

Sniegon, Tomas. *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture.* New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2014. Pp. 248, illus.
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This is an ambitious book. Its main subject matter—the marginalization of the memory of the Holocaust in Czech and Slovak historical consciousness and cultures—is relatively straightforward. However, the theoretical model employed to explain the marginalization is quite complex, involving overlapping concepts of hegemonic historical narrative, uses of history, and the intensity of historical experience. Sniegon examines four specific historical, cultural narratives that were dominant in different periods: Czechoslovak Communist, Czech national-liberal (presenting Czech society as “traditionally democratic” and privileging Czech suffering during the Nazi occupation over the suffering of all other groups), Slovak national-Catholic (proudly celebrating the wartime Slovak, clerical, Fascist state as the first Slovak nation-state and its president, Jozef Tiso, as an unjustly punished national leader), and the Slovak national-European narrative (developed in the 1990s to promote a new view of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising as “the beginning of the Slovak path to democracy and ‘common Europe’” [213]).

Czechs and, to a lesser extent, Slovaks were never forced to radically reexamine and reshape their existing historical-cultural frameworks. Instead, and despite the dramatic changes entailed by the transition from Communism and the breakup of Czechoslovakia, they were able to readjust them only slightly. Moreover, most of the readjustment was inspired by external activists and other international variables, such as the Europeanization and Americanization of Holocaust memory. The Czech and Slovak states’ respective aspirations for, and eventual achievements in May 2004 of, membership in the European Union also played a role.

The book’s main thesis is that the Holocaust’s marginal position in the Czech and Slovak post-Communist historical cultures “is too problematic to be explained as solely the result of a legacy from the communist ideological usage of history” (202). To illustrate this proposition, the author first reviews the Communist period, highlighting the late 1950s and the 1960s when the Holocaust did play a significant role, mainly in literature and what was then called the “new wave” of Czechoslovak films. This discussion is followed by a critical review of four post-1989 case studies of contested public debates about the Holocaust and its commemoration: (1) the uneven role of the Holocaust in Czech-Slovak discourse during the process that led to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, (2) the less-than-enthusiastic Czech reception in 1994 of the famous Hollywood film *Schindler’s List*, despite (or, rather, because of) the fact that the actual ethnic German Oscar Schindler was born and grew up in what is now a Czech town Svitavy, (3) the Holocaust of the Romas (the *Porajmos*) and debates about what to do about a pig farm built in the 1970s on the site of a former Roma concentration camp, and (4) the varying representations of the Holocaust of Slovak Jews in the most prominent Slovak museum of World War II, the Museum of Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica.

The author also reviews the role of the most important Czech symbol of the Holocaust, the former Nazi ghetto in Terezín/Theresienstadt, but he offers only a brief analysis of the development of the Terezín Memorial after 1989. This is justified by the alleged separation of Czech and Jewish historical cultures—i.e., by the Memorial becoming an integral part of the global Jewish, but not the Czech, historical culture. As proof, Sniegon cites the focus “on the local history of the place without attempts to raise new questions and create a new meaning for the Holocaust within Czechoslovak and Czech historical culture” (37). Had the author examined the Czech exhibit at Auschwitz-Birkenau (as he did for Slovakia), he might have modified his conclusion.

The stereotypical picture that emerges from these complex analyses is one of guilt-free (*vis-à-vis* the Jews and the Romas) Czech victims of German aggression and Slovak heroes of the short (and defeated) 1944 Slovak National Uprising, leaving the Jews and Romas marginalized. Thus, “the main goal of the Europeanisation of the Holocaust—to make the Holocaust one of the key building blocks

of a new common European identity ... was reached in neither the Czech nor the Slovak historical cultures" (217).

This is an important study, which should be read by anyone interested in Jewish, Czech, Slovak, and Czechoslovak history, and in issues of collective memory, historical consciousness, comparative cultures, dominant narratives, and the intensity of historical experience.

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Stifter, Christian H. *Zwischen geistiger Erneuerung und Restauration: US-amerikanische Planungen zur Entnazifizierung und demokratischen Neuorientierung österreichischer Wissenschaft, 1941–1955.* Vienna: Böhlau, 2013. Pp. 755, tables.

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The study of the post-World War II Austrian occupation had seen its heyday in the 1980s and 1990s, but has not been blessed with major scholarly contributions since. Christian Stifter's ambitious study of American reeducation policies in postwar Austria is a signal contribution to the field. This vast study is structured roughly into three main sections: (1) American World War II discourses about reeducating/reorienting Germans after the war, rooted in a long history of European and American stereotypes of one another; (2) the denazification of Austrian universities after the war, with a focus on the University of Vienna; and (3) the paradigm switch from military to civilian U.S. reorientation programs after 1947, resulting in Cold War psychological warfare and the formation of U.S.-friendly elites through exchange programs.

Stifter summarizes the study of the long-standing European stereotypes of "material" and "uncultured" America and the "mirroring" of these images in the United States. Austrians were usually considered Germans. Hitler's drastic biases of America as "*halb verjudet, halb verneuert und alles auf dem Dollar beruhend*" built on these older negative stereotypes (88), which in turn fed into the World War II debates in the United States about reconstructing postwar Germany. Because planning for Austria emerged very late in the war, Stifter assumes that discourses on Germany subsume Austria.

Stifter recounts the complex institutional history of American postwar planning that started during World War II. He deftly summarizes two broad strains of American discourses about reorienting the Germans. There were the civilian education discourses based on reeducating the world toward democracy and freedom. This liberal, "soft" approach aimed at teaching the Germans democracy; here, Stifter pulls together an enormous amount of material, some from obscure personal papers. Then there were the "psychiatric-psychological" approaches that aimed at rehabilitating the "mentally sick German people" (158). Such discourses often assumed German collective guilt (ending in the "Morgenthau Plan"). The emigré Frankfurt School's "authoritarian personality" study constituted a crucial starting point for the latter. The Germans needed to learn that they were not the master race (164).

These often sophisticated scholarly discourses conducted in the civilian arena were largely ignored by military planners for postwar Germany. Austria emerged late as a separate field in American military planning, once Allied policy makers determined with the Moscow Declaration of 1943 that Austria would be reconstituted as a separate state. These well-informed civilian discourses were also ignored because of the "helter-skelter" nature of the Roosevelt administration (215). In Stifter's estimation, American military planning for the postwar world was "highly inefficient" (227). For example, JCS 1067, the basic planning document on Germany, did not include any specifics on reeducation. Stifter further asserts that the Pentagon's experiment to reeducate a select group of German prisoners was a "failed experiment" (237). This reviewer