On the Social History of Persecution

On the Social History of Persecution

Edited by
Christian Gerlach

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

The open access publication of this book has been published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Swiss National
Science Foundation

ISBN 978-3-11-078966-9
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-078969-0
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-078971-3
DOI https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690

One chapter that is included in the printed version of this book is not part of this e-book.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022947589

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Contents

Christian Gerlach

Introduction: Social histories of persecution and mass violence

Social histories of persecution are a rare thing. And this is one of very few collections with a social history approach encompassing more than one case of mass violence.[1] The study of 'genocide' or mass violence is a highly politicized field, which has resulted in a hegemony of political science and political history approaches within it. Research about mass violence and persecution has been dominated by inquiries into political actors, ideas, events, organizational structures, and political systems.

Scholarship dealing more specifically with people under persecution has provided more in the way of social history, but often lacks a comprehensive or systematic social analysis. Understanding violence as constituted by social relations and interaction, the authors of this volume aim at a fuller understanding of the process of persecution, of its complex effects and of the social conditions of life under persecution. For doing this, we conceive of social history in a broad sense, including phenomena reaching from economic activities to experiences of displacement to the emotional side of interaction or isolation. More precisely, it is not only social history that this volume offers, but social research more broadly, because this is a multidisciplinary volume with social anthropologists, a literary scholar and a geographer among its authors.

This book is primarily about the experience of those exposed to mass violence (the so-called victims' side). Many contributions here deal with the persecution of European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, but others examine the experience of other groups in the Second World War, Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire, and some African societies in the 20th century. What we aim at – always aware of the specific context – are insights into persecution beyond the individual historical case.[2]

The themes in this volume are: labor; family; the life of domestic refugees; space; collective action; violence as a social process; and society after violence.

1 See Jutta Bakonyi and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, eds. *A Micro-Sociology of Violence: Deciphering patterns and dynamics of collective violence* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). See also the focus section "Extremely Violent Societies," *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 10, 1 (2016): 4–92.

2 However, it is a limitation that all authors of this volume except for one are either from Europe or North America, and all of them are from industrial countries. In this sense, this is no global history. Efforts to involve scholars from other world regions were unsuccessful.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-001

We deal with outcasts' interactions with each other and with the people surrounding them, arguably society, but much less with direct interaction with their persecutors. What we describe is life under persecution. Unlike an event-oriented political history, we inquire into longer-term processes and conditions.[3] How we are doing this concretely belongs to a specific phase in the research about mass violence and persecution. In this introduction, some reflections about our approaches and categories are put forth.

Different sorts of social history

The question is appropriate: what kind of social history (or social research) do we practice? The classical type of social history is quantitative, abstract, impersonal, collective. Such work used to be about social class and strata, social hierarchies, a group's position within a social system, and the attempt to link social structures to processes and experiences. Often, the focus has been on lower classes, in part on production. However, there is not a single quantitative study among our contributions. Most chapters concentrate on the sphere of reproduction, and the term "class" appears only occasionally and, for the most part, marginally.[4]

Another type conceives of social history as being about social relations. This type might even deal with one individual. It is less anonymous, usually qualitative, more actor-centric. Sometimes it is about connectedness and networks. However, often the criteria in such a qualitative analysis appear not entirely clear, and the question of representativity arises, that is, of what is a study, or story, indicative beyond its immediate subject, or subjects?

3 This inquiry into conditions of life is also why the title of the volume speaks of "persecution," a more encompassing term than 'mass violence'; for what we examine goes much beyond direct violence. This term is used here depite of its problematic aspects: it is a politically charged, normative concept, denoting innocence of all 'victims'; and it has often been used in reference to religious groups. In languages like French and German, the term 'persecution' is more frequently used than in English.

4 Note that, for example, there are few quantitative studies about the destruction of the European Jews, such as Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc, *Face à la persecution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010). And some studies that have made quantitative arguments have met with criticism, like Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York and London: Free Press and Collier Macmillan, 1979) and Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Still another type of social history, arguably, inquires into social conflict. This approach looks for social forces and conditions that lead to violence; and usually not only for conditions – meaning that this type is about dynamics, and sometimes about connections between short-term and longer-term processes.

Most contributions in this book mix the second and third types of study, that is, inquiry into social relations and social conflict, and they do so in a specific fashion. They use qualitative methods on the basis of sources like survivor accounts, diaries, oral history, participant observation, official documents, and photographs.

In some ways, the examination of social relations and social conflict is in tune with recent – and not so recent – scholarship in the field. Take, for instance, sociology. Since Helen Fein, many scholars have complained about how little interest most sociologists take in genocide and mass violence and how limited their insights into this topic are. Often, such laments come in the form of articles about what sociology *could* do.[5] Sociologists' major contributions to the field are about powerholders, organizations involved, and obedience; mechanisms of group exclusion; and definitions of a new social order.[6] Put differently, sociologists maintain that a new social group (usually an ethno-racial group) is emerging, or solidified, during genocide. As if this ethnization overrides, or substitutes for, all other divisions in society, they usually say very little about other existing categories of social order like class, family, age and gender. In part, this explains why scholars often depict violence as having been disconnected from – or contradictory to – economic interests. Thus the ideas that many sociologists offer about the new social order are misleadingly simplified and highly deficient.[7] Societies in times of mass violence do not fall only into the groups of perpetrators, victims and bystanders.[8] One outcome of the ethno-racialized understanding of history and society is the concept of "victim society" which can be understood as an

5 See Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (London et al.: Sage, 1993); Martin Shaw, "Sociology and Genocide," *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, eds. Donald Bloxham and Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42–62. Stefan Friedrich, *Soziologie des Genozids: Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Forschungsperspektive* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012) expands this kind of study even to book length.

6 See Shaw, "Sociology," and Charles Anderton, "Genocide: Perspectives from the Social Sciences," July 2015, https://web.holycross.edu/RePEc/hcx/HC1508_Anderton_Genocide.pdf (accessed 13 January 2022), 11–14.

7 In fashionable parlance one could say that sociologists' analyses suffer from a lack of intersectionality (if intersectionality were about more than questions of identity).

8 See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992). Many but not all contributions in Andrea Löw and Frank Bajohr, eds., *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics* (London: Pal-

independent unit.[9] The assumption of a "perpetrator society" is equally problematic.[10]

Characteristically, many recent discussions concerning social research about mass violence have revolved around questions of scale. This is occurring in several disciplines. Some time ago, anthropologists and sociologists called for analyzing 'violence itself' instead of its genesis and context.[11] In sociology, the call is for a micro-sociology that looks at situations in which violence occurs.[12] Among political scientists, there is a "micropolitical turn in the study of social violence."[13] A similar plea for, and practice of, microhistory has emerged as well.[14] Another move in this context has been toward the history of everyday life.[15] What does this trend toward smaller scales say?

Microhistory and micro-sociology constitute attempts to gain an empirical foothold and question macro-explanations. Both are necessary. But one can do a variety of things with micro-perspectives. They bear the danger of de-contextualization, for example in a sociology that looks at little else other than the immediate situation in which violence comes about.[16] Such research may be about bodily practices or spaces where violence happens and what this means. Those absent from the scene find little consideration. If "situationism" trumps "dispositionalism," as Charles Anderton calls them, i.e. through a micro-perspective, psychology may also (again) weigh in heavily on explanations.[17]

On the other hand, there may be something to Stefan Friedrich's critique that most sociologists have ignored mass violence because they celebrate modernity, see mass violence as a passing disturbance and emphasize macro-structures over

---

grave Macmillan, 2016) still rely primarily on these categories as social groups, though emphasizing ambivalences.

9 Anna Hájková, *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2, 239–240. Hájková does provide for an interesting social history.

10 Friedrich, *Soziologie*, 311.

11 See Trutz von Trotha, ed., *Soziologie der Gewalt* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997).

12 Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). However, Bakonyi and Bliesemann de Guevara, *A Micro-Sociology* does not fall into this category, despite that book's title, but is based on the understanding that violence is a "social [. . .] process" (ibid., 4).

13 Charles King quoted in Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 19.

14 Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman, eds. *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017).

15 See Andrea Löw et al., eds. *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Grossdeutschen Reich 1941–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013).

16 See Collins, *Violence*.

17 See Anderton, "Genocide", on the social sciences including economics (quote p. 15).

agency.[18] However, the underlying assumption that social scientists have already clarified the basic social structures in and through which mass violence happens is erroneous.

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to bridging the gap between macro- and micro-perspectives. In this volume, Tim Cole proposes 'relational' geographies for this purpose, combining both scales for understanding the destruction of the Jews.[19] Lee Ann Fujii has shown through a local study that existing social structures, in particular family and friendship ties and neighborly relations, did influence logics of action during the mass murders in Rwanda in the early 1990s. She pleaded for a broad contextualization of data from micro-studies.[20] Moritz Feichtinger and Andreas Zeman, using localized perspectives and thick description, have analyzed the social process among forcibly concentrated peoples in the decolonization wars of Algeria, Kenya and Mozambique, challenging, among other things, Pierre Bourdieu's notions of social uprooting and transformation.[21] Jean-Paul Kimonyo studies three areas of Rwanda and attempts to connect economic, social and political history.[22] Sociologist Michael Mann tries to combine biographical data with a macro-explanation of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide.[23]

There are several micro studies in this volume. The chapters by Jason Tingler, Andreas Zeman and Anna Ohannessian-Charpin deal with small (rural) places. Tim Cole's and Janina Wurbs' chapters crystallize around one person or a few. Dalia Ofer links one Jewish man's experience to a broader view of males and their social roles under persecution. By contrast, Masha Cerovic and Christian Gerlach have much larger frames, and Hilmar Kaiser tries to reach empirical ground by combining two regional studies of Ottoman Armenians' survival.

Many chapters here take new topics and approaches. They employ labor history, the history of fatherhood, sound history, or look at the situation of domestic refugees. The anthropological study in this volume looks at the social situation long after violence has taken place, adopting more complex arguments than

18 Friedrich, *Soziologie*, esp. 310–311.

19 See also Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

20 Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, esp. 42.

21 See Moritz Feichtinger, *'Villagization': A People's History of Strategic Resettlement and Violent Transformation: Kenya and Algeria 1952–1962* (Ph.D thesis, University of Bern, 2016); Andreas Zeman, *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa Since the 19th Century* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022 [forthcoming]); Pierre Bourdieu, *In Algerien: Zeugnisse der Entwurzelung* (Graz: Edition Camera Austria, 2005).

22 Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *Rwanda's Popular Genocide* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2016).

23 Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

other studies, and geographer Tim Cole goes further in the direction of recent spatial analyses of persecution.

Our volume is based on a workshop under the same title, held online on 11 and 12 February 2021 and organized at the University of Bern in the context of a research project called "Sounds of anti-Jewish persecution."[24] This project used an approach that involved reconstructing sounds, listening and hearing as means of social history in order to explore power hierarchies, social relations and social order, everyday life, conflicts, violence, collective action, gender relations, the functioning of families, cultural and religious practice, emotions and self-construction. The source material upon which this research was based consisted of written material: wartime diaries, contemporary reports and post-liberation accounts of persecuted and formerly persecuted people, respectively. Unlike many sound histories about the 20th century which concentrate on technical sounds, mediated sounds and city noise, our focus was on the human voice – the noises most often mentioned in the sources by far. The project's participants found that most descriptions of sounds related either to sounds produced by other persecuted people, often their interaction, or their interaction with wider society (rather than persecutors).[25]

There is no reason for enthusiasm concerning the state of the social history of violence. Our papers' approaches too have limitations. Because of a bias in their source basis, some chapters show people from the bourgeoisie, intelligentsia or petty bourgeoisie on their social decline. It was primarily people with this social background who left diaries and memoirs, and they were more likely to get institutionally interviewed in the aftermath of a given violent period than poor people. Conducting one's own interviews or using large collections of survivor accounts are ways to evade this bias. Some other chapters simply give no information about the class background of their persecuted protagonists.

---

24 The project was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF-Projekt 100011_172597/1), as is the publication of this volume. Nikita Hock, Janina Wurbs and Christian Gerlach are the authors in this volume who were members of this project. Notably, Anna Shternshis who was not part of the project also refers to sounds in her chapter in various ways. The authors of this volume are grateful for comments and suggestions made by an anonymous reviewer. For important technical help with the preparation of the manuscript of this book, I am indebted to Gabriele Jordan and Andreas Zeman.

25 For first findings from this project, see Nikita Hock, "Making Home, Making Sense: Aural Experiences of Warsaw and East Galician Jews in Subterranean Shelters during the Holocaust," *Transposition. Musique et Sciences Sociales* 1 (2020), journals.openedition.org/transposition/4205 and Christian Gerlach, "Echoes of persecution: sounds in early post-liberation Jewish memories," *Holocaust Studies* 24, 1 (2018): 1–25.

Some findings

Most authors of this volume do not see chaos in times of mass violence or persecution. Instead, the social order in such periods takes on a new shape, new hierarchies are created, relations change, new communities emerge. The authors of this volume therefore examine how persecution deforms social life, but also reconfigures it. Even though the emerging social relations were highly unstable,[26] they seem to argue, countering Margaret Thatcher: "There is no such thing as no society."

To some it may seem banal that there exists no absence of society, but this idea stands in contrast to, e.g., the atomization thesis, based on the outdated totalitarianism theory and popular since Hannah Arendt, for example in (diaspora) Polish scholarship.[27] Many chapters in this volume do acknowledge and examine social fragmentation, mobility and social dislocation, loosening ties and phenomena of exclusion, but they also explore how other ties between individuals and groups emerge. Persecuted people always attempted to establish new relations. In this frame, violence is both anti-social and social.

By studying everyday life and practices, the authors herein reveal traces of agency among people exposed to persecution and help scholarship to move further away from the image of the helpless victim. Such findings are generated thanks to the fact that these contributions look at something broader than the immediate situation in which direct violence occurred.[28]

It is significant that four contributors describe intimate relations of intermarriage or adoption involving people under persecution, or briefly after persecution (Aleksiun, Gerlach, Ohannessian-Charpin and another chapter that is only included in the print version of this book). This has occurred in various contexts (late Ottoman society/colonial Jordan, Poland/Ukraine, etc.) and were often voluntary choices. Not all of them endured, but some. They are strong symbols of social integration, or reintegration. The forces of non-violence are not to be underestimated.

---

26 For example, see the chapters by Nikita Hock and Andreas Zeman in this volume.

27 See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. chapters 10 and 11; Jan Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The General Government, 1939–1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 147–150, 177; Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 122. In his chapter in this volume, Nikita Hock does use the term "atomization" but with a different meaning than the all-encompassing understanding denoted in totalitarianism theory.

