onto the museum landscape; rather, the museum directors themselves in this phase spoke of a "European standard" and wanted their exhibitions to be "internationally recognizable and in the context of international standards," as I will show. Several museums tried to prove their "Europeanness" by copying musealization trends from the non-European United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), showing that what has been described as the cosmopolitization of the Holocaust (Levy and Sznaider) and the Europeanization of the Holocaust (Judt) were going hand in hand in the early 2000s. The second group of museums, in turn, during EU accession demanded that "Europe" or "the West" acknowledge their country's suffering from communist crimes, which they depicted as worse than those of the Nazi occupation. They understood confronting "our" own perpetratorship and collaboration as standing in the way of recognition of "our" victimhood under communism.

In this article, I analyze how these museums address "our" perpetrators, collaborators, or subjects implicated in the Holocaust and Soviet crimes. I argue that this differs depending on which of the two museum groups they belong to. In the first part of this paper, I analyze museums that "invocate Europe": the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest, the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising, and the Jasenovac Memorial Museum in Croatia. This group extensively depicts perpetratorship and collaboration—albeit introduced primarily for the purpose of memory diplomacy during EU accession talks in the 2000s and with some significant gaps. In the second part, I discuss examples of the second group, which perceives Nazi collaboration as a threat to the victimhood narrative: the Museum of Genocide Victims in Lithuania (recently renamed the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights), the Museum of Occupation of Latvia, and the House of Terror in Budapest. For this group I argue that demanding Europe and the West to acknowledge Soviet crimes mattered most to them and that they either completely omitted Nazi collaboration in their exhibitions or, where mentioned, exculpated it. My case selection is limited to the most clear-cut representatives of the two groups and puts special emphasis on the countries that had quisling regimes collaborating with the Nazis.[2]

My research is based on visits to the museums, photo and film documentation of the permanent exhibitions, exchanges with museum officials, site analysis, and critical discourse analysis of the museum exhibitions, guidebooks, and museum websites. While my previous works focused on aesthetics, visual, and object representations in museum exhibitions (Radonić,

[2] There was also will for collaboration in German-occupied Poland, yet this case is left out given the focus on quisling regimes.

"Post-Communist Memorial Museums"), this article analyzes narratives because perpetrators and collaboration are primarily addressed on the textual level. Wherever they are exhibited in photographs, these elements will be included.

Acknowledging "Us" as Perpetrators as an EU Entry Ticket

The "memory-boom" in the West after the Cold War emphasized the Holocaust as the negative icon of the twentieth century and brought a change in the focus of remembrance: the figure of the hero-martyr has been replaced by the victim. The Holocaust has become a universal imperative for the respect of human rights and a "container" for the memory of different victims. In Europe, this "universalization of the Holocaust" (Eckel and Moisel 9–13) has become a negative European founding myth. Especially in the early 2000s, post-war Europe was understood as a collective that developed shared structures in order to avoid a recurrence of the Holocaust (Judt 933–66). While not "officially" applied during the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004, vague "European standards" were applied by the future member countries, as suggested by the fact that Hungary's Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest opened a few weeks before the country joined the EU, despite no permanent exhibition having been installed at that point. Beside copying the dark aesthetics of "Western" Holocaust memorial museums and focusing on individual victims by exhibiting their private photographs, biographical objects, and testimonies, another element of this proof of "Europe-readiness" is the inclusion of "us" as perpetrators and collaborators.

Museums of this Europe-invoking group included self-critical acknowledgement of perpetratorship and collaboration into their permanent exhibitions to a much higher degree than the second group did. Yet, in this first group, this topic also remains a difficult one: several curatorial strategies are applied to achieve this "invocation of Europe," while keeping self-critical confrontation with the past on a superficial level.

Holocaust Memorial Center

The state-funded Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest is located at the site of a renovated 1920s synagogue; the permanent exhibition about the Holocaust and Roma genocide in Hungary is placed underground. Its self-critical confrontation with Hungarian Holocaust perpetrators and collaborators in the 2006 permanent exhibition can be understood as part of a "diplomacy with memory" (Bachleitner 492)—as an international appeasement signal after the nationalist House of Terror museum had been heavily criticized after Viktor Orbán opened it, aimed at a domestic audience, during his election campaign in 2002. The fact that Hungary felt the need to open the museum a few weeks before the country joined the EU can be understood as a result of the "Europeanization of the Holocaust." Furthermore, the museum explicitly names the USHMM as a role model and follows a program "based on museum techniques from Western Europe," as the director, Szabolcs Szita, put it (quoted in Molnár). It strongly relies on the international trend to focus on individual victims.

