

Appropriation of Holocaust Memory in East Central Europe after Communism

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My paper explores the ways in which the visual and symbolic repertoire of what has been named "cosmopolitan Holocaust memory" in the West has over the past decade been appropriated to represent other types of historical crimes in Europe's East. Specifically, I examine to what extent has this instrumentalisation of Holocaust memory fed into a crisis in cosmopolitan memory and the rise of its nationalised, particularised, and populist variants.

Focusing on post-communist Eastern Europe, I demonstrate how the familiar narratives and images of the Holocaust have been repurposed for two main goals: to normatively elevate the suffering of non-Jewish national majorities and equate it with the Holocaust and to reposition the crimes of Communism as the dominant criminal legacy of the 20th Century on par with, and sometimes overtaking, the legacy of the Holocaust. I illustrate these arguments with brief examples of revisionist museum and commemorative practices in Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Serbia. I conclude by thinking through some methodological and ethical dimensions of this research.