28 This is another reason why it makes sense to study persecution, rather than violence.

It is necessary to add several remarks as a matter of qualification. The fact that this was mostly about the integration of women and children[29] is telling about the subordinate social position of those enjoying this inclusion in patriarchal contexts. Furthermore, as almost all chapters mention, these new families were always built after the loss of original ones due to murder or unbearable conditions of life. And our heavy emphasis on post-conflict accounts may create an overly optimistic picture, because they provide the perspective of survivors – persecuted people (often a minority) who were successful in their effort at social (re)integration.

This is also to say that most chapters here are about relations between a persecuted group and wider society; or they cover more than one persecuted group and describe their interrelations, like the contributions of Tingler and Cerovic. A few chapters focus on social relations and structures within the persecuted Jewish minority – because those under persecution were also divided. Cole shows new intra-group ties emerging; Wurbs does the same but under conditions of social and political conflict among those persecuted; Ofer demonstrates how social roles within the family evolved; Shternshis, Wurbs and Cole find traces of collective action.[30] In sum, social relations changed under the enormous pressures of persecution and its effects.

A better understanding of the pressures involved requires some knowledge of context. The political situations differ (global war in the Ottoman Empire or in German-occupied territories in Eastern Europe; and a war of decolonization in Portuguese-Mozambique), but in each case study in this volume a war was going on. And all of our studies without exception describe poverty and a lack of resources (though poverty is hardly used as an analytical concept). Importantly, it was not only those under persecution who suffered from poverty and want, but also the majority of those living in their vicinity. Persecuted people, but also many in the society around them, were just experiencing impoverishment. Such downward social mobility was a consequence of war and mass violence, but in complex processes, mass violence was also fueled by social change in the first place.[31] Not only political threats, but also social pressures, sometimes distress – mostly under capitalist conditions –, were felt by more than one group, which put limits on solidarity, spurred rivalry and instigated the drive for private gain.[32]

29 With the exception of some cases described in Natalia Aleksiun's chapter.

30 Collective action – across ethnicized groups – is also traced in the chapter by Masha Cerovic.

31 This is the argument in Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

32 Hilmar Kaiser's, Jason Tingler's and Christian Gerlach's chapters stress the importance of economic interests.

Within the interconnections between social change and persecution, the authors of this volume explore in particular how social relations shifted. This includes labor relations, the search for a livelihood, family and gender relations and, often implictly, relationships between the urban and rural,[33] social structures that permeated seemingly totally ethnicized forms of order.

Structure of this book

The volume is arranged according to seven themes. The first two chapters examine labor relations of persecuted people. In his study about the Ottoman Empire, Hilmar Kaiser argues that Muslims' dealings with Armenians during their persecution of 1915–1918 were determined by rational considerations about economic utility. The existence or absence of labor demand, and for certain skills in particular, strongly influenced whether Armenians were taken in and employed where authorities' policies or their lack of power allowed room for such decisions. Comparing labor relations among Armenians with those of persecuted Jews in German-occupied Poland 1942–1944, Christian Gerlach points to similarities. He emphasizes that Armenians and Jews mostly performed lowly qualified labor; that they were exploited and that especially women and children were thus accepted by parts of society as inferior social groups; and that many Armenians, unlike Jews, were integrated into Muslim families as wives or foster children with an affection that went beyond economic interest, although all of them had to work. Both chapters show a process of temporary downward social mobility (presumably permanent in some cases).

Moving to the sphere of reproduction, the chapters by Dalia Ofer and Natalia Aleksiun explore family ties. Ofer examines changes in the role of Jewish fatherhood under persecution. Describing the case of one intellectual – a religious Zionist – in the Warsaw ghetto in detail, she shows that, mixing traditional and modern elements, he tried to perform a male role as a breadwinner, protector and affectionate supporter but was unable to meet the first two goals. His wife and daughter perished. His self-image was challenged by his own and thus his family's social descent, but he continued trying to make a living (literally) and remained politically active. Aleksiun points to a number of phenomena involving Jews and non-Jews in mixed family or para-family relations that lasted after liberation. This includes Christians' adoption of Jewish children and marriages or similar relationships between Jews and non-Jews, often forged under persecution

33 For the latter, see the contributions by Masha Cerovic and Jason Tingler in this volume.

and with common children. She describes relatively dense social networks and argues that many of these relationships were of an ambivalent character, or emerged out of utilitarian motives before involving emotional bonds, and that differences in behavior between men and women may not have been as great as one could expect. Under persecution, many families were crushed, but occasionally new ties also emerged.

As far as social history goes, domestic refugees are an intriguing but understudied topic. Do they indicate a disintegration of society? How do they organize themselves? The answers given by Andreas Zeman and Masha Cerovic differ. In her chapter about rural Belarus under German occupation, 1941–1944, Cerovic argues that displacement had a deep impact on society as a whole. Multi-directional refugee flows loosened ties in village communities but created new inter-local or interregional links. Solidarity between locals and refugees worked on the whole, Cerovic states, despite tensions, the violent rejection of some groups and unequal access to resources. By contrast, Zeman finds that locals in Mozambique's Lago district during the war of decolonization (1964–1975) could only live in great numbers as refugees in the bush and forrest for a short time. Portuguese attacks on fields left them without livelihood and forced most either to surrender or to emigrate to Malawi. Groups were unstable and highly mobile. Zeman stresses the guerrillas' lack of control in the region he studies, Cerovic shows the impact of the partisans' fervor for social organization. Cerovic's and Zeman's pioneering and rich studies still contain relatively little detail about the social hierarchy under conditions of clandestine rural life, but we can assume that women were in vulnerable positions in a world of militant men,[34] that older people lost influence, as did men with invalidated professions such as those from the intelligentsia, whereas (male) youth gained power.

Unlike these two chapters about broader populations under persecution, those in the following section deal with the question how people from a persecuted minority – Jews – use and appropriate space. Both Tim Cole and Nikita Hock argue that Jews' relationship to space and place reveals that they had a bit of agency, although within places where they were segregated and under permanent threat. Hock's study of the special setting of hiding places (attics) through sound history highlights social isolation because of lack of acoustic insulation. Especially in rural attics, hiding Jews could hear life around them going on, sadly aware that they were excluded. Their movements were extremely restricted for the fear of being heard and denounced, and they could not make these places

34 See Masha Cerovic, *Les enfants de Staline: La guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944)* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), 103–109.

something resembling a temporary home. Therefore attics were usually only used for short periods as hiding places (unlike underground shelters). Inquiry into noise-making and the feelings it caused in listeners also shows that within host households, some members approved of helping Jews more than others and illustrates how complex and fragile relationships between hosts and hosted were. Tim Cole demonstrates that even within an extremely hostile space like the Auschwitz concentration camp, female Jewish inmates formed little groups that occupied small spaces (a bunk bed) and attempted reproduction and survival together by things like sharing food and marching together in a row – practices excluding others. This collectivity is reflected by survivors constantly placing their experience in ghettos, transports, camps and workplaces within larger or smaller groups and expressing their experiences in terms of "we." In the course of their persecution, their old groups of belonging were replaced by new ones, which emerged under the conditions of spatial situations imposed on them. In Cole's and Hock's studies, space/place co-determines social reorganization.

Moving one step further from collective experience, the contributions in the following section explore collective action through the cultural practices of people living under persecution – in this case, Jews. Both Janina Wurbs' and Anna Shternshis' chapters are about singing, though in very different contexts. Wurbs' chapter describes the case of a popular street singer in the Łódź ghetto (under German control) who mocked and criticized the Jewish leadership, whom he held in part responsible for the hunger and misery of the people. With the help of influential Jewish supporters who advertised his songs, he created spontaneous communities united by listening, or singing refrains, who shared his bitter criticism. Shternshis writes about a different situation – songs created, widely memorized and often collectively sung in Transnistrian ghettos under Romanian rule. Often these songs were for keeping the memory of mass murders committed by Romanians or Germans alive, while others mocked Hitler and the Germans, but some also criticized the indifference either of Jewish inmates in general or, again, of the Jewish leadership, toward orphaned Jewish children. Like Wurbs' (and Zeman's) chapter, this points to social conflicts over scarce resources, especially food, among people under persecution, when they were under German or Romanian strangleholds. In both chapters, cultural practices reveal an active attitude instead of escapism and passivity.

Jason Tingler's local history of the area around the German extermination camp in Sobibór in occupied Poland exemplifies how violence works as a social process. Unlike earlier studies about connections between death camps and their

vicinity,[35] Tingler embeds his analysis in a broader framework of multiple groups, conflicts and multi-directional violence. Society in this rural area changed through several waves of forced immigration and emigration in the context of ethnic resettlement, forced labor recruitment, partisan struggle and civil war. The ethnic makeup and hierarchies within the population shifted. German violence and threats against farmers found not delivering goods or helping Jews, along with widespread impoverishment, contributed to a brutalization that made some locals rob and murder Jewish refugees, others offer services to camp personnel awash with valuables stolen from murdered Jews, and still others hope for social ascent otherwise. Circles of solidarity became smaller, materialism gained ground and tensions became conflicts, conditions under which the death camp became near-inescapable for Jews.

What about social structures long after violence? Anna Ohannessian-Charpin shows that Armenian women, once deported to the south of the Ottoman Empire and among the few survivors in Ma'an in what later became Jordan, married (many as first wives) into a few interrelated Bedouin families and became well-respected in local society. They created close local networks of kinship and friendship and gained status first by certain skills that were hardly known among locals and later, from the late 1950s onward, through their international contacts and travel to rediscovered relatives around the world. Locally, "Armenian" was no derogatory term in the 1980s. Characteristically, however, these young women had married only into clans of a lesser status, and no Armenian men were integrated. Ohannessian-Charpin depicts different forms of social integration slowly overcoming earlier fragmentation, a topic also raised in Gerlach's chapter. In doing so, she questions the notion of persecuted people as constituting a solid social group.

Anna Ohannessian-Charpin in particular, and also Natalia Aleksiun, look at long-term processes. More generally, the authors of this collection analyze life under mass violence and persecution as a social process[36] that involves at least a medium-term timeframe. With this book, research about these developments of social restructuring has not reached its end; rather, it is just in its beginnings.

---

35 See Jan Burzlaff, "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers: Social Dynamics and Everyday Life around the Killing Center at Bełżec (1941–1944)," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35, 3 (2021): 445–463; Sybille Steinbacher, *"Musterstadt" Auschwitz: Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Ostoberschlesien* (Münich: K.G. Saur, 2000).

36 Sheri Rosenberg, "Genocide Is a Process, Not an Event," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, 1 (2012): 16–23 calls for regarding genocide as a process but argues that this position is far from dominant.

Bibliography

Anderton, Charles. "Genocide: Perspectives from the Social Sciences." July 2015, https://web.holycross.edu/RePEc/hcx/HC1508_Anderton_Genocide.pdf (accessed 13 January 2022).

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973 (first 1951).

Bakonyi, Jutta, and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, eds. *A Micro-Socology of Violence: Deciphering patterns and dynamics of collective violence*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *In Algerien: Zeugnisse der Entwurzelung*. Graz: Edition Camera Austria, 2005.

Burzlaff, Jan. "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers: Social Dynamics and Everyday Life around the Killing Center at Bełżec (1941–1944)." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35, 3 (2021): 445–463.

Cerovic, Masha. *Les enfants de Staline: La guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944)*. Paris: Seuil, 2018.

Cole, Tim. *Holocaust Landscapes*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Collins, Randall. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Feichtinger, Moritz. *'Villagization': A People's History of Strategic Resettlement and Violent Transformation: Kenya and Algeria 1952–1962*. Ph.D thesis, University of Bern, 2016.

Fein, Helen. *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*. New York and London: Free Press and Collier Macmillan, 1979.

Fein, Helen. *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*. London et al.: Sage, 1993.

Friedrich, Stefan. *Soziologie des Genozids: Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Forschungsperspektive*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012.

Fujii, Lee Ann. *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Gerlach, Christian. *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gerlach, Christian. *The Extermination of the European Jews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Gerlach, Christian. "Echoes of persecution: sounds in early post-liberation Jewish memories." *Holocaust Studies* 24, 1 (2018): 1–25.

Gross, Jan. *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The General Government, 1939–1944*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Gross, Jan. *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Hájková, Anna. *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Hilberg, Raul. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1992.

Hock, Nikita. "Making Home, Making Sense: Aural Experiences of Warsaw and East Galician Jews in Subterranean Shelters during the Holocaust." *Transposition. Musique et Sciences Sociales*, 1, 2020, journals.openedition.org/transposition/4205.

Kimonyo, Jean-Paul. *Rwanda's Popular Genocide*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2016.

Löw, Andrea, et al., eds. *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Grossdeutschen Reich 1941–1945*. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013.
Löw, Andrea, and Frank Bajohr, eds. *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
Mann, Michael. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
Mariot, Nicolas, and Claire Zalc. *Face à la persecution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010.
Rosenberg, Sheri. "Genocide Is a Process, Not an Event", *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, 1 (2012): 16–23.
Shaw, Martin. "Sociology and Genocide", *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, eds. Donald Bloxham and Dirk Moses, 42–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Steinbacher, Sybille. *"Musterstadt" Auschwitz: Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Ostoberschlesien*. Münich: K.G. Saur, 2000.
von Trotha, Trutz, ed. *Soziologie der Gewalt*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997.
Zalc, Claire, and Tal Bruttman, eds. *Microhistories of the Holocaust*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017.
Zeman, Andreas. *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa Since the 19th Century*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022 (forthcoming).

Labor

Hilmar Kaiser

Strategies of survival: Genocide and Armenian deportee labor, 1915–1918

The Armenian Genocide claimed the lives of about 1.4 Million Armenians, or approximately eighty percent of the Ottoman Armenian population in early 1915. The Ottoman government effected these deaths principally through outright massacres, death marches, starvation, and systematic exposure to contagious diseases. The authorities registered almost all of the survivors outside the urban centers of Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo as Muslims, thereby removing them from the reach of the few remaining community institutions and theoretically eliminating any Armenian presence from most of the state's territory. In the old settlement areas outside the combat zones on the Russian front, converted Armenians were allowed to stay if their number did not exceed five percent of the registered sedentary Muslim population; in the so-called destination areas their number was not to exceed ten percent. Areas along railways lines and other strategic locations were entirely off-limits. In August 1915, the central government granted some exceptions from deportation to Armenian military families, Catholics and Protestants within the five percent limit.[1]

Starting in May 1915, the Ministry of Interior's (DH) "Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants" (IAMM) coordinated the deportations. Its manuals and orders fine-tuned the entire operation and provided the basis for the wholesale expropriation of the victims. Throughout the war, the IAMM supervised regular censuses of Armenian survivors, determining their locations and survival rates. For the Armenian core settlement area, the IAMM ascertained a death rate of 95 percent or more by March 1917. Smaller communities in the central and western provinces lost sixty percent.[2]

While central government coordination and control was strong, provincial governors and army commanders played a critical role as well. Some mitigated the orders but others implemented even harsher measures and pushed for total annihilation. Erzerum governor Tahsin Bey was a key proponent and organizer of deportations and massacres. Other governors, like the Aleppo governors Djelal

1 For a detailed overview see Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide. A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

2 For a summary of administrative policies see Hilmar Kaiser, "Genocide at the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham et al. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 365–385.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-002

Bey and Bekir Sami Bey, opposed the entire scheme. Fourth Army Commander Djemal Pasha actively prevented massacres and introduced measures aiming to keep deportees alive as they were arriving in his region of control. Local actors like notables, religious and tribal leaders as well as ordinary townsmen and farmers pursued their own interests during deportations and massacres. Interdependencies between Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian communities further structured the implementation of state policies. This complex set of interacting interests created a diverse web of local responses that can explain the ferocity of the onslaught and also the emergence of spaces of survival.