Of all the museums in my sample, this one has incorporated "negative memory" in the most extensive way. The permanent exhibition tackles the issue of Hungarian perpetrators with texts and photographs displayed at the highest level of visibility. It introduces visitors not only to the German perpetrators, but also to the responsible minister in the Hungarian collaborationist government and the Hungarian "deportation trio" in charge of the deportations

on the ground. The exhibition refers to gendarmes who systematically robbed Jews, prevented them from bringing food into the ghetto, and raped or tortured them (Fritz 171). There are even three photographs on display of ordinary Hungarians looting a ghetto, here also documenting the participation of female perpetrators—a rare visual representation for post-socialist museums.

The exhibition offers an unsparing account of the "right-wing, antisemitic, nationalist and anticommunist" regime of Miklós Horthy (1920–1944) (*From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide* CT).[3] No attempt is made to externalize and lay Hungarian responsibility at the feet of the Germans, a trend prominent in Hungary since the second (2010) Orbán government. In contrast, the 2006 exhibition makes clear that "it was not under pressure from German leadership that Hungarian governments prepared the first anti-Jewish bills, and the Parliament and Regent Horthy passed them into law not in fear of the Nazi army, but under pressure from the Hungarian extreme right, and at most in emulation of the German model" (CT). The exhibition discusses earlier antisemitism in Hungary: "In the 1880s, 'modern,' racially motivated antisemitism reared its head in Hungary, too, its proponents declaring that the Jewish 'race' intended to dominate the world, and to that end exploited and destroyed nations" (CT).

Unlike during the phase of massive European enlargement in 2004, such a critical depiction of Hungarian responsibility has been largely impossible since 2010, due to the Fidesz party's authoritarian backlash and historical revisionism. It can be assumed that Orbán has not closed or replaced the "old" exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial Center, although it totally contradicts Fidesz's memory politics today, because this would cause too much international protest. Instead, Fidesz has been planning to open a second Holocaust museum in Budapest, the "House of Fates," in 2014. Yet the long-finished building is still closed because the museum has been heavily criticized by both the Hungarian Jewish communities and international opponents of rewriting history. The frontwoman of Fidesz's historical revisionism and director of the House of Terror, Mária Schmidt, was supposed to become the head of the new House of Fates (Laczó). She wanted the museum to focus on the "Hungarian-Jewish love story" (Schmidt, "A Love Story")—the exact opposite of self-critically confronting the past. The giant difference between the approaches to Hungarian responsibility in these two memorial museums shows how central this topic is to encoding the politics of each respective government at a given time—either as a signal of "Europe-readiness" or as an attempt to enforce a national victimhood myth that externalizes responsibility.

Museum of the Slovak National Uprising

The Slovak National Uprising (SNU) was a 1944 armed insurrection enacted by partisans and defectors from the Nazi-satellite Slovak Army. It was crushed by Nazis and the Slovak collaborationist regime. The Museum of the Slovak National Uprising, financed by the Slovak Ministry of Culture, has been located in Banská Bystrica since 1969.

The current permanent exhibition opened in 2004, the year Slovakia joined the EU. "In contrast to previous exhibitions in the past forty years, the SNU is no longer presented as an isolated historical event having an exclusive class (regime) or national meaning but it is rather presented in a European historical context," as Lášticová and Findor (237) showed. In 2000,

[3] Throughout, CT refers to a given exhibition's curatorial text, while AG refers to its audio guide. Since changes can be made to curatorial text after an exhibit opens, I have chosen to list the year(s) when I photographed each exhibition in the reference list instead of the year that exhibition opened.

the museum's director explained his plans to expand the museum's sphere of interest in order "to fill empty areas in the historical memory so as to be able to correspond to a European standard" (quoted in Sniegon 187). In the exhibition concept, it says: "Even today when Slovakia is striving to take part in the European integration process the antifascist resistance and the SNP have significance as political capital which cannot be lost" (Stanislav and Tóth 7). This invocation of Slovakia's Europeanness is obvious in the name of the exhibition, *Slovakia in Europe's Antifascist Resistance Movement 1939–1945*, and in the titles of exhibition parts like "Europe and Slovakia After the Year 1938."

Accordingly, the responsibility of Slovak authorities for the Holocaust is addressed. The section on "The Tragedy of Slovak Jews" makes clear that, in 1942, the "Slovak Government deported by its own legal-administrative means almost 58.000 Jews from Slovakia to Nazi extermination camps" (*Slovakia in Europe's Antifascist Resistance Movement 1939–1945* CT). "Slovakia paid 500 Reich Marks to the Third Reich for each deported Jew as evacuation fee. The deportations were brutally organized particularly by the members of Hlinka's Guard and the FS [Flying Squads of the Slovak collaborators, the Hlinka Guard]" (CT). The panel devoted to the crushing of the Uprising names both German and Slovak perpetrators: the paramilitary Flying Squads of Hlinka's Guards (POGH), the Heimatschutz squads, and others.

