

The Post-communist Turn: Holocaust Memory of the 2010s in Central and Eastern Europe

Owing to the space opened up for critical national reflection after the fall of communism ended Soviet-era censorship, the territories of Central and Eastern Europe have borne witness to the proliferation of previously repressed or overlooked memories of the Holocaust since 1989-91. Typically framed as a process of coming to terms with 'dark' or uncomfortable pasts, the contemporary inclusion of Jewish voices that had been subsumed by officialised narratives of Holocaust remembrance, have exposed the prevalence of local complicity and collaboration in these sites of non-industrialised killing. Particularly divisive since 2010, these varied and emergent memory-cultures, which have been cultivated not only in art, literature, and cultural production, but are also reflected in political and educational policy, as well as museums and memorials —have challenged national or hegemonic versions of Holocaust experience inextricably tied to the politics of national identity. In these bloodlands, now characterised by a rightward European turn, memories of the Holocaust have also contributed toward the recent upheaval, and revision of, the past.

This panel draws on a variety of sources and perspectives to examine the construction, representation, and reception of Holocaust memory in post-communist territories from the last decade onwards through the lens of four specific cultural paradigms: revisionist museum and commemorative practices; the co-construction of educational textbooks in the Russian Federation; forensic policy in Poland; and satirical filmic representation of Romanian collaboration. This diverse yet localised network of contemporary post-communist paradigms serves to expose the representation and appropriation of Jewish suffering and the dynamics of revisionism and historical acceptance in these places, and questions the role of the state, its citizens and institutions in cultivating these memories—some of which gesture toward the continued legacy of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Through this, the panel aims to answer the following: How can we characterise the relationship of Central and Eastern Europe to the events of the Holocaust? How has the Holocaust been conceptualised here since 2010 and how does it operate within national discourse? Finally, how might these paradigms relate to or reflect Europe's rightward turn?