The present paper, which links the issues of survival and labor, will first focus on Kighi kaza, a sub-district in the Erzerum province. The mountainous rural area bordered on the largely autonomous region of Dersim in the North of the Kharput province. While Kighi was fully integrated into the Ottoman state apparatus, Ottoman control over Dersim was often more nominal. Thus, the area offers an opportunity to glimpse Armenian-Kurdish relations outside the reach of the central government.

The provinces of Aleppo and Syria covered roughly the area south of a line drawn from the Gulf of Iskenderun to Urfa and up to today's border of Saudi Arabia, with the exception of Palestine and Lebanon. Armenian deportees were sent as far south as Ma'an. In early 1916 the independent district of Der Zor was transferred from the Fourth Army region to that of the Sixth. By September 1916, the authorities had massacred almost all deportees in the district. Thus, the Fourth Army region became the one so-called 'destination area' where large numbers of deportees survived. Armenian survival in the region casts doubt on claims that allege streamlined deportation and decision-making processes. Instead, the central government had to negotiate its policies.

Kighi and Dersim

Dersim was a rather remote mountain region. The mostly Kurdish population was tribal and adhered to Alevism, which was related to Shiism. Their relations with the Ottoman government and its Sunni Islam were bad at best. Some tribes had recently rebelled and been subjected to artillery bombardments. The situation remained tense, and by 1916 a new revolt was underway. The region's topography facilitated resistance. Some Armenian survivors participated in raids on government-held areas but were denied a share of the plunder. Many areas in Dersim lacked roads. Only small mountain paths connected the isolated settlements and houses. Nevertheless, the villagers were not entirely isolated. As in neighboring

Kighi, some men had gone as workers to larger Ottoman centers like Constantinople. Both Armenians and Kurds often remained there for several years before returning to their families. Some stayed in the big cities for good while Armenians expanded the migratory network to the U.S. once the opportunity presented itself. Some locations, however, had remained backward and lacked services. One Armenian survivor described conditions as follows: "They really appreciated receiving needles and thread. They said they had never seen them before."[3]

On 26 June 1916, Nazaret Postoyan left the U.S., where he had settled as a worker, and returned via Russia to his home village of Khubs, in the Kighi sub-district within Russian occupied territory. He was able to locate 33 survivors and, based on their testimonies, compiled the first systematic study of the destruction of the 48 Armenian communities of Kighi.[4] His work was included in records compiled by the *Armenian Revolutionary Federation* (ARF)'s Baku Committee. In 1916 it initiated a survey called the "Chronicles of Sorrow." The data therein included information on pre-war population, property, Ottoman government policies, evidence concerning the crimes committed and the perpetrators involved. The experiences of survivors, their sufferings and their escape were equally important.[5] Postoyan's detailed review showed that entire villages had been slaughtered with no or only a handful of known survivors. He estimated that 53,600 had been killed within their villages or at pre-determined massacre sites. The number of missing people was unknown.[6]

---

3 Avedis Abrahamian, *Avedis' Story: An Armenian Boy's Journey* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2014), 43.

4 Nazaret Postoyan, "Records of Nazaret Postoyan on the massacres of the Armenian villages of Kghi District of Karin Province," Karin [Erzerum], 17 April 1917, in *Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey 1915: Testimony of Survivors. Collection of Documents*, ed. Amatuni Virabyan (Yerevan: Zangak, 2013), 272–295; "Testimony of a group of survivors on the massacres of the villages in Kghi district of Karin province," in *Armenian Genocide*, 296–301; Tovmas Poghosian, "Testimony of Survivor Tovmas Poghosian on the Massacre of the Armenian Population of Karin and Armenian Labour companies," Karin [Erzerum] 1917, in *Armenian Genocide*, 256.

5 Amatuni Virabyan, Gohar Avagyan, "From the Editors," in *Armenian Genocide*, 5–10. Copies from the material were also cataloged at the Armenian General Benevolent Union's Nubarian Library in Paris with the fonds Andonian together with material produced in Aleppo. Mihran A. Minassian, "The Indictment Documents on the Armenian Genocide Written in Aleppo and the Sassoun Document (1919)," *Ts'eghaspanagitakan handes* 9 (2021): 93–126.

6 Postoyan, "Records," 283. His number of casualties exceeds enormously the overall population figures of about 20,000 for Kighi given by Kévorkian, *Armenian Genocide*, 304 based on Armenian church records. Adjusted official Ottoman data for 1914 supports the population figure of 20,000. Erzerum governor Tahsin Bey, too, gave the number of 2,500 households with about 20,000 people. They all had allegedly been deported by 12 June 1915. Nevertheless, Postoyan's estimates appear to be reliable given his intimate knowledge of the area and his inquiries made

Naturally, Postoyan's account had limitations. He had no access to information from territories under Ottoman control where inhabitants from Kighi had been deported. Some had been able to flee the massacres of the caravans and reached the city of Kharput. Others continued as far as the Syrian desert.[7] Along the way, Muslim notables had taken women and children from the caravans whom they deemed suitable for their own households. For instance, at Diarbekir, Governor Dr. Reshid Bey and other Muslim notables selected some young women for themselves.[8] Other Muslims took girls for adoption in order to obtain a legal claim to the girl's family estate.[9] Governor Tahsin Bey had argued that the deportation program should secure the replacement of Armenians with Muslim settlers, who would function as a counterweight against Kurdish tribes from Dersim. The latter formed a security risk in the eyes of the state. The full expropriation of the deportees, including their wheat stocks, was a part of the plan.[10]

In Kighi kaza, many Armenians were murdered within their villages. Deportation was often a follow-up measure. According to Postoyan, the massacres started on 3 June in the village of Akrag on the kaza's Southern border. A Kurdish mob and organized bands, so-called "tchetes," had attacked and burned down the place, leaving only three or four people alive.[11] Within days other villages came under attack, and the deportations started. Two weeks later, only ten essential workers, mostly craftsmen and health officials, had been left in Kighi.[12] Tribesmen from Dersim had participated in the atrocities. As they acted on their own account and outside of government orders, the authorities executed 32 of them by early September. Some local officials were implicated as well and were awaiting punishment.[13]

Some women and children survived the systematic slaughter of the deportee caravans from Kighi kaza that took place at pre-designated locations in valleys and at a bridge near Palu. The survivor accounts show that Kurdish villages lacked

---

on location. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914–1918*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt ve Denetleme Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2005), 629; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Dahiliye Nezareti (DH), Şifre Kalemi (ŞFR) 472–145, Tahsin to DH, Erzerum, May 29, 1915; 475–29, June 12, 1915.

7 Armenian Assembly of America (hereafter: AAA), Oral History Project (hereafter: OH), Shamigian, Antranig. Kévorkian, *Genocide*, 307.

8 Kévorkian, *Genocide*, 307.

9 Hilmar Kaiser, "Assimilating Armenians, 1915–1917," in *Aufarbeitung historischer Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit: Eine interdisziplinäre Auseinandersetzung mit dem Armenier-Genozid*, ed. Melanie Altanian (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018), 35–36.

10 DH.ŞFR 472–145, Tahsin to DH, Erzerum, May 29, 1915; 474–123, June 9, 1915.

11 Postoyan, "Records," 281.

12 Kévorkian, *Genocide*, 306.

13 DH.ŞFR 487–28, Tahsin to DH, Erzindjan, Sept. 4, 1915; 487–120, Sept. 6, 1915.

adequate food supplies, which might also explain in part the willingness of many Kurds to participate in the slaughter and plundering. Nine-year-old Yervant Krekorian survived when a Kurd abducted him. He worked for his new master as a shepherd or performed other tasks such as thrashing wheat. Despite the hard work, he received just enough food to survive. The owner was aware that the child was in a desperate situation and resorted to death threats and frequent beatings. Seeing that he could not survive under such conditions, Krekorian fled to his home village near Kighi. He found work again as a shepherd, this time for a Muslim refugee who had settled there. However, authorities detected and deported him again. By coincidence, his master saved him from massacre near Palu by bribing a gendarme and then took him towards Kharput. In the city, the boy ended up with the family of a high-ranking Turkish official who later allowed him to enter an American orphanage.[14]

Vahram Aloyan was nine years old when a gendarme saved him and his two brothers who dropped them off in a Kurdish village. His six-year-old brother starved to death as the Kurdish villagers were not providing food. His older brother disappeared when searching for food at night. Aloyan survived only by begging and stealing. Sometimes he traded his plunder for food. Doing so meant risking being killed, however. Once he was caught, but narrowly escaped. He left the area, sleeping in the forest during the daytime and traveling or searching for food at night. Slowly he made his way to Kharput, where he begged in the market. At one point, he became the servant of a Turkish family, taking care of their cattle among other duties. The family treated him well and planned to adopt him. The wife breast-fed him so that he would be considered her child. After three years with this family, he entered an Armenian orphanage in the city.[15]

Not all survivors had been deported. Antranig Baghdoian from the village of Chan was 13 years old when his village was attacked. He, his mother, a brother and two sisters survived by seeking shelter with Muslim acquaintances. After harvesting, their Muslim saviors sent them to Dersim in order to escape detection by the authorities. Later, his uncle, a blacksmith, arrived, as well as a shoemaker. Despite the summer time, work was scarce, and only his older brother found some farm work. In total, thirteen people lived here in one small house in the hills. Villages did not exist in this area. They were considered untouchable, as the house belonged to their former host in Kighi kaza, who wielded considerable influence. The group survived primarily on the blacksmith's income. His work was in high

14 Yervant Krekorian, *The Story of My Life* (Saint Catherines, ON: privately distributed, 1973), 6–10, 13–17.

15 AAA-OH, Aloyan, Vahram.

demand, as nobody else in the area could repair or produce tools. The Kurds paid in kind with products and animals. The income was sufficient to help other Armenians seeking shelter in the area, but when a famine hit late in 1916 people still died of starvation. Baghdoian recalled ". . . when we were in Dersim, they were not like slaves – they were getting paid." In other words, extreme exploitation was not a general phenomenon, but depended on specific circumstances and the status of the refugee.[16]

Having survived deportation and massacre, Zaroohy Norsigian, born in 1908, and her mother succeeded in returning to and remaining for some time in the village of Darman. As the government kept searching for survivors, both had to leave again. They were joined by one son and two of his friends. Her father had been trading with a Kurdish village. Thus, they found shelter with the village chief together with her daughter. Their mother's qualifications made them a valuable addition to the community: ". . . when they saw that my mother sewed pretty good and she can dye yarn for them, they were very, very grateful to her . . ." The Kurds lacked clothing and paid with food, but also money. Later on, the villagers helped them to reach the Russian lines.[17]

Gulnaz Bakaian was born in 1897 in Kighi. She married early, but her husband went for work to the U.S. Together with her aunt, she survived the massacres near Palu. Both women entered the household of a Kurdish Sheikh in a village. Her aunt became the household's cook, with her niece assisting her. The Sheikh's sister opposed, however, her presence and let her clean the streets, a particularly dreaded task. The situation deteriorated further and Gulnaz escaped a plot to kill her only with help of the woman's brother. The shepherd took her first to mountain pastures and later to Kharput. In the city, she worked in a missionary orphanage producing textiles. Later, she located her mother, who was working as a cook in a Turkish household. Critically, she succeeded in getting in touch with her husband in the U.S. and obtaining funds that secured her survival.[18]

Armenak Antranigian, born around 1893 in the village of Akrag, had spent five years in Constantinople before returning home in 1913. On his return he kissed the hand of a local Kurdish Agha. Impressed, the leader told Antranigian's mother: "Those who go to Istanbul, return as men, while those who go to America return as asses. Your son has become a man, for he wanted to kiss my hand in respect. He lost nothing by doing so, but instead, he reversed him-

16 AAA-OH, Baghdoian, Antranig.
17 AAA-OH, Norsigian, Zaroohy.
18 AAA-OH, Bakaian, Gulnaz.

self."[19] Antranigian recalled that local Armenian and Kurdish customs as well as family structures had similarities. Unmarried Armenian girls were, for instance, veiled. In 1914, many villagers had been drafted into the army, but most of them deserted and returned. On 26 May 1915, the authorities collected the sheep tax at Akrag after which Kurds, allegedly from Dersim, began cattle stealing and the first murders occurred at Khoobeg, a neighboring village. Antranigian and relatives hid with Kurdish friends. When Akrag was attacked three days later, his Kurdish friends urged him leave, as all Armenian men would be killed. For the time being, they would still protect his wife and children. Meanwhile, the government warned Kurds not to harbor Armenians. While some local Kurds blamed tribesmen from Dersim, it became clear that the locals were intent on killing Armenians. In response, Antranigian and other family members changed locations frequently, always staying with Kurds. Problems arose when one host tried to keep his wife, Mariam. With the help of other Kurds, he freed his wife and surviving family members moved in with a Kurdish landlord. His brother became a shepherd, receiving two loaves of bread as pay. Antranigian did other work in return for one or two loaves per day as well. As the village was close to the deportation route, he witnessed the plundering and massacre of deportees. By that time, killing in the villages was widespread. Hussein Agha, a Muslim notable, killed a leading Armenian and companion of Antranigian, named Iskender. The victim's body and those of two other prominent victims were mutilated as a political statement. Next, Hussein Agha seized Iskender's wife, daughter and baby boy. He ordered a woman to strangle the baby, thereby annihilating the Armenian family's male line. Soon afterwards, Antranigian's family fled again, as security forces were getting closer. The headman of Taroo village protected them for one week, after which his wife returned to her family's native village. Her friend was the daughter of Ahmad Agha, the local Kurdish leader, and wanted to protect her. However, when Antranigian attempted to take her to Dersim, Kurds killed two of his male relatives while he narrowly escaped with the help of Agha's daughter. He returned to Taroo where he became a worker for a powerful local religious leader, the Seyyid. It turned out, however, that the Seyyid, too intended to take hold of his wife and sell her while killing her husband. Thus, Antranigian escaped to Dersim, where friendly Kurdish women hosted him in their tent on a pasture. The women invited him to stay with their clan and promised protection. After all, the Kooreshan were a powerful tribe that not even the Seyyid could challenge.