The computer information screens in the exhibition contain the most information regarding Slovak perpetrators. The mass murder of Jews and Roma in Kremnička and Nemecká after the Uprising is addressed: "These were premediated and planned extermination actions […]. The direct participants in the murders (the POGH members) were under the pledge of secrecy on the basis of SS-Obersturmführer Deffner's order. They had to confirm it by their signatures. This fact proves that both the organizers and the executioners were fully aware of the actual character of their criminal deeds" (CT).

Yet the exhibition has some "elephants in the room" (Zerubavel 11) and gaps. While the screens display the organizational structure of the collaborationist Hlinka party in great detail, the party's ideology and the question of antisemitism in Slovak society are missing. Instead, the panel on the "Solution of the Jewish Question" ends with the information that "many Slovaks in spite of the threat of being imprisoned and risking their own lives helped save hundreds of Jews" (CT). It also avoids mentioning that Slovaks fought against Slovaks during the uprising, not only against Nazis.

Also, there is a tension between admitting that, in many cases, Slovaks acted as perpetrators and attempting to portray the collaborationist state in a more neutral way. The exhibition depicts the "Slovak republic" (1939–1945) as an "authoritarian political system" in which political parties other than the HSLS were banned, with a constitution "very close to authoritarian systems of the fascist Italy and Frankist Spain" (CT). Yet, the term "Slovak Republic" is used without inverted commas, indicating that the satellite state had really been a Republic in the beginning and that the Assembly's powers were abolished only "gradually." Implicitly, the Slovak state is depicted as a milestone towards Slovak independence in 1993: "In spite of the authoritarian regime the Slovak Republic achieved many positive results in the areas of economy, science, schools and culture, owing to the war boom" (CT). This new depiction stems from the revisionist narrative of the 1990s (Pauličkova 550) but has found its way into the museum for the first time in the current exhibition.

The integration of the nationalist narrative about "positive" aspects of the collaborationist regime with the claim to "Europeanization" constitutes a "national-European" narrative (Sniegon 166), which attempts to incorporate both dimensions so as to re-narrate Slovak history after 1989. The exhibition does not relativize Slovak responsibility for the extermination of Slovak Jews: it names perpetrators and collaborators but remains ambivalent in its characterization of the Slovak collaborationist state.

Jasenovac Memorial Museum

Another case in point is the Jasenovac Memorial Museum, founded in the 1960s and today financed by the Croatian Ministry of Culture; the museum is located at the site of the former Ustasha death camp in Croatia. The first permanent exhibition created after Croatia's independence opened during the EU accession talks in 2006. It highlights individual victims of the Ustasha camp. Nataša Jovičić, the former director, stressed that "we want to be part of the modern European education and museum system and follow the framework we get from the institutions dealing with these topics" (*Vjesnik*, July 24, 2004). The 2006 exhibition had been conceptualized with international experts to be "internationally recognizable and in the context of international standards" (*Vjesnik*, February 14, 2004). The fact that this permanent exhibition, with its dark rooms, white names of victims against a dark background, and focus on individual victims, looks so similar to the exhibition at Budapest's Holocaust Memorial Center, also opened in 2006, was what sparked my interest in this comparative topic in the first place.

The exhibition leaves no doubt that the Croatian Nazi collaborators, the Ustashe—in contrast to most other collaborationist regimes—were running the camp on their own. The textboard "Ways of Leaving the Camp" refers to the camps as "Ustasha camps" (Jasenovac Memorial Museum CT). Another formulation on the textboard titled "Death Camp" again implicitly names the perpetrators: "Serbs, Jews and Roma were murdered with no verdict since they did not fit into the proclaimed Ustasha concept of racial and national purity" (CT). The textboard on Jasenovac as a labor camp is a rare case in which a perpetrator other than the Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić is named: "The first commander of the labor service was Ljubo Miloš, an Ustasha first lieutenant" (CT). Yet, it is notable that the exhibition often uses passive phrasing, which does not name the Ustashe as perpetrators when saying that people "were killed" or that the first concentration camps in the "Independent State of Croatia" (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska*—NDH) "were established" already in April and May 1941 (CT).

On the visual level, only two of the permanently displayed photographs show perpetrators; one displays anonymous guards, the other Pavelić visiting Hitler. Pavelić is here depicted standing on a lower step, in an inferior position. The caption informs us that, during Pavelić's visit to Berghof in June 1941, Hitler gave him "full support" (CT) for a policy of genocide against the Serbian population. The responsibility for this mass murder, which was indeed the main topic of this meeting, but which, in general, the Ustashe undertook on their own initiative and often against German protest, is externalized.

