

Topics from the first and second sections merge together in the third section in which the respective authors analyze how cultural and ideological exchanges combined with the work of these youth movements fed into mobilization for Germany's war efforts. The contributions investigate various aspects of this process in three countries: Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia. Beáta Márkus' chapter, for example, examines how the close relations between the leaders of the Hungarian ethnic Germans and Nazi Germany as well as intense propaganda led to a high number of volunteers for the SS (*Schutzstaffel*), the major Nazi paramilitary organization. Ottmar Trașcă's essay, in contrast, scrutinizes the desperate and failed attempt of the German secret service and the Legionary Movement to initiate a pro-German resistance in Romania after the coup in 1944.

The final section of the volume offers unique and important historiographical insights into the postwar era. Its chapters demonstrate that the radicalization and Nazification of ethnic German populations cast a long shadow well into the state socialist period. This legacy appeared not only in mechanisms of surveillance and the Securitate's policies against ethnic German leaders in Romania, but also in blackmail practices, such as in the case of former movement leaders from Slovakia. In his essay, Stefan Leher reconstructs the experiences and postwar activities of a couple of key Slovak ethnic German figures and shows how the state security apparatus threatened to discredit them.

The volume is a valuable collection of case studies tackling a range of compelling and important issues. In both its geographical focus and its inclusion of the postwar years, it adds a new dimension to existing research on this topic. All told, it is an essential historiographical contribution to scholarship on ethnic German communities in Eastern Europe.

Budapest

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Saulius Sužiedėlis: Crisis, War, and the Holocaust in Lithuania. (Lithuanian Studies without Borders.) Academic Studies Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Academic Studies Press. Newton 2025. XVI, 625 S., Ill., Tab. ISBN 979-8-887-19490-5. (Open Access: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/de/document/doi/10.1515/9798887194912/html>; Print: \$ 165,—.)

As a member of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania and a former research historian at the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), Lithuanian-American historian Saulius Sužiedėlis is well-equipped to present a comprehensive and nuanced study of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The German occupation of Lithuania resulted in the annihilation of more than 90 percent of Lithuanian Jewry along with other victim groups such as Roma, individuals with mental disabilities, and Soviet prisoners of war. By situating the Holocaust "within Lithuania's twentieth-century social catastrophe," the author attempts to highlight "some conditions unique to Lithuania" (p. VIII). In the preface of the book, S. argues: "As historians we must also search for answers in the specific conditions of time and place that gave rise to horror" (p. IX). Thus, the book emphasizes the importance of analyzing the Holocaust not as an isolated event but as a phenomenon deeply embedded in the broader historical, social, and political ruptures of the wartime period.

The book is divided into three main parts that trace the pre-history, history, and aftermath of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The first part, entitled "Before the Shoah," examines the history of Jews in Lithuania and their interactions with non-Jewish Lithuanians; it starts with the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Russian Empire, but focuses on the interwar years and the first Soviet occupation. S. argues that the First Republic, under the authoritarian regime of Antanas Smetona, "did not result in antisemitic legislation" and all ethnic disturbances that occurred throughout the interwar years were "localized, short-lived, and relatively infrequent" (p. 88). In the second section, he dismantles the myth of "Judeo-Bolshevism" and "Jewish power" under the Soviet regime and depicts how the geopolitical crisis of 1940 and 1941 evoked the rise of antisemitism in Lithuania.

Part two, named “Destruction,” explores the mass murder of Jews during the summer of 1941, the subsequent ghettoization of the Jewish population, and such themes as Jewish armed and spiritual resistance as well as survival methods. Rather than presenting new empirical findings or original archival research, this section largely synthesizes existing scholarship in the field. The works of Christoph Dieckmann, Arūnas Bubnys, and others, alongside the author’s own previously published research, form the basis of this overview. By drawing on this body of work and the testimonies of Jewish survivors, the section offers a comprehensive account of how the Holocaust unfolded in Lithuania’s provincial and urban areas, serving, as mentioned above, as a concise and well-written summary of the current historiography on the Holocaust in Lithuania.

A significant contribution of part three, titled “Response, Memory, and Legacy,” is the exploration of a broader spectrum of actors involved in the Holocaust—not only those who directly participated in the mass atrocities, but also those who benefited from the persecution of Jews or contributed to the spread of antisemitic ideology. S. sheds light on the roles played by rural police forces and civilian officials as well as the antisemitic attitudes present among segments of the Lithuanian intellectuals, members of the Provisional Government, and the Catholic clergy. For instance, in his analysis of the Catholic Church, he critically highlights its ambiguous position whereby the Church sought to strike a balance between the defense of institutional interests with a reluctance to openly condemn the persecution the Lithuanian Jews. As he notes, “the hierarchy’s public pro-German statements and endorsement of the war against Bolshevism went considerably further than accommodations made with the previous occupiers” (p. 409). This assessment underscores the moral and political complexities of institutional responses during the Holocaust while also challenging Lithuanian scholarship that has tended to portray the Catholic Church as a passive or neutral actor during the German occupation.

The book concludes with a reflection on the ongoing challenge of confronting and reconciling Lithuania’s “divisive past.” S. points out that the Holocaust has yet to fully enter “the historical imagination of the Lithuanian people,” indicating a persistent gap between scholarship and public memory (p. 547). To address this absence, he emphasizes the necessity of “de-emphasizing one’s own victimization in order to better understand the pain and suffering of the Other” (p. 549). These concluding remarks attempt to emphasize the interconnectedness of suffering and the complexities of both victimhood and complicity in Lithuania’s twentieth-century history.