19 Armenag Antranigian, *From Hell to Heaven: Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide and the Volunteer Corps* (Ottawa, ON: privately published, 2015), 62 (quote); for the following, see ibid., 82–83, 90–96, 98–113, 118–127.

For a year, Antranigian performed mainly agricultural work such as harvesting or collecting leaves. The latter were winter feed for the animals. Particularly difficult was the transport of the tents, produce and other items between village and summer camp on the mountains. While the family was supportive, he was unable to get to his wife, as he had to work constantly. He later made it to the Russian lines, having learned that his wife had died.

Helping an Armenian to escape to Russian lines was not an isolated incident. Among survivors in Kharput, Dersim became a place of refuge in 1916 when the tribes created an underground railroad smuggling Armenians from Kharput to the Russian lines near Erzindjan. The initially high fees of about 45 to 50 Tl dropped significantly and leveled out at 3 Tl. By that time the Kurds were smuggling groups of 30 or more people at a time. In some cases, the smugglers were willing to take needy people for free.[20] At one time, the village of Aghzunik alone sheltered 2,000 Armenian refugees escaping from Kharput.[21]

The survivor accounts show that the massacres and deportations in Kighi were organized by government officials, while mostly local villagers and tribes allied with the government executed the massacres. Most of the remaining men had been deported with the families but then were separated from the caravans and killed first.[22] Muslim villagers and tribesmen took rather few women and children. This points to the high degree of government surveillance in the villages, where those in hiding were arrested and re-deported or killed right away. Muslim farmers had an interest in securing young women and children, as these formed an investment that had significant monetary value. Subsistence farming or petty commodity producing families faced a major expense in obtaining a bride for their eldest sons. The animals or other gifts they had to transfer could constitute their disposable income for several years. The bride's family had to be compensated for the loss of a worker. Thus, obtaining brides without paying the girl's family made economic sense. Similarly, being able to turn an Armenian girl into a bride within a relative short time, during which the girl was working anyhow, was

20 US-NA/RG 59/867.4016/392, Leslie Davis, Port Jefferson, NJ, Feb. 9, 1918, in Ara Sarafian, comp., *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915–1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), 672; Esther Mugerditchian, *From Turkish Toils: The Narrative of an Armenian Family's Escape* (New York, NY: Doran, 1917), 35–42; Alice Muggerditchian Shipley, *We Walked, Then Ran* (Phoenix, AZ: privately published, 1983), 127–134; Henry Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia. Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915–1917* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1997), 112–116; Abrahamian, *Story*, 40.

21 Galust Galustian, "Testimony of Survivor Galust Galustian on Deportation and Massacres of the Armenian Population of the Town of Arabkir," Baberd, June 21, 1917, in *Armenian Genocide*, 360.

22 AAA, Krieger collection, film 16, *Les événements de Keghi depuis la mobilisation jusqu'à la déportation (Récit d'une escapée)*.

profitable. The killing of a potential asset points to government control on the one hand and a lack of demand on the other hand. There might have been simply too many victims available for making use of them.

The acceptance of an Armenian woman or girl into a Muslim household did not create a problem for a family's self-perception. For the union was understood to be a marriage, and thus the woman was considered to have become a Muslim as well. Families were patrilineal, the background of the girl did not matter. The family was considered entirely Turkish or Kurdish.

The situation for boys depended to some extent on the number of cattle, goats, and sheep the plunderers had been able to secure and hide from the government authorities. The animals had to graze on mountain pastures and needed to be watched. This created an additional demand for shepherds, preferably boys with experience.

Often, however, survival was only temporary and dependent on the timing of the deportations. The Armenian villagers were sent off with harvest-time approaching. Thus, Muslims sheltered many refugees for a considerable time, provided the victims helped with the harvesting and processing food. Those who joined nomadic tribes were vulnerable, as the tribes had to pass bridges along their migration routes. These spots served tax collectors as convenient spots for their work. In 1915 and 1916, the authorities seized Armenian refugees as well.[23]

The Fourth Army Region, Aleppo and Syria provinces

An international relief work assisted deportees. These funds had been donated by Americans, Europeans, and Armenians abroad. At times, however, the American missionary organization's interest took precedence over humanitarian effort. Some Armenian women in Caesarea district had converted to Islam in order to avoid deportation and massacre. The authorities dispersed them in remote Muslim villages, where many were robbed and where sexual assault was common. Having endured robberies, beatings, and rape, many made their way to Caesarea, where they appealed to American missionaries for help. The latter, however, withheld relief funds on grounds that the women had converted for opportunistic reasons. Instead, the funds were to be used for rebuilding an Evangelical community of

23 DH.ŞFR 502–83, Memduh to DH, Bitlis, Dec. 25, 1915.

returning deportees under their leadership after the war. Missionaries despised the women 'as women in the streets' and people who had 'bowed knee to Baal.'[24]

At Aleppo and in adjacent provinces and districts, relief work had taken on a more international character, but relief efforts were primarily based on local Armenian workers.[25] At Aleppo many women and children found shelter in local households. While families had room to accommodate newcomers, they lacked funds to feed them. Thus, the relief network financed the upkeep while landlords gave a place to stay in exchange for work. Although it was a widespread operation, it was officially banned, and police hunted down those in hiding. Still, even the highest officials took advantage of the situation. Governor Bekir Sami Bey caused a scandal when he tried to rape an Armenian woman working in his household. Abdulahad Nuri Bey, the director of the Aleppo field office of the Ministry of Interior's IAMM, took in a deportee from Samsun who later recalled with disgust the activities of the fanatical Turkish nationalist.[26]

In the so-called settlement areas outside Aleppo, Armenian survival depended on army regions. By 1917, almost all remaining survivors were located in the Fourth Army region. Those in Der Zor district, which belonged to the Sixth Army by summer 1916, had been slaughtered. An absence of massacres, however, did not necessarily increase the chances of survival. Eighty to ninety percent of the deportees in the desert regions of Hauran and Karak died. The survival rate in Damascus and Hama

24 Harvard University, Houghton Library, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Western Turkey Mission 1910–1919, S-Z, Wingate to [?], Talas, Nov. 14, 1916 [copy, extract]. Hilmar Kaiser, "Regional Resistance to Central Government Policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the Governors of Aleppo, and Armenian Deportees in the Spring and Summer of 1915," *Journal of Genocide Research* 12 (2010): 173–218.

25 Hilmar Kaiser with Luther and Nancy Eskijian, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor. Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2001); Hilmar Kaiser, "Humanitärer Widerstand gegen den Genozid an den Armeniern in Aleppo," in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, ed. Rolf Hosfeld et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017), 244–264; Kévorkian, *Genocide*, 639–644, Vahram L. Shemmassian, "Humanitarian Intervention by the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo during the First Months of the Genocide," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2013): 127–152; Mihran Minassian, "The Activities of the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo during the Armenian Genocide (1915–1918)," *The Rescue of Armenians in the Middle East in 1915–1923*, ed. Harutyun Marutyan et al. (Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, 2020), 226–256. Mouradian's recent monograph is based on earlier studies by other authors. Khatchig Mouradian, *The Resistance Network. The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915–1918* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2021).

26 Pailadzo Captanian, *Mémoires d'une déportée* (Paris: Flinikowski, 1919), 100; Kaiser, "Regional Resistance," 205. NA/RG59/867.4016/373, Jackson to Secretary of State, Washington, Mar. 4, 1918, in Sarafian, *Official Records*, 593.

was higher, but ravaging epidemics and famine still took a terrible toll. The misery is all the more extraordinary given the Ottoman decision to allow deportees to enter the Syrian province as long as they paid for train transportation. This resulted in a differentiation between more destitute deportees, who were driven into the desert along the Euphrates, and the comparably more wealthy who were going South.[27]

Those who had savings or who received funds from relatives or organizations they belonged to had a reasonably good chance of survival if they managed to avoid contagious diseases. For example, an Armenian priest in Tafila could hire a fellow clergyman as his servant. In Jerash, the Dadourian family ran a small trading business. Armenian traders extended their operations, quickly bringing in goods from Damascus. In doing so, they were able to take market-shares from Muslim traders that had previously controlled trade. The latter used their leverage with officials and attempted to overcome Armenian competition. Some deportees fared well as agricultural workers since they had vegetable seeds that were locally unknown.[28] Others used their technical know-how to introduce watermills that allowed for considerable expansion of irrigation and the production of agricultural products like flour. A few educated Armenians found some sort of employment with local authorities, as staff-members literate in Turkish were hard to find in the Arab speaking provinces.[29]

At Damascus, the workshops and administration of the Hedjaz railroad operations offered important employment for Armenian men. They also provided a base for the organization of a clandestine resistance. Later on, the need for firewood led to the recruitment of many deportees in the Karak district. Their camps on the hillsides soon were surrounded by huts where Armenian women offered sexual services. Armenian women worked as prostitutes at pretty much any railway station throughout the empire, and amongst the towns. It was often a last resort in order to secure to survival of their children.[30]

In general, however, deportees could hardly find work in the Ottoman districts of Hauran and Karak, which covered the territory of today's southern Syria and Jordan. Agriculture was very limited and restricted to relatively densely popu-

27 Hilmar Kaiser, "Shukru Bey and the Armenian Deportations in the Fall of 1915," in *Syria in World War I: Politics, economy, and society*, ed. Talha Çiçek (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 196.

28 Hilmar Kaiser, "The Armenian Deportees in Hauran and Karak District During the Armenian Genocide," in *Armenians of Jordan*, ed. Antranig Dakessian (Beirut: Haigazian University Press, 2019), 86–87, 90.

29 Vahé Tachjian, *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915–1918* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 114.

30 Kaiser, "Hauran," 93.

lated spots. Facing absolute poverty, many tried to survive on collecting firewood in the mountains. The income was totally inadequate and the people starved to death. Most of the deportees depended on transfers of funds from relatives in Constantinople and abroad that might reach them only after heavy deductions. The Armenian church authorities in Jerusalem provided some relief, as did Ottoman officials. It is not clear if these latter funds came from Ottoman government sources or, more likely, from western donations. Fourth Army commander Djemal Pasha ordered some impromptu distributions or levied donations on local Muslim leaders when visiting the area on a tour of inspection.

In the Tafila sub-district, Armenians abandoned children, as they saw no chance of keeping them alive. Desperate children followed the adults through a desert stretch along which half of the children died. At the new location at which these people arrived, conditions were just as bad, and the children stayed in the streets. Some of the children survived when Ottoman officers picked them up and took them to Deraa. At Deraa, military authorities provided for the survivors. They dispatched recovering younger children to Aintoura, an army orphanage in Lebanon, which was to serve as a model institution for Djemal Pasha's efforts in modernizing Syria. While the children were subjected to systematic assimilation efforts on the part of Turkish nationalists, it is doubtful that this was the intent of the army command. Most of the teenagers transferred from Deraa to Damascus, where they joined military workshops. The workshops were officially under the command of the Fourth Army's "Inspector for Immigrants" Tcherkes Hasan Bey. In reality, Armenians ran the workshops and associated shelter, as well as an orphanage. The director was a member of a revolutionary organization wanted by the central government but protected by Djemal Pasha. The reputation of the orphanage and workshops among deportees was stellar and people were desperate to gain admittance. While the Armenian staff followed a restrictive policy in accepting applicants, the Ottoman officer adopted a more inclusive strategy.[31]

Still, in the south, most of the survivors depended on transfers from relatives or relief handouts. The Aleppo network's operations were to a large extent dependent on the tacit cooperation of the Fourth Army as civil authorities tried to sabotage the work. By the fall of 1916, most of those remaining alive in the

31 Hrazdan Tokmajian, *The Kalemkiarians. Ayntab, Damascus, Aleppo* (Aleppo: Armenian Diocese of Aleppo, 2016), 36–37; Ümit Kurt, "A Rescuer, an Enigma and a Génocidaire: Cemal Pasha," in *End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser et al. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 233. Hilmar Kaiser, "Hauran," 90; Hilmar Kaiser, "The Ottoman Fourth Army's Orphanage Policy, 1915–1918," in *Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts: Neglected Perspectives on a Global War, 1914–1918*, ed. Mehmet Beşikçi et al. (Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2020), 78–79, 91–94.

Hauran were evacuated to urban centers in Syria. The Fourth Army took Armenian deportees of any age to Damascus and Hama. Once more, the rescue effort faced the determined opposition of the civil authorities. The governors of Damascus, Tahsin Bey, and Deraa, Abdulkadir Bey were fanatical nationalists who had played a key role in the extermination of Armenians in Erzerum and adjacent provinces.[32]

Many evacuees were employed in military workshops at Damascus and Hama. Like the Damascus workshop, the one at Hama was supervised by Armenian deportees, where mostly women produced textiles.[33] At Aleppo, Armenian community leaders had suggested the creation of military workshops. Local orphanages had run their own workshops for some time and the various Armenian communities had also created a series of workshops. For the women and teenagers laboring in the new military textile workshops, the army was to pay a minimal wage in the form of bread. Initially about 10,000 Armenians, including "6,500 women, mostly widows, 3,000 girls, and 650 men and big boys" found employment. Important here was that the workers would receive a document identifying them as military personnel. This status removed them and their immediate relatives from the control of the civil authority and prevented their deportation. One workshop with about 1,500 Armenians operated under the direction of a former Armenian deportee with Armenian supervisors. Thus, some wealthy Armenians paid rather high bribes of between 400 to 500 Turkish Pounds to become supervisors in one of the workshops. It is likely that the community-based workshops also produced for the government, although exact information to this effect is lacking. As for the relief network, the small food rations constituted a significant improvement in the quantity of available food for Armenians. The relief network provided food rations for the workers' children and clothing. Hiring and operations took place in close cooperation between relief workers and officers. Work was hard and reflected the famine conditions of the time, where exploitation was the rule rather than the exception. Social relations, however, were not always bad. At Aintab, the Muslim manager of the workshop married an Armenian woman and converted to Christianity after the war. In contrast, an Armenian worker used his secure position to harass a deportee who barely escaped him. At Aleppo similar problems were common.[34] Importantly, conditions in the

32 Hilmar Kaiser, "Tahsin Uzer: Talaat's Man in the East," in *End of the Ottomans*, 93–115; Hilmar Kaiser, "Requiem for a Thug: *Aintabli* Abdulkadir and the Special Organization," in *End of the Ottomans*, 67–91.