The second permanently installed photograph shows victims and guards. The photograph is cropped: we don't see, at the left edge of the photograph, a perpetrator pulling at an elderly victim's coat (Mataušić 125). In the uncropped version, instead of the usual Ustasha hat, he is wearing a black Muslim fez with an Ustasha emblem on it. The exhibited image offers

a simplified account of the perpetrators by neither showing nor mentioning that there were also Muslim Ustashe (given that the NDH, besides Croatia, also included Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Because the 2006 exhibition—in strong contrast to the 1980s exhibitions, which showed graphic depictions of mutilated bodies (Byford 190)—focuses primarily on individual victims, further information about the Croatian perpetrators can only be obtained at the computer terminals provided and on the museum's website, which provide short biographies of twelve Ustashe—seven of them linked directly to the camp ("The Ustashas").

Yet nowhere does the exhibition deal with the fact that the Ustasha camps were actually—apart from the camps run by the Romanians in Transnistria—the only death camps in German-controlled Europe that were operated by local collaborators themselves. It does not discuss how antisemitic, anti-"Gypsy," or anti-Serb sentiments developed in Croatia and how far they differed from Nazi ideology in fulfilling intra-Croatian functions.

Like in the Slovak case, the depiction of the Nazi satellite state remains ambivalent. The exhibition explains:

> The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was set up after the April war in 1941 by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, through the Ustasha movement, with Ante Pavelić at its head. […] They promised radical measures against Serbs, Jews and all real and potential enemies when the Ustashe came to power. […] Germany and Italy divided the territory of the NDH with the demarcation line of their occupied zones and within the areas of their authority they gradually took over increasing power from the civil and military authorities of the NDH. Therefore it can be said that the NDH was not independent, nor a state, nor Croatian. (CT)

While this final sentence can be read as externalization of guilt and responsibility to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, its meaning is more complicated. It is correct that the Ustasha regime must be understood as a satellite of Hitler's and Mussolini's regimes; thus, it was not "independent." It is also correct that the NDH did not have authority over the zones occupied by Italy. For the German occupation zone, this claim is questionable because it refers to territory where both German and Ustasha authorities were present. The most interesting part of the final sentence is that the NDH was not Croatian. This can be read as blaming the Ustashe while exculpating "the Croats," but is, at the same time, also a critical reference to the 1990s president of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, who understood the NDH as a milestone towards Croat independence. The claim that the NDH was not Croatian thus rejects such historical revisionism and the celebration of the NDH as a predecessor of independent Croatia. At the same time, the claim avoids a serious confrontation with the fact that the Ustasha regime was run and supported by large parts of the Croatian population. In the Jasenovac guidebook, there is a whole subchapter questioning the idea that the state had really been an independent one (Jakovina 27). In contrast to the Slovak museum, it is made clear that cultural achievements went hand in hand with censorship, "forbidden writers," propaganda and Ustashization (30).

I argued above that the "negative memory" highly present at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest can be understood as a response to the international critique of the nationalist House of Terror. In the Slovak and Croatian cases, the roles the respective Nazi satellite states played once the two countries became independent after 1989 are decisive. The first and only time the two countries had existed before was as Nazi satellites. A substantial number of Slovaks and Croats saw these satellite states as liberating them from the constraints

of the inter-war, multi-national states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In the 1990s, moreover, both countries were deficient democracies: in Slovakia, Vladimír Mečiar's authoritarian style maneuvered the country into international isolation and put NATO and EU membership in jeopardy (Haughton 270). In Croatia, president Franjo Tuđman severely limited democratic checks and balances even after the end of the war in 1995. His aggressive support for the autonomy of the Croatian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina left Croatia isolated until his death in 1999 (Radonić, *Krieg um die Erinnerung* 135–137).

Their authoritarian rule went hand in hand with historical revisionism concerning the Nazi satellites. Mečiar included the ultra-nationalist party *Slovenská národná strana* (SNS) in his government in 1994, and the Minister of Education from the SNS distributed an antisemitic book as supplementary teaching material in schools (Bútora 15). Tuđman claimed that the NDH was "not only a 'Quisling creation' or a 'Fascist crime', but also an expression of the Croatian nation's historic desire for an independent homeland" (Goldstein 597). Thus, after the 1990s, both countries tried to prove that they had become truly European. To sum up, the first group of museums staged European-ness, and did so in a highly instrumental way, as the tension between naming local perpetrators and exculpating the collaborationist states shows.

"We" as Victims of Soviet Crimes and Propaganda

Running parallel to the "Europeanization of the Holocaust" described in the first part, there has been a re-narration of history in eastern European countries from 1989 onwards: in particular, this has manifested the invention of a "golden era" before state socialist rule (Cornelißen 48). The narrative of the heroic antifascist struggle has been delegitimized along with the communist regimes, and post-communist states placed the trauma of communist crimes at the core of memory, often using symbols already familiar in the West from Holocaust memory (railway tracks, carriages). A divided memory between "East" and "West" has prompted representatives of post-socialist states to demand that communist crimes be condemned to the same extent as those of the Holocaust (Kucia 106).