One notable weakness of the book lies in its inconsistent, and frequently absent presentation of archival references. With few exceptions, S. primarily cites original documents secondhand, drawing on quotations found in the works of other historians rather than referencing the archival sources directly. For instance, on p. 242, he reproduces in full a document signed on 7 August 1941 by Vaitiekus Bortkevičius, the Lithuanian chief of the Kaunas district, from the Soviet Lithuanian publication *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje* [Mass Murders in Lithuania] and provides no archival reference for the original document. The lack of adequate archival references is especially pronounced for the Soviet-era documentation that he cites, most notably interrogation protocols from the Soviet Lithuanian war crimes trials. Essential details are often missing, such as the archive name, fond and file numbers, document titles, production dates, or other identifying archival information. The reader is frequently directed to other historians’ writings that reference or cite the actual archival records. There are also instances in which materials are described as being part of the “author’s archive,” despite the fact that the originals belong to official state repositories. Such a citation practice reduces the traceability of sources, making it difficult—particularly for international scholars—to engage in critical verification or conduct further research based on the referenced documents. Moreover, it also raises broader concerns about archival accountability and methodological rigor in Holocaust studies.

Similarly problematic is the use of visual material, which primarily appears to serve an illustrative rather than analytical function. In several instances, the photographs included in

the book lack sufficient descriptive context or attribution. For example, the author uses well-known images—such as the iconic photograph of two young boys wearing Jewish badges in the Kovno ghetto, taken by George Kadish—without acknowledging the photographer's authorship (p. 346). Despite the fact that Kadish's photographic work represents some of the most significant visual documentation of the Holocaust in Lithuania, his wartime activities are not mentioned in the book, not even in the sections discussing spiritual and cultural resistance within the ghettos. This absence not only overlooks a key figure in the visual historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania, but also reflects a missed opportunity to engage critically with visual sources and their historiographical value. Despite these shortcomings, the monograph—clearly intended for an international scholarly audience as well as general readers—stands as a valuable example of thorough and accessible scholarship on the Holocaust in Lithuania. Its strength lies in synthesizing a complex and often emotionally charged history in a manner that is both analytical and broadly comprehensible, thereby making a significant contribution to the field of Holocaust studies.

Vilnius

Gintarė Malinauskaitė

A Companion to Political Institutions in Poland, 1944–1989. Hrsg. von Marek Jabłoński, Wojciech Jakubowski und Daniel Przystek. (Brill's Companions to the Slavic World, Bd. 4.) Brill Schöningh. Leiden – Paderborn 2025. XI, 381 S., Ill., Tab., Kt. ISBN 978-3-506-79673-8. (€ 99,-.)

Das vorliegende Buch ist in drei Teile strukturiert (die sich jeweils in Kapitel und Unterkapitel aufgliedern), von denen sich der erste mit historischen Konditionen der Politik – beginnend mit dem geteilten Polen vor dem Wiener Kongress von 1815 bis zum Ende Volkspolens 1989 – beschäftigt und der zweite, hauptsächlich, die Institutionen des politischen Systems Polens zwischen 1944 und 1989 beschreibt. Der dritte Teil wird von einem ausführlichen Anhang in fünf Abschnitten gebildet.

Das Buch beginnt ohne Vorwort mit einer knappen Definition der Begriffe „politisches System“ und „Regierungsform“, die für die Darstellung des Gegenstands durch die Autoren von Interesse sind: „The political system is based both on the principles set out in legal acts. It is defined in a given ideology, and it also results from historical tradition“ (S. 3). Folgerichtig befasst sich das erste Kapitel von Teil I mit „Polish Political Traditions of the 19th and the First Half of the 20th Century“. Das erste Kapitel von Teil II („Institutions of ‚People's Power‘ [‚Government‘] in Poland“) handelt – den oben genannten Definitionen folgend – von den ideologischen Grundlagen eines sozialistischen Staates. Genannt werden die zwei wesentlichen Konzepte der marxistisch-leninistischen Gesellschaftstheorie: die These von der Geschichte als aufsteigende Abfolge von sozial-ökonomischen Gesellschaftsformationen, deren Wechsel durch Revolutionen vorangetrieben werde, sowie die Vorstellung einer dominierenden Rolle der ökonomischen Basis gegenüber dem ideologisch-kulturellen Überbau.

Der Leser wird mit einer beeindruckenden Fülle von Informationen versorgt. Allerdings ist dem Rezensenten beim Durchsehen des umfangreichen Anhangs ein Defizit aufgefallen, das ihm für die Konzeption des Buches charakteristisch und daher hier besonders erwähnenswert scheint: Annex 1 beschreibt nicht nur die politische Zusammensetzung der einzelnen Regierungen der Volksrepublik, sondern auch ihre genauen Bezeichnungen, den Zeitraum ihres Bestehens, ihre Vorsitzenden, die Zahl der Minister sowie die in ihnen vertretenen Parteien (in den frühen Jahren bis zu sechs, später nur noch drei). Die entsprechenden Angaben stammen aus dem 1991 publizierten Buch *Ludzie Władzy*.¹ Annex 2 stellt die zentralen staatlichen Behörden vor – Präsident, Staatsrat, Regierung und Leitung des Sejms, jeweils mit den genauen Daten der Legislaturperioden. Den Abschluss dieses

1 TADEUSZ MOŁDAWA: *Ludzie władzy 1944–1991* [Machthaber 1994–1991], Warszawa 1991.