33 Tachjian, *Abyss*, 113–114.

34 NA/RG59/867.4016/373, Jackson to Secretary of State, Washington, Mar. 4, 1918, in Sarafian, *Official Records*, 593; George B. Kooshian, *The Web of Hope* (Altadena, CA: Ideal Press, 2017),

workshops of the Fourth Army differed fundamentally from those of the Third Army where workers faced systematic abuse and torture before being summarily massacred.[35]

Despite all misery, many deportees remained politically active. At Damascus, some deportees organized a committee of the ARF. They began buying arms and smuggling them from the Sinai front to Damascus. By 1918, the committee's armed wing counted more than 60 militants. At the same time, the organization began to explore ways of contacting the outside world to report on the situation. In the end, the militants left Damascus assisted by Druze allies and fought in the Arab revolt.[36]

Conclusion

The survival of Armenians depended on their surroundings. The events in the Kighi district and neighboring Dersim demonstrate the importance of local government control. Survival was impossible in Kighi, and few Armenians remained in the district. Dersim was, however, largely beyond direct government interference. In Dersim, Kurds treated Armenian refugees for some time as guests and protected them. When it became clear that the arrivals could make a contribution to the local economy by rendering specialized services or as workers, their stay could become permanent. Some landlords exploited the refugees to the extreme, while others developed friendly relations with them. Harsh winter climates and

231–232, 236–224; Minassian, "Activities," 251–254; Yeghishe E. Chilingirian, *Description of Different Events and Matters of Deportees and Monastic Life: Jerusalem, Aleppo, Damascus, 1914–1918*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: no publisher, 1927), 28. Sarkis Balabanian, *The Stormy and Calm Days of My Life: Sarkis Balabanian "Balaban Khoja" Educator, Rescuer, Survivor* (Pasadena, CA: 2019), 67–69, 99. Some authors describe the conditions as "semi-servitude," "semi-slavery" or "essentially slave labor." They do not address the role of Armenians in organizing and running the workshops, nor do they account for contemporary western and Armenian accounts that contradict their claims. Tachjian, *Abyss*, 58, 177–178. Khatchig Mouradian, "Surviving Talaat: The Armenian Genocide and its Aftermath in Syria, 1915–1920," in *Aftermath of the Holocaust and Genocides*, ed. Victoria Khiterer et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 233. See also, Yervant Odian, *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914–1919* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2009), 177–180. The workshops established in Der Zor district, founded in 1917, fell under the authority of the Sixth army and were not part of that system. Kaiser, "Resisting Genocide," in *The Rescue of Armenians*, 275–276.

35 Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Towards a Social History of the Ottoman War Economy: Manufacturing and Armenian Forced Skilled-Laborers," *Not All Quiet*, 56–69.

36 Kaiser, "Jordan", 80–81. On ARF operations in and around Aleppo see Kaiser, "Resisting."

famine forced many Kurds and Armenians to make difficult choices. Armenian adults invariably opted for departing to the Russian lines in the North, while isolated children often migrated south and sought refuge in Kharput. Importantly, the attitudes of Kurdish villagers and tribesmen show that Ottoman government directives do not suffice to explain the fate of Armenian women and children.

The few surviving Armenian craftsmen did not meet the demand. Mountain roads deteriorated as bridges were no longer maintained. Similarly, irrigation systems decayed and production, especially garden agriculture, declined. Nomads were forced to settle as they could no longer rely on winter fodder and stables provided by Armenian farmers. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult to trade animal products for wheat. In one case, Armenians associated themselves with a large Kurdish tribal confederation, forming their own tribe. In the process they changed their religion and language for at least one or two generations.[37]

Most Armenian deportees ended up in desolate rural areas. Agriculture was underdeveloped and arable land was scarce, if available at all. For farmers and semi-nomads, Armenians were temporarily useful at harvest time and during migration. To keep Armenians through winter until plowing season often made no sense economically. Women and children might initially have been a profitable investment for "owners," but then they could easily be replaced with other victims. Wealthy deportees found alternatives as traders, but in doing so they created competition for local merchants, causing much resentment. Only Armenian craftsmen and deportees with special qualifications could hope for a favorable reception. Others were a burden that local communities were willing to cope with as long as there was some reward associated with it, such the cash income through relief funds. The cooperation between relief networks and the army alone created a sizable increase in employment. The arrangements resembled the agreements with private households in Aleppo. The number of deportees saved by the efforts of the relief network, including the military workshops, constituted numerically the single most important segment of survivors in the so-called destination areas by 1918.

37 Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus* (Marburg: Geographisches Institut der Universität Marburg, 1959), 57, 144–145.

Bibliography

Abrahamian, Avedis. *Avedis' Story: An Armenian Boy's Journey*. London: Gomidas Institute, 2014.

Antranigian, Armenag. *From Hell to Heaven. Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide and the Volunteer Corps*. Ottawa, ON: privately published, 2015.

Captanian, Pailadzo. *Mémoires d'une déportée*. Paris: Flinikowski, 1919.

Chilingirian, Yeghishe E. *Description of Different Events and Matters of Deportees and Monastic Life. Jerusalem, Aleppo, Damascus, 1914–1918*. 2nd ed. Jerusalem: no publisher, 1927 (in Armenian).

Cora, Yaşar Tolga. "Towards a Social History of the Ottoman War Economy: Manufacturing and Armenian Forced Skilled-Laborers." In *Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts: Neglected Perspectives on a Global War, 1914–1918*, edited by Mehmet Beşikçi, Selçuk Akşin Somel and Alexandre Toumarkine, 56–69, Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2020.

Hütteroth, Wolf-Dieter. *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus*. Marburg: Geographisches Institut der Universität Marburg, 1959.

Kaiser, Hilmar, Luther Eskijian and Nancy Eskijian, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor. Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915–1917*. Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2001.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Genocide at the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire." In *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, edited by Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, 365–385, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Regional Resistance to Central Government Policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the Governors of Aleppo, and Armenian Deportees in the Spring and Summer of 1915," *Journal of Genocide Research* 12 (2010): 173–218.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Shukru Bey and the Armenian Deportations in the Fall of 1915." In *Syria in World War I: Politics, economy, and society*, edited by Talha Çiçek, 169–236, London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Humanitärer Widerstand gegen den Genozid an den Armeniern in Aleppo." In *Das Deutsche Reich und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, edited by Rolf Hosfeld and Christin Pschichholz, 244–264, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Assimilating Armenians, 1915–1917." In *Aufarbeitung historischer Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit: Eine interdisziplinäre Auseinandersetzung mit dem Armenier-Genozid*, edited by Melanie Altanian, 23–55, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Tahsin Uzer: Talaat's Man in the East." In *End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, edited by Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret L. Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar and Thomas Schmutz, 93–115, London: I. B. Tauris, 2019.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Requiem for a Thug: *Aintabli* Abdulkadir and the Special Organization." In *End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, edited by Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret L. Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar and Thomas Schmutz, 67–91, London: I. B. Tauris, 2019.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "The Armenian Deportees in Hauran and Karak District During the Armenian Genocide." In *Armenians of Jordan*, edited by Antranig Dakessian, 39–105, Beirut: Haigazian University Press, 2019.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "Resisting Genocide: The Aleppo Relief Network 1915–1918." In *The Rescue of Armenians in the Middle East in 1915–1923*, edited by Harutyun Marutyan and Narine Margaryan, 259–293, Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, 2020.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "The Ottoman Fourth Army's Orphanage Policy, 1915–1918." In *Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts: Neglected Perspectives on a Global War, 1914–1918*, edited by Mehmet Beşikçi, Selçuk Akşin Somel and Alexandre Toumarkine, 73–100, Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2020.

Kévorkian, Raymond. *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.

Kooshian, George B. *The Web of Hope*. Altadena, CA: Ideal Press, 2017.

Krekorian, Yervant. *The Story of My Life*. Saint Catherines, ON: privately distributed, 1973.

Kurt, Ümit. "A Rescuer, an Enigma and a Génocidaire: Cemal Pasha." In *End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, edited by Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret L. Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar and Thomas Schmutz, 221–245, London: I. B. Tauris, 2019.

Minassian, Mihran. "The Activities of the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo during the Armenian Genocide (1915–1918)." In *The Rescue of Armenians in the Middle East in 1915–1923*, edited by Harutyun Marutyan and Narine Margaryan, 226–256, Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, 2020 (in Armenian).

Mihran A. Minassian, "The Indictment Documents on the Armenian Genocide Written in Aleppo and the Sassoun Document (1919)," *Ts'eghaspanagitakan handes* 9 (2021): 93–126 (in Armenian).

Mouradian, Khatchig. "Surviving Talaat: The Armenian Genocide and its Aftermath in Syria, 1915–1920." In *Aftermath of the Holocaust and Genocides*, edited by Victoria Khiterer and Erin Magee, 228–247, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020.

Mouradian, Khatchig. *The Resistance Network. The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915–1918*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2021.

Mugerditchian, Esther. *From Turkish Toils. The Narrative of an Armenian Family's Escape*. New York, NY: Doran, 1917.

Muggerditchian Shipley, Alice. *We Walked, Then Ran*. Phoenix, AZ: privately published, 1983.

Odian, Yervant. *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914–1919*. London: Gomidas Institute, 2009.

Riggs, Henry. *Days of Tragedy in Armenia. Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915–1917*. Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1997.

Sarafian, Ara, comp. *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915–1917*. London: Gomidas Institute, 2004.

Shemmassian, Vahram L. "Humanitarian Intervention by the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo during the First Months of the Genocide," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2013): 127–152.

Tachjian, Vahé. *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915–1918*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017.

Tokmajian, Hrazdan. *The Kalemkiarians. Ayntab, Damascus, Aleppo*. Aleppo: Armenian Diocese of Aleppo, 2016.

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Genelkurmay Başkanlığı. *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914 – 1918*, vol. 1. Ankara: Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt ve Denetleme Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2005.

Virabyan, Amatuni, ed. *Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey 1915: Testimony of Survivors. Collection of Documents*. Yerevan: Zangak, 2013.

Christian Gerlach

Comparing Jewish labor in Poland, 1942–1945, and Armenian labor in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1918

Introduction

This chapter points to similarities between labor relations involving Jews hiding in German-occupied Poland, 1942–1945, and Armenians hiding in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1918.[1] Many of these people took up informal employment with non-Jews and non-Armenians, respectively, to obtain sustenance at a time when their group was under a deadly threat. This was for people who were not wealthy enough to afford years of paying for food, hosts and bribes, or who had lost their wealth. Several hundred thousand Armenians and tens of thousands of Jews in Poland survived this way.[2] Examining these labor relations helps elucidate the social position of members of these two groups under persecution. The background of this interest is my contention that violence, persecution but also support for persecuted people are constituted by social interaction, which means that it is not enough to look at official policies. It was not only officials that persecuted Armenians and Jews; many civilians also killed, mistreated, denounced, and pillaged them. At the same time, I argue that Jews and Armenians underwent proletarianization in low-qualification jobs in those years, at least temporarily.

It is no coincidence that the political scholarship – whether, by tendency, accusatory or denialist – has paid little attention to this phenomenon, which tends to be at odds with their narratives. But a number of – mostly female – scholars in these two fields have pointed to the existence of this kind of labor. Often the topic has been raised in studies about women or children. Joanna Michlic noted that Jewish children hiding in Poland served non-Jews, mostly farmers, as "cheap labor" without the "right to the most basic human care," Debórah Dwork emphasized that the work that Jewish children had to do was often hard and that the phenomenon also occurred inside Germany, and Nahum Bogner added valu-

1 This chapter is based on my work in the project "Sounds of anti-Jewish persecution," supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF-Projekt 100011_172597/1).

2 For Ottoman Armenians, see Nazan Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children and Youth During World War I* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2019), 115–116.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-003

able observations and insights.[3] Hilmar Kaiser mentioned that Armenians under persecution worked for others, as did Nazan Maksudyan, emphasizing children's industriousness and agency, and Victoria Rowe, who added that Armenian women continued to seek wage labor in the first years after liberation, although this was not customary before their deportation.[4] Katharine Derderian called such work done by Armenian women "forced labor" and "slave labor," with women being extremely vulnerable to their employers/new families.[5] However, I know of no in-depth study of the phenomenon on either side[6] – except for Hilmar Kaiser's chapter in this volume – and, in comparative terms, there is a brief summary remark by Derderian that Armenian and Jewish women both had to do slave labor,[7] but no in-depth comparison of labor relations of people in hiding in the two cases.

These are the questions guiding my brief analysis, each time asked in comparative fashion: What kind of work were the persecuted doing, and was it more in rural or urban environments? What about labor conditions, the workload, payment and treatment? To what extent did Jews and Armenians become part of

3 See Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), 40 and 70; Debórah Dwork, *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 92–95; Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).

4 Hilmar Kaiser, "'A Scene from the Inferno': The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915–1916," *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, eds. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller (Zurich: Chronos, 2002), 177–178 note 55; Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 127–128; Victoria Rowe, "Armenian Women Refugees at the End of Empire: Strategies of Survival," *Refugees and the End of Empire: Imperial Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Panikos Panyi and Pippa Virdee (Basingstoke and New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2011), 158–159, 167. See also Jinks, "'Marks'", 114, 123.

5 Katharine Derderian, "Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19, 1 (2005): 3, 11–12, 14–15. See also Ceyda Karamursel, "The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Women's History* 28, 3 (2016): 155. Calling Armenians living with Muslim families slaves was common among Christian activists in the 1910s and 1920s: Jinks, "'Marks,'" 104–106.

6 This also appears to apply to the recent collection of critical local case studies *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, eds. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, 2 volumes (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą *Żydów*, 2018), where the topic pops up occasionally. The same goes for Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 135–170. What comes closest to a systematic treatment I found in Gunnar Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), esp. 131–136.

7 Derderian, "Common Fate," 14–15.

employers' families? How long did this informal employment last, and how steady was it? How did one get this kind of job? Who was employed in regard to sex and age? And who were the employers in terms of social status, sex and ethnicity?

All of this is about Jews and Armenians working while living illegally in the most intense years of persecution. This paper is not about Jews doing work who lived in German-controlled ghettos and camps, nor about Armenians working in military forced labor battallions,[8] in the officially sponsored labor schemes in Aleppo, in orphanages and in the cities of Constantinople and Smyrna, where Armenians lived legally throughout the First World War.