In reaction to these conflicting memories, after the eastern enlargement of the EU came an eastern enlargement of the European remembrance canon. After the 2008 "Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism," in 2009, the European Parliament recommended that another memorial day, beside Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27, be introduced on August 23, the date of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. This commemorates the victims of Nazism and Stalinism together. While the memory of the victims of Stalinism was thereby finally added to the European canon, the victims of both regimes are explicitly equated, raising new problems. The new memorial day is, in fact, an antithesis to Holocaust Memorial Day, which concerns the crimes of a country's "own" collective, while the European Day of Remembrance externalizes responsibility to the Nazis and the Soviets (Uhl). One's "own people" are understood as innocent victims of oppression from outside, while participation in the Nazi and communist regimes is often downplayed. The museums of this group, which first equate Nazi and Soviet crimes, but later argue that Soviet crimes were the greater evil, depict the idea of "us" as collaborators with the Nazis either as Soviet propaganda or as something they must acknowledge due to international pressure.

Museum of Genocide Victims

The Lithuanian Museum of Genocide Victims was established in Vilnius in 1992 by the Minister of Culture and Education and the Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees. Between 1992 and 2011, the exhibition dealt only with the building's former use as a prison of the Soviet secret services and the two Soviet occupations. The Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, which runs the museum, explains:

> The West's total negligence toward what happened in the Baltics after the Second World War allows the Lithuanian partisan war to be described as an "unknown" fight in the darkness. […] And as most Western academics of the former Soviet empire seemed to be even more Moscow-centric than their Soviet counterparts, the topic never gained much publicity in the West. […] Such a situation was caused by the Iron Curtain, which still exists in Western minds. (Kuodytė and Tracevskis 4)

The fact that the site had served as a Gestapo prison from 1941 to 1944 was not discussed—until one former prison cell was dedicated to the Nazi era in 2011. Thus, the Holocaust and Nazi occupation remained missing during the country's EU accession in 2004—despite the still-visible inscriptions prisoners had left in the cells during the Nazi era—and were only added after years of persistent criticism of the gap. Also, the name "Museum of Genocide Victims" used the term genocide exclusively to claim that the Soviets committed "physical and spiritual genocide against the Lithuanian people" (Rudienė and Juozevičiūtė 3)—the Holocaust was only mentioned on a tiny textboard between the parts on the first and second Soviet occupations and on a board listing numbers of victims from all occupations. Now, one textboard in the 2011 exhibition part discusses perpetrators during the Nazi era: "The prison comprised three units, in which people arrested by the German Security Police (Gestapo) and the Lithuanian Security Police and Criminal Police were held separately from each other" (Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights CT). The audio guide about the prison cells in the cellar still refers to the building as the "NKVD prison" and "KGB headquarters," yet eight sentences have been added, saying:

> Beside the Gestapo, the troops of the Vilnius extraordinary detachment engaged in the annihilation of Jews and other Lithuanian nationals who were quartered in the building from February 1944 [*sic*] till the end of 1943. […] The Nazi occupation is one of the darkest periods in the history of the country when around 200 000 Jews were killed. Some Lithuanians participated in the killings. (AG)

Local perpetrators are mentioned, but antisemitism in Lithuania is, again, not discussed. Interestingly enough, in the Lithuanian case, adding an exhibition part dealing with the Nazi occupation, the Holocaust, and Lithuanian collaborators did not seem to be a must during the EU accession process. When it came to the Baltic states, the only post-socialist EU member states that had been part of the Soviet Union before 1989, I argue that the EU seemed to have cared more about democratization and going through with the accession than about how the past is exhibited. Only later were those critics who had raised a scandal over the Nazi-era prisoners' omission from the exhibition successful.

Given that, in contrast to the museums of the first group discussed above, these museums primarily discuss the Soviet occupation(s), it is also worth looking into how they depict collaboration with the Soviets: "Moscow, with the help of local collaborators, destroyed gradually the sovereignty of the state, ruined the system of state power and administration, implemented communist ideology, and deported and imprisoned people" (CT). The

responsibility of Lithuanian politicians is also discussed: "Merkys, the acting president, agreed to the formation of a 'people's government' headed by the left-wing journalist Justas Paleckis, and then retired. The new prime minister usurped the role of president" (CT).

Yet, Lithuanian collaborators with the Soviets who committed murder are displayed only in photographs and mentioned in the respective captions, with, thus, a low level of visibility. One caption in the section "An Unequal Struggle" reads:

> Members of the 'Stribai' battalions, the name for the military units of local collaborators which were officially called 'people's defenders.' They usually accompanied representatives of the authorities to villages, participated in the deportation of people, worked as interpreters for foreigners who were sent to work in Lithuania, and only in individual cases mounted military operations. Because of their collaborative activity, frequent plundering and heavy drinking, they were despised by the people and called 'stribas, stribokers' (destroyers) and similar (CT).

The term "collaborator" is not mentioned for collaboration with the Nazis, but it is explicitly used when it comes to the Soviet era. Also, Lithuanian perpetrators during the Nazi era are depicted in a neutral or even aseptic language, while the local perpetrators during the Soviet occupation are portrayed as thieves and drunks. In contrast, those Lithuanians who joined the KGB are portrayed as an elite living apart from Lithuanian society, which implies that they were not actually Lithuanian anymore. The exhibition describes their privileges extensively, arguing, "These and other perks, and high salaries, made them a separate, closed segment of society" (CT). Nazi collaborators were added to the exhibit for diplomatic purposes, while it is the collaboration with the Soviets that the museum harshly condemns because that contradicts the collective victimhood narrative.

Museum of Occupation of Latvia

The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia in Riga was initiated in 1993 by the American-Latvian history professor Paulis Lazda, who conceptualized international acceptance of the "*okupācijas fakts*" (Lazda), the fact that the Soviets had occupied, not liberated, Latvia in 1944, as a narrative basis for ensuring the survival of the young post-Soviet Latvian state. According to Lazda, the museum is supposed to defend Latvia against "defamation" (Lazda, as quoted in Blume 36) concerning the role of the Latvian people in the Holocaust. Instead, it seeks to inform Latvian society and, especially, other countries about the "tragic" history of the Baltic state "which has been forgotten by the world" (Lazda, as quoted in Blume 36). Communication with non-Russian Europe and the West was strongly emphasized, also by head curator Valters Nollendorfs: "A part of our mission is to tell the world the story of this country and of its survival during the years of occupation and annexation" (quoted in Freutel).

The museum, first financed by private donations, then later publicly funded, opened in a building that already had served as a museum in the socialist era. It moved to an alternative location in 2012 in order to add a second half to the initial building, a process that was delayed until 2022. The old permanent exhibition (opened in steps from 1993 to 1998), which I analyze here, drawing on my photo-documentation of it, not only dealt with the two Soviet occupations of 1940 and 1944, but devoted a large part to the Nazi era—especially when compared to the other Baltic occupation museums in Tallinn and Vilnius.

The museum deals with Latvian perpetrators and Nazi collaborators, but always in the context of the first Soviet occupation, from 1940 to 1941. The text board on the "Formation of Self-Defence Units" does not depict the crimes Latvians committed during the Nazi occupation as a problem, but the lack of Latvian national symbols is presented as problematic: "In order to secure the occupation, the Nazis form Latvian Self-Defence units. Many people join hoping that the Latvian army and state will be renewed. But already in July 1941 the members are prohibited to wear Latvian army uniforms and the Self-Defence units are reorganized into Auxiliary Police units. The Nazis also use these units to carry out punitive actions against Latvia's residents" (Museum of Occupation of Latvia CT).

Latvian perpetrators are discussed:

> The Nazi plan to exterminate Jews envisages the involvement of the Latvian population. But the hope to incite spontaneous pogroms does not materialize. In early July 1941, the Operative Group A (Einsatzgruppe A) of the German Security Service (SD) forms a Special Commando (Sonderkommando) of ca. 300 local volunteers under the direction of Viktors Arājs. The members of this squad kill approximately 26 000 of Latvia's Jews during the summer and autumn of 1941. The Nazis establish similar groups in Jelgava, Valmiera, Daugavpils, Ilūkste and elsewhere. The Nazis also use the members of these groups and the Auxiliary Police to assist in arresting Jews and guarding places of execution. (CT)

There is a longer version of this quote in the German version of the guidebook, which exculpates even the greatest murderers, the Arājs commando:

> The [Arājs] commando at first comprised around 100 volunteers, among them many who had lost relatives through the recent Soviet repressions. At the end of 1941, the troop comprised around 300 men. In 1942, when the systematical annihilation of the Jewish population in Latvia was already finished, their number grew to up to 1,200. As research shows, many joined the commando over the course of time, in order to for example avoid the direct war- or work duty." (Nollendorfs, *Lettland* 55; my translation)

No such exculpation can be found in the 1998 exhibition itself nor in the 2008 English guidebook (Nollendorfs, *1940–1991. Latvia under the Rule*). The German versions from 2010 and 2017 strikingly also only use the word Holocaust, not for the historical event itself, but for discussing manipulations of history: "the Holocaust was organized by the Nazis, but cynically ascribed to spontaneous outbursts by the local population without German participation—and thus a myth was created. […] After the war, NKVD propaganda helped spread the myth that the Holocaust in Latvia had occurred without German participation" (Nollendorfs, *Lettland* 54). The Holocaust is something only Latvians were blamed for: "the Soviet regime started a campaign in the 1960s designed to equate the national aspirations of the Latvians with Nazi ideology and blame them for violent crimes and the Holocaust" (Nollendorfs, *Lettland* 94). Thus, in this early exhibition from the 1990s, the Latvian murderers are discussed, yet in an exculpating way.