The main material with which I work – and with which others have worked who made observations about this topic – are survivor accounts. This material has a number of limitations. Often, employment is only mentioned in passing without much qualification. And survivors, especially in the Jewish case, arguably represent atypical, relatively successful cases of employment, because they did not fall victim to persecution like most other members of their group hiding in Poland[9] (this argument applies to Armenians only to a certain extent). But these Jews and Armenians never became, as some others did (especially Armenians), fully socially integrated, which is why they later left the employers or households where they had worked; these departures allow us to learn from their experiences, because their accounts are only available for that reason, whereas those who stayed with the new families did not leave accounts. Also, it has to be kept in mind that many of these survivors were minors at the time, with the effect that children's work is in the center of their accounts, whereas they mention labor done by older relatives of theirs only occasionally.

Labor relations compared

Where did people work who lived clandestinely? For context, it should be said that both persecutions took place during a major war in which there was a lack of labor due to many men having been drafted to the military, and in German-

8 See, for example, Erik Jan Zürcher, "Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I," in Kieser and Schaller, *The Armenian Genocide*, 187–196; Raymond Kévorkian, "Ahmed Djémal pacha et le sort des déportés arméniens de Syrie-Palestine," in Kieser and Schaller, *The Armenian Genocide*, 197–212; Raymond Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006), 846–849.
9 See Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 413–420; Grabowski, *Hunt*, 138.

occupied Poland also for forced labor in Germany. The demand for labor was especially high in the countryside, where state control tended to be less tight.[10]

According to the accounts from Poland, Jews in hiding – children and adults, male and female – worked primarily as farmhands for individuals, rarely for cooperatives.[11] For many, the primary work in the villages was tending to animals.[12] Some female refugees were spinning and knitting for a living.[13] Women and girls also worked as household maids, urban or rural.[14] In villages, some went as taylors or beggars, and Jan Grabowski mentions artisans such as shoemakers and carpenters.[15] In cities and towns, there were more independent activities in petty trade – inside and/or outside ghettos, often in groups or pairs, sometimes also together with non-Jews – and smuggling, especially by boys.[16] Other urban jobs – for girls and women – included sewing, mending socks, weaving, toymaking, stuffing cigarettes (most of this done as cottage work), baking and service jobs, including as street singers (on the non-Jewish side) and as porters at railway stations.[17] Some Polish Jews also tried their luck with letting themselves be deported (or even crossed the border themselves) to Germany to find employment as alleg-

10 For labor demand in the city of Warsaw, see Paulsson, *Secret City*, 132.

11 See Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 82; Michlic, *Jewish Children*, 34; accounts by Emanuel Elbinger, Jerzy Frydman, Henoch Rafael Lisak, Karolina Heuman in: *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, ed. Wiktoria Śliwowska (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 33, 50, 102, 188; accounts by Mendel Rosenkranz, Józef Leichter, Jozek Mansdorf, Maria Kopel, Izak Klajman and Jan Kulbinger in: *The Children Accuse*, eds. Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss (London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 39, 70–71, 109, 122, 130, 225–226.

12 Accounts by Józef Leichter, Anzelm Landesman, Regina Rück, Henryk Piechotka, Tamara Cygler, Leon Majblum, Jozek Mansdorf and Izak Klajman in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 70, 76, 84–85, 86, 90, 91–92, 109, 130; accounts by Maria Kamińska and Helena Choynowska (Alter), in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 84, 168.

13 Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 64.

14 See Paulsson, *Secret City*, 108, 134; Michlic, *Jewish Children*, 34; accounts by Barbara Góra and Helena Choynowska (Alter) in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 73, 168 (both in Warsaw); accounts by Marlena Wolisch and Eugenia Welner in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 96, 124.

15 Account by Hanka Grynberg in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 182–183; account by Józef Leichter in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 70; Grabowski, *Hunt*, 148 and, for begging, the account by Cyla Braw in: Grabowski, *Hunt*, 221.

16 Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 99–113; Paulsson, *Secret City*, 125, 134–135; accounts by Henryk Meller, Szlama Kutnowski, Jozek Mansdorf and Jan Kulbinger, Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 65–66, 80, 105, 108, 222; account by Barbara Góra in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 73.

17 Paulsson, *Secret City*, 133; accounts by Joanna Kaltman, Hanna Mesz and Maria Teresa Zielińska, in: Śliwowska *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 80, 123, 149–150; Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 103, 108, 110.

edly non-Jewish Polish workers[18] or, disguised as non-Jews, with Germans in occupied Poland, in jobs as maids, assistants and workers for military units, e.g.[19]

Armenian women and girls lived as housemaids or in forced marriages with Muslims, probably doing work similar to a maid, apparently in rural and urban environments. For women living with bedouins, this included weaving and spinning.[20] Especially those who were married also had to be ready for sex, which could, depending on one's perspective, also be regarded as kind of work; it has been called sex slavery.[21] Some Armenian girls also found work as maids in German and other European families, who sometimes bought them.[22] There were few male adult survivors of massacres and marches. Armenian adults and youth worked as "shoemakers, [. . .], seamstresses, tailors, blacksmiths, or carpenters, and [. . .] doctors" in times when qualified labor was scarce.[23] Some started to look for work and economic opportunity even during the deportation marches.[24] Boys worked as farmhands, shepherds, servants, or cleaning stables or doing gardening.[25] Kerop Bedoukian reported about a village in southeastern Anatolia in 1915, probably with some exaggeration, that all of the local "wives, maids, housekeepers, goatherds, milkers, cheese-makers" were Armenians.[26] There were other jobs in urban environments. One boy worked as an assistant of a physician and then

18 See Paulsson, *Secret City*, 135; account by Krystyna Chudy in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 26–28; account by Szlama Kutnowski in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 81.

19 See Anna Zapalec, "Powiat Złoczowski," in Engelking and Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc*, vol. I, 736–739; accounts by Robert Kulka and Eugenia Magdziarz in Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 89, 107; accounts by Josek Mansdorf and Jan Kulbinger in Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 109, 226.

20 Kaiser, "'A Scene,'" 177 note 55; Donald Miller and Lourna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 114; *Verlust und Vermächtnis: Überlebende des Genozids an den Armeniern erinnern sich*, eds. Mihran Dabag and Kristin Platt (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2015), 109, 186, 239–242 (Schuschanig Gambarian, Yüghaper Eftian and Zepure Medsbakian); Mae Derderian, *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide: Based on a memoir by Virginia Meghrouni* (Los Angeles: Atmus, 1996), 93, 122 (this book must be used with caution).

21 See for example Derderian, "Common Fate;" Vahakn Dadrian, "Children as victims of genocide: The Armenian Case," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, 3, (2003): 425, 427–428.

22 Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 112; Martin Niepage, *The Horrors of Aleppo* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, n.y. [1917]), 13; see also account by Yüghaper Eftian in Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 187.

23 Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 128.

24 Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 127–128.

25 Kaiser, "'A Scene,'" 177–178 note 55; accounts by Khoren Margossian by Aram Güreghian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 59, 61, 142, 144; Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 110, 114, 117.

26 Kerop Bedoukian, *Some of Us Survived* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 54–55.

of a shopkeeper, eventually becoming his accountant.[27] In the town of Marash, some Armenians worked as sewers, in Birecik as weavers; in Harput Armenian women became knitters, and in Diyarbekir, Armenian boys became waiters.[28] In an urban environment, prostitution by Armenian women and girls was frequent, in some cases because they were shunned by other Armenians after having been raped, and for the same reason some worked as prostitutes also after liberation.[29] Activities of self-employment included petty trade (mostly for boys), begging, and some boys lived as thieves, especially in urban environments.[30] A 1980s oral history-based study included female informants who worked as "beggars, street peddlers, street cleaners, water carriers, maids, seamstresses, helpmates in hospitals, nurse's aides, nurses, and teachers."[31] As Nazan Maksudyan stresses, many Armenian children – and other Ottoman children during World War I – were not just passive victims, but exerted agency in various ways, including work.[32]

Importantly, the Armenian women and children initially often lacked experience and qualifications in the jobs they were given or took up. The sort of jobs that persecuted refugees could even hope for put them in a low social position. Except for the clothing sector, the same was also often true for Polish Jews. Overall, the kind of jobs the refugees obtained were amazingly similar in the two cases – farming and animal raising, trade, and weaving and cloth-making.

The accounts given by Armenians and Jews say little about the conditions of work. This includes the workload, which could be heavy or light, but was often not specified.[33] Given that payment usually goes unmentioned (one survivor noted that there was one), I assume that most Armenians worked for room and board.[34] The same went for Polish Jews; only some of them mentioned that they did piece-

27 Account by Aram Güreghian in Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 73–75 (Pazare).

28 Bedoukian, *Some*, 81–84, 86, 90, 126; account by Zepure Medsbakian in Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 242; Uğur Üngör, "Orphans, Converts and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923," *War in History* 19, 2 (2012): 177.

29 Üngör, "Orphans," 187–188; Tachjian, "Gender", 66, 68, 71; for the context, see also Jinks, "'Marks'", 111–112.

30 Bedoukian, *Some*, 63; Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 106, 114; Üngör, "Orphans," 177; Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 128–129, 132.

31 Eliz Sanasarian, "Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4, 4 (1989): 451.

32 Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 105–136, esp. 106, 140.

33 See Kaiser, "'A Scene,'" 177–178 note 55; account by Aram Güreghian in Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 61; account by Szlama Kutnowski in Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 79.

34 Zepure Medsbakian (in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 242) mentions that there was no pay. In the desert around Der es-Zor, the authorities prohibited Armenians from earning a salary; see Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2002), 378.

meal work in the textile sector.[35] Armenian survivors often described how they were treated by their employers by telling about the quality and amount of food they received. This could vary between being well provided, eating what the family ate and living off scrap.[36] Some complained about being bossed around by rural men or women, sometimes including beatings.[37] The account of Aram Güreghian is probably not atypical: he had to fend off a sexual assualt by his first employer (a doctor) and was treated with dignity by the second, an Afghan businessman.[38] Even within a family, a girl could be treated well by one person, the new 'father,' and badly, like a maid, by another, his wife, for example.[39] The "treatment of the captured youngsters ranged from cruelty to love," as Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill wrote, who added that older Armenian boys tended to be treated "as slave labor."[40] The range of treatment of Polish Jews by their employers was almost equally wide.[41] There was also mixed behavior. One survivor said that the farmers who took her in had rough manners but dealt with their own children the same way.[42] A boy wrote that his farmer made him work hard but treated and fed him well.[43]

Despite some reports about fairly good treatment, there is just one account of a Jewish girl in my sample who said she was dealt with like a family member.[44] This was more often the case with very small Jewish children, who did not work. Other Jews just worked for their hosts. By contrast, a great number of Armenian children were adopted by Muslim families and many women were accepted as (first) wives.[45]

---

35 See accounts by Joanna Kaltman and Maria Teresa Zielińska in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 80, 150. For a lowly paid cow herder, see the account by Jan Kulbinger in in Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 226.

36 Rather positive: Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 114; Derderian, "Coomon Fate," 126; account by Schuschanig Gambarian in Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 109. Negative account by Khoren Margossian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 144.

37 Derderian, "Common Fate," 93, 95; Kaiser, "'A Scene,'" 178 note 55.

38 See Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 74–75 (urban); similar account by Khoren Margossian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 142–144 (rural).

39 Üngör, "Orphans," 178.

40 Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill, "The Armenian Genocide and the Survival of Children," in *Anatomy of Genocide: State-Sponsored Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Alexandre Kimenyi and Otis Scott (Lewiston: Mellen, 2001), 232.

41 See accounts by Tamara Cygler, Maria Kopel and Eugenia Welner in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 90, 122, 124; account by Michał Pinkas in: Grabowski, *Hunt*, 187. Similar conclusion in Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 89–90, 94.

42 Account by Barbara Góra in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 73.

43 Account by Szlama Kutnowskii in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 79.

44 Account by Hanka Grynberg in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 184.

45 See Derderian, "Common Fate," despite her quite different interpretation; Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 106, 110; Rowe, "Armenian women refugees," 158–159.

Many were tattoed, marking the "transition from one social group to another."[46] Survivors identifying as Armenian sometimes wrote memoirs or were interviewed (after they had left their Muslim families), but those who stayed in those families are hardly represented in such sources. The fact that strong persuasion was necessary to 'rescue' some of them from Muslim families after 1918 and that many did not leave testifies to their social inclusion.[47] Many women who stayed in their new Muslim environs did so because fellow Armenians rejected their children who had been fathered by Turks, Arabs or Kurds. Others even returned to their Muslim families after having been 'rescued' out of their midst by Christians.[48] Many others were not adopted, but the full integration of Armenians into the family seems to be a major distinction between Armenians and Jews in Poland (except for an unknown number of young Jewish children[49]), even though one has to keep in mind that neither the thousands of Jews nor the Armenians who stayed with their new families even after the German or Ottoman regime collapsed ever told their story.

For people in hiding, it was best if they could stay in one place and thus also one position of employment during the persecution. Although there is evidence for many Armenians having stayed in one job for years,[50] there were few who had only one employer, and others reported having changed frequently (some by running away), sometimes in combination with switching from one activity to another as well.[51] Unsteady employment can also be taken as a sign that working conditions were bad and people were not integrated into families. Accordingly, Polish Jews seem to have stayed on average much shorter in one job than Armenians. Many Armenians disguised their identities like Jews did, but unlike non-Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, non-Jewish Poles were threatened with death by German 'laws' not to help Jews, which made many (but not all) send them away if they found out that their employees were Jews or if their neighbors found out; Jews themselves often left if they considered the risk of being betrayed too big due to the threats,

46 Jinks, "'Marks,'" 103, quoting Hanne Schönig.

47 For the high numbers of those who stayed, see Jinks, "'Marks,'" 116. Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 117–120, 125 argues that staying was often a matter of choice. Rebecca Clifford, *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), 69 writes that 'rescue' teams sometimes used force to take Jewish children out of their non-Jewish families after 1945. See also Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 257–295.

48 Jinks, "'Marks,'" 123; Tachjian, "Gender," 73, 75.

49 Clifford, *Survivors*, 66–67 argues that these numbers were low (but only on the basis of children placed with non-Jews with the help of rescue organizations); see also Bogner, *At the Mercy*, 75, 290–292.

50 See especially the examples in Kaiser 2002, "'A Scene,'" 177–178 note 55.

51 See Bedoukian, *Some*, 63, 81–90, 126; accounts by Aram Güreghian and Zepure Medsbakian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 59, 61, 241; Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children*, 124–125.

blackmail or rumors. Therefore there are many reports by Jews recording very short employment periods[52] and comparatively few reporting stays of over one year.[53]

This lack of steadiness raised the question of how to get a new job under conditions that meant that searching for employment could easily lead to one's being denounced and killed. But the need was so great that many Jews report that they or their relatives asked Christians whether they needed any workers.[54] Even if not explicitly stating that they were Jews, many locals might, and did, guess as much. In some cases, non-Jews who no longer wanted to house a Jew transported him to an acquaintance for new employment.[55] It was often different with Armenians, who were for the most part actually picked up by Muslim locals, whether abducted or literally bought by them. There are many reports about so-called slave markets, whether improvised or of a steadier character.[56] Other Armenians seem to have searched for jobs on their own, as indicated by their frequent change of employers.