In the case of this museum, the German guidebook also mentions that antisemitism reached Latvian society in the second half of the nineteenth century and that several antisemitic organizations like *Pērkonskrusts* existed. Yet the guidebook also stresses that—in contrast to Russia—there were no anti-Jew pogroms in the 1880s and that the Jews were always protected

by the state, even during Kārlis Ulmanis's authoritarian reign (1934–1940). The guidebook emphasizes that Latvia accepted several thousand German Jews in the 1930s, when other countries did not take them (Nollendorfs, *Lettland* 55). Valters Nollendorfs, who published all the museum guidebooks, here argues that the antisemitic Nazi propaganda equated Jews with Bolsheviks but did not lead to pogroms or murder of Jews in the first phase after the occupation: "But it helped to strengthen the awareness of Jewish participation in communist atrocities and to justify participation of Latvians in operations to annihilate Jews" (Nollendorfs, *Lettland* 67; my translation). The guidebook thus does not combat antisemitism and instead speaks of Nazis "helping" Latvians realize that Jews participated in Soviet crimes. What starts out as a multi-perspectival, reflexive guidebook discussing terminology turns into exculpation when it comes to Latvian perpetrators and explaining antisemitism.

House of Terror

The House of Terror in Budapest is located at a historical site where people were detained, tortured, and killed, both by the Nazi collaborationist regime of the Arrow Cross Party (1944–1945) and by the state socialist regime after the end of World War II (Rév 66). Prime Minister Victor Orbán inaugurated the museum in a big rally a few weeks before the 2002 parliamentary elections (Apor 233). Although the building was used by the security police only until the 1950s, the museum displays events up to a speech delivered by Orbán in post-socialist Hungary and the opening of the museum, as if to suggest that Orbán himself was involved in liberating Hungary. This museum is one of the most striking examples of communication with Europe and the West because it copies the aesthetics of Holocaust museums, first of all the USHMM's "Tower of faces." Yet, in contrast to the Washington multi-story installation of private photographs from an annihilated Jewish village, the seemingly similar Budapest collage of perpetrator-taken mugshots is all about collective Hungarian suffering—under the Soviets. The Nazi victims are excluded in this installation, despite the Nazi collaborationists' history of torture in the building (Radonić, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg* 189).

The Horthy era (1920–1944) is depicted as democratic, while antisemitic and authoritarian aspects are ignored (Rév 60)—in contrast to the Holocaust Memorial Center. The guidebook says: "Up to the time of the Nazi occupation of 1944, Hungary's affairs were conducted by an elected, legitimate parliament and government, with representatives of active opposition parties sitting in the chambers" (Schmidt, *House of Terror* 6). That most Hungarian Jews were deported immediately after the Nazi invasion, most of them in May 1944, while Horthy still ruled and *before* the Arrow Cross Party era, is neglected. The Nazi occupation period under Arrow Cross rule is depicted in only two and a half rooms, the state socialist phase in over twenty (Blutinger 83). Jews are depicted as leaders of the communist state in the 1950s, leaving out that many of them also became victims of state socialist terror after 1945/48 (Ungváry, "Der Umgang" 214).

The responsibility for both regimes is externalized to foreign powers and just a few domestic perpetrators: the Arrow Cross Party and some (predominantly either Jewish or allegedly former Nazi) communists (Horváth 271). The "Hungarian Nazis" from the Arrow Cross Party supposedly "in great numbers" ("Changing Clothes") simply changed uniforms after 1945 and became communist state security, as the museum website puts it. The "changing clothes" room puts forward a historically incorrect claim that these same people—and, thus, a

limited number of Hungarians—were supposedly responsible for the crimes committed by socialist state security, as well (Ungváry, "Der Umgang" 213).

Therefore, when individual Hungarian perpetrators are shown in the "Gallery of Victimizers" toward the end of the exhibition, this is the highly politicized prelude for the 1989 video, in which Orbán features prominently. The selection of victimizers looks arbitrary, but a closer look shows that the fathers of two Hungarian liberal politicians who were active when the museum opened, Iván Pető and Tamás Bauer, are shown, while prominent "victimizers" who are relatives of members of the museum's board of trustees are left out (Ungváry, "Orte der Erinnerung" 222).

Even some of those responsible for Nazi collaboration and World War II atrocities feature only in their subsequent capacity as "victims of communist dictatorship" (Schmidt, *House of Terror* 86). Their photographs and biographies are exhibited in the prison cells in the basement: all anticommunist fighters are depicted as heroes "who sacrificed their lives or freedom in the fight against oppression" (Schmidt, *House of Terror* 84). Thus, Hungary is depicted as a collective victim of a few Hungarian Nazis-turned-Communists and of external powers. This "changing clothes" figure is a unique approach to exhibiting local perpetrators without self-critically confronting Hungarian responsibility.