According to the reports from Poland, men, women and children all found employment with Polish non-Jews. In contrast, those Armenians who were employed were mainly women and children, girls and boys.[57] Armenian men had relatively little chance to get a job, were running a much higher risk of getting murdered, and most survivors were women and children.[58]

If Armenians worked in firms, institutions or shops, their employers were mostly men. If they worked within rural families, those were also usually headed by a man, although it was often women who assigned the work, especially to girls and women. Those who picked up or bought Armenians were for the most part men, but women were also reported to do this in some places.[59] It was about

52 Accounts by Mendel Rosenkranz, Józef Leichter, Regina Rück (about her mother) and Leon Majblum in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 39, 70, 84, 92; account by Jerzy Frydman in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 50.

53 Account by Józef Leichter in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 70; accounts by Henoch Rafael Lisak and Maria Teresa Zieliński in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 102, 149.

54 Accounts by Józef Leichter, Anzelm Landesman and Leon Majblum in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 70, 76, 91–92.

55 Account by Henoch Rafael Lisak in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 102.

56 See Auron, *Banality*, 379–380; Miller and Touryan Miller, *Survivors*, 101, 110; Derderian, "Common Fate," 12; Dirouhi Kouymijan Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (Watertown: Baikar, 1985), 74; Leon Surmelian, *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1945), 108, 111–112; accounts by Aram Güreghian and Yüghaper Eftian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 61, 186.

57 This accentuation differs somewhat from Derderian, "Common Fate."

58 For the latter point, see Kaprielian-Churchill, "The Armenian Genocide," 223.

59 For the latter, see Abraham Hartunian, *Neither to Laught nor to Weep: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 102–103 (near Aintab) and Sanasarian, "Gender Distinction," 453.

the same for the Polish non-Jews who employed Jews (except for the purchasing aspect), but women had a slightly greater role there.

The social position of those who employed Armenians differed widely. In the urban sphere, they tended to be of a bourgeois background: dignitaries, businessmen and foreigners. Those who had Armenians work for them in the countryside were farmers or pastoralists, who could be wealthy but often they lived modestly or were poor. They were from various ethnicities: Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Europeans and even Afghans.[60] By contrast, most employers in Poland were ethnic Poles and some were Germans, but there is only one report about a Ukrainian.[61] In terms of class, there are relatively many descriptions of poor non-Jewish Polish farmers who employed Jewish workers, knowingly or not.[62] If Jews found work with Germans, they were usually not poor.

Conclusion

In the late Ottoman Empire and in German-occupied Poland during World War II, many people were ready to accept individuals from persecuted minorities in hiding as workers. In both cases, this happened more in rural than in urban areas because there was a war-related lack of labor in the countryside. Most people – children and adults – worked as farmhands, maids or servants. In cities and towns, some of the activities (especially in trade) involved self-employment. The jobs tended to be manual, low-skilled, the employment informal and unsteady. Apparently there was little pay; without doubt, persecuted people were taken advantage of in situations where they were deeply vulnerable and in most cases alone. They were exploited, but not all of the work was terribly hard, even for children. Those who exploited those under persecution came from all walks of life, but often they were lower-class people who were just getting by themselves and who did not draw huge benefits from the employment.

In this chapter, such employment has neither been interpreted as part of the persecution nor as rescue activity, as has been done in the political liter-

60 See Derderian "Common Fate," 13, 19 note 26; for Arabs: Derderian, *Vergeen*, 93 and the account by Schuschanig Gambarian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 109; for Turks: account by Zepure Medsbakian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 242; for Kurds and an Afghan see the account by Aram Güreghian in: Dabag and Platt, *Verlust*, 59, 74 and by Zepure Medsbakian, 239.

61 Account by Anzelm Landesman in: Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 76.

62 For example, accounts by Emanuel Elbinger and Barbara Góra in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 33, 73 and as a contrary example account by Henoch Rafael Lisak, in: Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, 102.

ature. In terms of work, both Muslims in Anatolia and Syria and Christians in Poland accepted persecuted people as a subordinate part of their society. Not everybody treated Armenians and Jews as outcasts. Despite the fact that, apparently, little cash was involved and they were paid in kind, I argue that those taking up work in the ways described in this paper underwent proletarianization and, if they came from bourgeois or petty-bourgeois backgrounds, social decline, whence many ascended after the persecution with the help of those who remained of their families. Even if those employed could be killed by their employers with impunity, they can be seen as proletarians, not slaves, because of the loose ties between employer and employee. It is true that in the Ottoman case, many started a new life in a new family during the war and stayed there after 1918. The situation in Poland, where capitalism was more advanced than in the Ottoman countryside and the family as an economic unit perhaps already less dominant, was usually less paternalistic, less personal and more business-like.[63] But also in the Ottoman Empire, even if many Armenians were bought or captured by their employers, the term 'slavery' does not appear to describe labor relations sufficiently, at least in many cases, given refugees' integration into families.

The Armenians' fates resembled late Ottoman slavery in that the primary demand was for females, most of whom were domestic servants,[64] labor was hard without pay, sexual abuse frequent and many Armenians, as well as slaves, fled.[65] Around World War I, Ottoman slavery was dying down but was still a known practice.[66] However, while many poorer households kept Armenians, to own slaves was for the most part an upper class affair[67] (a tradition upon which Talaat Pasha seemed to build with his 10 July 1915 order to give Armenian children as adoptees

63 However, the literature cited in footnote 47 indicates signs of affection by many hosts for young Jewish children.

64 See Madeline Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 215. Thanks to Masha Cerovic for suggesting that I take a closer look at Ottoman slavery in general.

65 Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its Demise, 1800–1909* (Basingstoke: Macmillan and St. Martin's, 1996), 160–173.

66 Ehud Toledano, "Late Ottoman Concepts of Slavery (1830s–1880s)," *Poetics Today* 14, 3 (1993): 485; Erdem, *Slavery*.

67 Karamursel, "The Uncertainties," 140; Michael Ferguson, "Clientship, Social Indebtedness and State-Controlled Emancipation of Africans in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Debt and Slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds*, eds. Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 51. However, at the peak of some refugee waves in the 19th century, broader population groups acquired (Muslim) 'Circassian' slaves: Karamursel, "The Uncertainties," 155.

preferrably to village notables).[68] Other differences were that only some Armenian survivors said that they were bought, and very few that they were sold on,[69] that many Armenian children were factually adopted by Muslim families, and slaves usually were not.[70] The forms of Armenians' relationships to their 'host' households also differed from slavery.[71]

The fate of Armenian children resembled the usual treatment of Ottoman orphans and destitute children taken in by other families, as it resembled slavery. With slavery on the decline, such fostership was on the rise. As with the Armenians around 1915, foster children were mostly girls, were used as unpaid servants for doing hard work for room and board only, were exploited under the guise of charity and were often sexually abused, with no schooling permitted. But unlike among the Armenians, accepting foster children was mostly an upper class affair; the children were Muslim and typically did not become part of the family – virtually no "happy stories" are documented,[72] whereas, remarkably, some Armenian survivors do report positive treatment by Muslim families. Perhaps the fact that rural poor families, too, adopted Armenians in great numbers had something to do with the fact that some were better treated than slaves and normal destitute children, although this may seem counterintuitive. In any case, the evidence suggests that some new social practices were emerging.

A generalizing comparison cannot stand on two legs. More cases are needed. The labor relations of Ottoman Armenians and Polish Jews can be compared to the fate of alleged or real Indonesian leftists persecuted in and after 1965. My study on their fate and on their accounts[73] concluded that many also experienced enforced proletarianization, after which some again climbed the social hierarchy. The situations are somewhat comparable since, unlike most in the communist movement, the majority in my Indonesian sample were well-educated and of an urban middle class background. They also tried to disguise their true identities. Many became workers (including in childcare) and some engaged in petty trade,

68 Üngör, "Orphans," 176.

69 For the latter fact, Sanasarian, "Gender Distinction," 454 mentions two cases. See, for example, also Jinks, "'Marks,'" 86.

70 Zilfi, *Women*, 166–167; Erdem, *Slavery*, 152–153.

71 Erdem, *Slavery*, 152–160; Zilfi, *Women*, 127; Ferguson, "Clientship," 51, 61.

72 See Nazan Maksudyan, *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 52–53, 55–58, 61–62, 67–68, 77 (quote). Locals and parents considered going to orphanages a better option for a child than going to foster families: Maksudyan, *Orphans and Destitute Children*, 56.

73 Christian Gerlach, "Indonesian narratives of survival in and after 1965 and their relation to societal persecution," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 441–458.

like those under persecution in Poland and the Ottoman Empire. One major difference is that only a few Indonesian leftists turned to farmwork, at least in my sample – surprising for an overwhelmingly rural society. Also, many leftists were ostracized by some of their own family members. Another marker of difference is that, in a social and partially also in a legal sense, the persecution of leftists in Indonesia is still ongoing decades later. In any case, the Indonesian story, too, is complex, but in many cases is again about the social displacement of middle class urbanites within a not fully industrialized society. These experiences are about people under persecution finding a place temporarily, their treatment in that situation and the degrees of their acceptance by others. More studies on labor in other contexts of mass violence would help shed further light on these dynamics.

Bibliography

Auron, Yair. *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2002.

Bedoukian, Kerop. *Some of Us Survived*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.

Clifford, Rebecca. *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020.

Dabag, Mihran, and Kristin Platt, eds. *Verlust und Vermächtnis: Überlebende des Genozids an den Armeniern erinnern sich*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2015.

Dadrian, Vahakn. "Children as victims of genocide: The Armenian Case." *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, 3 (2003): 421–437.

Derderian, Katharine. "Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19, 1 (2005): 1–25.

Derderian, Mae. *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide: Based on a memoir by Virginia Meghrouni*. Los Angeles: Atmus, 1996.

Dwork, Debórah. *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.

Engelking, Barbara, and Jan Grabowski, eds. *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, 2 volumes. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.

Erdem, Y. Hakan. *Slavery in the Ottoman* Empire *and* its Demise, *1800–1909*. Basingstoke: Macmillan and St. Martin's, 1996.

Ferguson, Michael. "Clientship, Social Indebtedness and State-Controlled Emancipation of Africans in the Late Ottoman Empire." *Debt and Slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds*, edited by Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani, 49–62. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013.

Gerlach, Christian. *The Extermination of the European Jews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Gerlach, Christian. "Indonesian narratives of survival in and after 1965 and their relation to societal persecution." *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six, 441–458. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Grabowski, Jan. *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Hartunian, Abraham. *Neither to Laught nor to Weep: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*. Boston: Beacon, 1968.

Hochberg-Mariańska, Maria, and Noe Grüss, eds. *The Children Accuse*. London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996.

Jinks, Rebecca. "'Marks Hard to Erase': The Troubled Reclamation of 'Absorbed' Armenian Women, 1919–1927." *American Historical Review* 123, 1 (2018): 86–123.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "'A Scene from the Inferno': The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915–1916." *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, eds. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller: 129–186. Zurich: Chronos, 2002.

Kaprielian-Churchill, Isabel. "The Armenian Genocide and the Survival of Children." *Anatomy of Genocide: State-Sponsored Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Alexandre Kimenyi and Otis Scott, 221–258. Lewiston: Mellen, 2001.

Karamursel, Ceyda. "The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire." *Journal of Women's History* 28, 3 (2016): 138–161.

Kévorkian, Raymond. "Ahmed Djémal pacha et le sort des déportés arméniens de Syrie-Palestine." *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, eds. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller, 197–212. Zurich: Chronos, 2002.

Kévorkian, Raymond. *Le génocide des Arméniens*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006.

Kouymijan Highgas, Dirouhi. *Refugee Girl*. Watertown: Baikar, 1985.

Maksudyan, Nazan. *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.

Maksudyan, Nazan. *Ottoman Children and Youth During World War I*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2019.

Michlic, Joanna. *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations During the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008.

Miller, Donald, and Lourna Touryan Miller. *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Niepage, Martin. *The Horrors of Aleppo*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, n.y. [1917].

Paulsson, Gunnar. *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Rowe, Victoria. "Armenian Women Refugees at the End of Empire: Strategies of Survival." *Refugees and the End of Empire: Imperial Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Panikos Panyi and Pippa Virdee, 152–172. Basingstoke and New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2011.

Sanasarian, Eliz. "Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4, 4 (1989): 449–461.

Śliwowska, Wiktoria, ed. *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999.

Surmelian, Leon. *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1945.

Tachjian, Vahé. "Gender, nationalism, exclusion: the reintegration process of female survivors of the Armenian genocide." *Nations and Nationalism* 15, 1 (2009): 60–80.

Toledano, Ehud. "Late Ottoman Concepts of Slavery (1830s–1880s)." *Poetics Today* 14, 3 (1993): 477–506.

Üngör, Uğur. "Orphans, Converts and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923." *War in History* 19, 2 (2012): 173–192.

Zapalec, Anna. "Powiat Złoczowski," *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*. Vol. 1, edited by Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, 623–765. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.

Zilfi, Madeline. *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Zürcher, Erik Jan. "Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I." *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, eds. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller, 187–196. Zurich: Chronos, 2002.

Family

Dalia Ofer

The family under duress: A male perspective

Nazi oppression impacted every aspect of family life and all family members. Terror, uncertainty, constant fear, loss of employment, dispossession, social constraints, and destruction of professional networks all shattered the family's internal equilibrium and endangered its ability to persevere. Families – nuclear and extended families, couples, parents and children, siblings – had to find ways to obtain sustenance and safe housing and to rework their relations. The kind of environment that might have helped them maintain solidarity and keep going is hard to determine. The answer depends on both external and internal factors. The type of setting – village, town, city –, the pace and dynamic of the oppression, and internal and external connections all counted in a family's ability or inability to sustain itself. Internal factors relate to the conditions within the Jewish community and the patterns of internal life that it adopted to alleviate the burden of the Nazi yoke. Of significance here was the economic and social state of the family. However, solidarity, cooperation, and psychological resilience among family members before the war were crucial. We usually have little information about these, and the evidence we can glean from contemporary sources is fragmentary.

Most contemporary sources, such as diaries or letters, disclose information solely through the lens of the writer and relate to a limited period of time. Seldom do they illuminate the detailed background of a family's life.