Conclusion

As a first result, the analysis confirmed that post-socialist memorial museums devoted to the World War II period do not discuss more complex roles like "participating observers" (Janicka 138) but stick to the traditional distinction between victims, perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders.

Regarding the special issue's initial claim that the questions of local perpetration, collaboration, and complicity in CEE have remained largely unaddressed, I have shown that the picture is more complex. There is a significant difference between the two groups of museums: the ones that used the self-critical inclusion of local perpetrators into the exhibition as proof of Europe-readiness and those that did not see the need to do so back in 2004, but wanted "the world" instead to acknowledge their suffering under communism. Looked at superficially, we can first state that all six memorial museums analyzed here mention local participants in the Holocaust.

Yet, firstly, this was not always the case in all museums. Regarding the second group, comprising the Baltic museums and the House of Terror, we can say that, in the most extreme case, the Museum of Genocide Victims, the omission of the Nazi occupation caused no problems for Lithuania's EU accession in 2004. Once the Nazi era and the Holocaust were added, they were discussed in strikingly distanced language—in contrast to the emotional condemnation of collaboration with the Soviets. Yet, even with the addition of one small prison cell devoted to the Nazi era, three whole floors focus on the Soviet occupations, and, while Nazi occupation is not discussed as a problem, the collaboration with the Soviets is. The Riga example has shown that where the most notorious among the Latvian perpetrators are mentioned, the local mass murderers' motivation and antisemitism in Latvia are presented as somewhat understandable, given the first Soviet occupation before the Nazi era. In the Hungarian case, domestic perpetrators feature prominently at the House of Terror, but the museum reduces the significance of Hungarian perpetrators by claiming that they simply

changed from the Arrow Cross into state socialist uniforms in 1945. Hungary can thus still be portrayed as a collective victim of only a few domestic perpetrators and two large external powers, albeit the Soviet Union is primarily in focus. All three approaches—the complete omission in Vilnius (until 2011), the exculpation of the mass murderers in Riga, and the historically incorrect claim in Budapest—would have been unthinkable for the other type of museum because this would have endangered the proof of "Europe-readiness." The core of these museums' narratives are the Soviet crimes, in contrast to the narratives of the first group, in which communist crimes fulfilled no function during EU accession.

The museums which invocate Europe—the Holocaust Memorial Center and the Slovak and Croatian museums—extensively discuss local perpetrators and leave no doubt regarding their responsibility. Perpetratorship, collaboration, and complicity *have* been addressed to a significant degree here—also, or maybe primarily, for the purpose of memory diplomacy. Yet, if we move away from quantitative measurement and look more closely into how this is done and which consequences are drawn from the past for today, there is still much missing. The Slovak and Croatian museums do not address today's society-level accountability for the Holocaust in collaborationist regimes, with which a high number of local perpetrators, facilitators, beneficiaries, and implicated subjects were involved. Within this group, the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest most critically considers antisemitism during the Horthy era and depicts the population, and even women, as perpetrators. Yet, this museum, located in a synagogue, is—albeit being state-funded and -governed—often perceived as a Jewish museum and, in today's Hungary, thus can be understood as a counter-museum, since it is not representative of Fidesz's dominant narrative. The Slovak and the Croatian museums extensively acknowledge domestic perpetrators and collaborators but leave out discussing local antisemitism, antigypsyism, and, in the Croatian case, anti-Serb hatred. The Slovak museum praises the achievements of the Nazi satellite state for the Slovak cause, while the Croatian museum omits discussion of why the Ustashe came to run death camps on their own.

Those museums that invocated Europe during EU accession talks have utilized exhibiting local perpetrators for memory diplomacy, without raising the most painful questions. In contrast, the Baltic museums and the House of Terror perceive self-critically confronting perpetratorship and collaboration with the Nazis as standing in the way of claiming a victim status for one's own community—in contrast to the German model of identity-making, in which the fact that there was no way to claim a victim- instead of a perpetrator-status has been turned into the benefit of being proud Germans because of their self-critical confrontation with the past. Yet, the changes in the Baltic museums and their renaming, long after EU accession, have shown that critique and new generations of curators can lead to incorporating transnational trends and paying more attention to local perpetratorship and collaboration. In contrast, the Hungarian case demonstrates that one critical museum can become completely marginalized once historical revisionism and an authoritarian backlash dominate more and more, the longer mnemonic warriors remain in power. Each museum analyzed here fulfilled a specific role for national identity in the early 2000s—yet the demands for national identity-making and memory diplomacy keep changing.

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