Consequently, a tentative rather than a definite approach to research on families would seem appropriate. However, by combining the available sources with the use of social, cultural, and psychological categories, scholars can express assumptions about the impact of the oppression on family life and structure. Questions about changes in relations among family members and about how each member tried to fulfill the roles assigned to them by social and individual values and conventions may be answered in part. Below I limit the discussion to Eastern Europe and focus on the ghettos and the voices of male heads of household as husbands, fathers, and sons of elder parents.

Elsewhere[1] I describe the complex reality of families between the two extremes of cohesion and rupture. There I find families' daily lives characterized by instability and great vulnerability. However, the better off the family was financially, the broader its social network and the closer its social or professional connections to

1 Dalia Ofer, "Cohesion and Rupture: The Jewish Family in East European Ghettos during the Holocaust," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* XIV (1998): 143–165.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-004

the center of authority, the better chance it had of enduring. The typical volatility of the economic life of the ghetto, however, thrust many families from middle class into starvation in the process of ghettoization. However, once the final decision to eliminate the ghetto and deport the population to the death or forced labor camps was implemented, much of the above became irrelevant.

In past writings, I centered on women's experiences during Nazi occupation and on efforts to keep their families together. More recently, the topic of Jewish masculinity has gained more attention in the research; a groundbreaking book by Maddy Carey is devoted to it.[2] Yet the role of men as husbands and sons has not been discussed thoroughly in the context of Jewish families affected by Nazi oppression; it is on this, therefore, that I focus below.

I begin by describing the self-identity of the Jewish male as a member of the family. Then I assess the difficulties and challenges that he faced as Nazi occupation and oppression progressed. I conclude by studying the diary of Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem) of Warsaw and his self-image as a Jewish male, father, and husband.

Jewish male self-identity

East European Jewry in the early twentieth century was patriarchal, largely working- and lower-middle class, and eager in many cases to upgrade to middle or upper-middle class. Children's education was an important lever of upward mobility. Many parents saw a profession or a good vocation for the next generation as key to a good marriage and a solid foundation for the support of a family.

Jewish children attended public schools; many boys received supplementary Jewish education. In their socialization process, boys were instructed to establish a family and meet its needs honorably, including food, housing, and basic protection. Although boys received more extensive Jewish education than did girls, it was women's responsibility to maintain a traditional Jewish home. Girls' socialization, however, also prepared them to help support their families as breadwinners in addition to effective mothering and housekeeping.

In this respect, an important element of self-identity among Jewish adult males, apart from establishing a family and protecting and providing for its members, concerned the construction and protection of the family's social status. In Orthodox families, males were duty-bound to integrate religious study into their daily routine;

2 Maddy Carey, *Jewish Masculinities in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

this, too, was a component of status. As heads of household, fathers demanded discipline and compliance with religious as well as social imperatives. However, they did not reveal strong emotions toward their children, whose daily care was the mother's responsibility (not to imply that they did not love their children). Furthermore, many were not strongly involved in their children's education, except in matters relating to religious knowledge, particularly ahead of the bar mitzva rite. As I put forward these generalizations, I stress that individual differences between families were significant and that class was a substantial determinant of parents' interests in educating their children.

The ongoing modernization of East European societies, coupled with the impact of Jewish ideological and political movements and extended contact with Jews who had emigrated to Western Europe and the USA, created a diverse Jewish society which nevertheless retained a deep connection to religion and a traditional Jewish way of life. Another outcome of these changes, however, was an acute generation gap in both Orthodox and non-Orthodox families, including Haredi ("ultra-Orthodox") ones. Family ties weakened, particularly within extended families, as many migrated not only from Poland but also from villages to towns or to large cities such as Łódź and Warsaw. The young and better educated often took a more modern approach toward their role in the family. Quite popular were ideas stemming from psychology and some more radical ideologies regarding gender equality, love-based marriage, the sharing of home responsibilities, and more male involvement in the education of children – both boys and girls.[3]

Jewish males were active in synagogues that were often divided along vocational lines; they also took part in political and social clubs. Women were not excluded from political or cultural clubs, but were a minority there. Journalists' and writers' clubs were predominantly male. Both sexes participated in youth movements, but males often occupied the leadership roles and power centers. Youth movements encouraged physical fitness and the enhancement of the male body. Sports clubs such as Maccabi became popular and gave young males a place to meet.[4] Social, cultural, and political activism was a male domain symbolized by physical strength.

---

3 Shaul Stampfer, "How Jewish Society Adapted to Change in Male/Female Relationships in 19th/Early 20th-Century Eastern Europe," in *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*, ed. Rivkah Blau (New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 2007), 65–83.

4 Jack Kugelmass, "Why Sport?" in Jack Kugelmass, ed., *Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 3–30; Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni, eds., *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press), 2002; for Poland, see Jack Jacobs, "The Politics of Jewish Sports Movements in

This pattern of socialization in a patriarchal society placed a great burden on males to bear the brunt of economic responsibility even though a relatively large share of Jewish women participated in the work force – some 24 percent of women on average – many assisting husbands in their businesses.[5] The collection of Jewish autobiographies initiated by YIVO in the early and late 1930s illuminates the difficulties that young men faced in finding or learning a vocation that would promise independence, or employment that would grant some stability.[6]

In sum, to assess the self-identity and masculinity, or rather masculinities, of Jewish males in pre-war Poland, one should differentiate, apart from class, among social groups in respect to religiosity, age, and political affiliation. A mix of traditional and modern elements cultivated the Jewish male's self-image and individual personality. Zionism advocated ideas about the "new Jew" and the Bund prescribed self-aware labor activism. Both valorized physical strength and fitness for their usefulness in defending the individual and the community. Families that tended to assimilation stressed the importance of education and a university degree; for religious families, maintaining traditional vocations and lifestyles were central. Among all groups, the male was responsible for assuring the family's economic wellbeing and respectability in the community. These conditions called for a creative and active personality. Under the sociopolitical circumstances of 1930s Eastern Europe (excluding the USSR), the rise of antisemitism and the economic hardships it entailed made these requirements even harder to meet.

The beginning: The occupation of Poland

The first weeks after the occupation of Poland[7] were characterized by many contradictions. Things were different in small places such as villages and towns com-

Interwar Poland," in Jack Kugelmass, ed., *Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 93–105.

5 For a breakdown of Jewish women in the workforce by industries and salaries compared with those of male workers, see Raphael Mahler, *The Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars: A Socioeconomic History and a Statistical Basis* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1968), 54; Bina Garnazarska-Kedari, "Changes in the Material Situation of the Jewish Workers in Poland, 1930–1939" (Hebrew), *Galed* 9 (1968): 169, Table 8.

6 Jeffrey Shandler, ed., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), especially the autobiographies of A. Gryyno, 51–112; G.W., 296–320; J. Harefuer, 344–379.

7 Maddy Carey defines this period as "deconstruction" and explains it from the perspective of efforts to make a living. Carey, *Jewish Masculinity*, 49–85.

pared to the major cities. The shock of occupation and the devastation in the cities and the territories that the armies crossed caused much difficulty and disorder.

From the family's point of view, the destruction of buildings, damage to the water system, food shortages, and the closure of schools and other services spread immense fear and uncertainty. Families whose homes were heavily damaged crowded into public centers or moved in with relatives. Family members, neighbors, Jews, and Poles displayed much solidarity and openness at first, but chaos erupted as the difficulties mounted. The Germans' anti-Jewish edicts had devastating effects. Large-scale confiscation and robbery from upper-class Jewish homes divided Jews from Poles in daily life, including an imbalanced allocation of shopping hours, supply distribution, and other basic services. Lower-middle-class families headed by artisans, vendors, and petty merchants with stalls in the market, which lived more-or-less on their weekly earnings, were devastated by the weeks of fighting, the massive destruction, and the unstable situation, followed by new restrictions such as marking the Jews. Among more established middle-class families, which traded in textiles in the countryside or had some connections outside of Poland, the uncertainty caused great tension and fear. Soon the occupier forbade the use of savings and bank accounts, rendering the family's "rainy-day" security useless. Mrs. G., reporting to Cecylia Slepak, told of how her husband, who engaged in the textile trade throughout Western Europe and specifically with England, tried to find someone to stand in for him but was unable to salvage his business. For a few months, he thought the occupation would be short and that they would get by. As the anti-Jewish edicts covered larger and larger sections of the economy and his family lost its savings, however, his energy and enterprise faltered.[8]

Escapees and deportees from western Poland flocked to larger towns, particularly Warsaw, in search of relatives, friends, and a place to stay. This burdened the host families but also gave them the solace of being able to help relatives and friends. Street violence against male Jews increased as men were seized for forced labor or molested, mocked, and beaten, deterring many from circulating in public. The limitation of shopping hours for Jews, coupled with the yellow-star requirement, signified not only the present hardships but also a trend that caused tension and fear to escalate.

8 Cecylia Slepak's research, part of the Ringelblum Archive (ARI/49), is divided into several notebooks. Her subjects are identified only by initials. I used the copy in the Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter: YVA), JM/217/4 and JM/215/3 (hereinafter: Slepak Report, followed by a notebook number), Slepak Report, Notebook 1, narrative of Mrs. G. On Slepak, see Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Last Writings*, vol. 2 (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1994), 223–225.

This situation affected different family members in different ways. Breadwinning, fathers' major concern, was impaired. Families reorganized their chores and responsibilities: children queued for food and water, older girls took care of little ones, and wives dedicated more time to the material support of the family. Despite the grave harm this caused to their self-esteem, men had to find new ways to continue carrying out their fundamental obligations.

The sources paint a complicated picture of men's contortions to keep their business and homes going under these conditions, while many were being taken for forced labor. Slepak tells us about a shoemaker who worked at home and sent his wife out to collect materials and return the mended shoes. A printer continued to operate his business until the Gestapo visited one day and locked the place up. A petty merchant badly beaten by Germans who invaded his home remained at home to watch over it while his wife ran his stall in the market.[9] Many who could not avoid forced labor removed debris and prepared apartments for the growing numbers of Germans in the cities and towns; others accepted forced labor in lieu of men of means, who paid them a supplement for this service. In the lower middle class, this was true of both youngsters and husbands. They continued to provide for their families, albeit only partly.

In smaller towns and the villages, the effect of occupation was more gradual. Some men moved their families to the countryside in the hope of finding safe haven, joining relatives who gave them assistance.[10] Within a year or less, however, Jews were deported to larger cities and families became refugees in their own land. At that point, the very existence of the family was at stake, on which I elaborate below.

In the areas that the USSR had annexed at the beginning of the war (the Baltic countries, eastern Poland), the German occupation that ensued in June 1941 followed mass atrocities and killings by local nationalists who blamed the Jews for communism and accused them of having supported the Soviets. In these areas, men were assailed first but women and children were also violently molested. Families tried to find refuge with friends and take advantage of social connections. It was often the men who attempted to take advantage of social and economic contacts and establish new ones to find relief from the danger and to arrange hideouts for children and women in back rooms or attics. The outburst of violence forced Jewish men to confront their utter inability to accomplish this. Yet

9 Slepak Report, Notebook 1, narrative of the shoemaker Mr. F; of Mr. K.R., whose husband watched the children while she tended the stall; and of R3 and the fate of her husband and the printing business.

10 YVA, RING/I 678, testimony of Bajla Brinberg (b. March 27, 1927, in Warsaw). Brinberg described her family's peregrinations: first to an aunt near the city, then to another small town, and finally evicted back to Warsaw.

they did not go down passively. The sources tell of desperate efforts to avoid violence as rioters invaded their homes and attempts to bribe attackers with money or other valuables, hide girls and children, and so on. The sense of helplessness encouraged young Jews, youth-movement members in particular, to organize in response to the abuse and the violence.[11]

In the ghettos

During the first year of the occupation, ghettoization represented the apotheosis of anti-Jewish brutality. By isolating the Jews and sundering their social networks with non-Jews, it finalized their economic destruction. Families who had managed to restore part of their businesses following the occupation or had somehow established new ventures lost these again. The move to the ghetto required a change in economic behavior. Salaries, prices, employment opportunities, supplies, and marketing did not resemble those in an ordinary economy. Men in diverse capacities – laborers, traders, artisans, white-collar professionals – had to adjust to the distorted ghetto economy.

Two main concerns followed the move to the ghetto: how to make a living and where to find a place to live, if only a room in an apartment. Caring for children after the occupier closed the schools was a concern that predated ghettoization. All such concerns were shared by men as breadwinners and women as those responsible for the family's daily nutrition. The cessation of formal education increased the pressure and foisted new responsibilities on children, such as queuing for bread and water and, later, sharing the economic burden. To sustain themselves, families had to coordinate their efforts and operate as teams.

The ghettoization process subjected families to acute trauma. Women decided which belongings to take to the new location; adolescents shared the efforts of packing and taking care of little ones. Yitzchak Rudashevski described the crisis of leaving home and walking to the ghetto area: Parents were nervous, children cried, people stooped under heavy sacks and bundles, dragging wailing children.

11 On Lwów, see Leon Wiliczker Wells, *The Janowska Road* (Washington, DC: USHMM, 1999), 42–50; Eliyahu Yones, *Smoke in the Sand: The Jews of Lwow During the War 1939*–1944 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001), 81–91; Stanislaw Rozycki, "'Days in Lwów': memoirs of June 1–September 15, 1941," YVA M10_ARI_427; Bela Hazan Yaari, *Bronislava Was My Name: On a Mission and Imprisoned, 1939–1945* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1991). On the thinking among youth about creating an organized response: Chajka Klinger, *I Am Writing These Words to You: The Original Diaries, Bedzin 1943* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem and Givat Haviva: Yad Vashem and Moreshet, 2016), 77–86.

Few could rent a carriage or other means of transport for the move. This test of the family's integrity became grimmer as ghetto life progressed.[12]

Finding work or establishing one's own business in the ghetto was a great challenge. The situation was unstable; for example, when the Germans' need for Jewish production escalated, regulations concerning production and the movement of merchandise were relaxed. German inspection and control of the ghetto economy were severely burdensome to Jewish entrepreneurs and ghetto authorities alike. Jewish authorities' centralization and control also impacted individuals' abilities to be creative, meet market demands, and enter into new undertakings, which in most cases involved crafts. The difference between Warsaw, where the Jewish authorities gave entrepreneurs considerable leeway, and Łódź, where these authorities' centralized policy barred individual initiatives, is significant.[13] And not less significant were the differences between ghettos in the General Government and those in Lithuania, where the economy was managed by the German authorities. The ghetto administrations employed mostly men, whose families enjoyed greater economic stability and were protected from dispatch to forced-labor camps.

Individuals who had small businesses, belonged to a workshop, or participated in a labor brigade that worked outside the ghetto transferred supplies to the ghetto in creative ways, both for family consumption and for sale. This was typical of ghettos in Lithuania, where most work was under German control and Jews were assigned to it by the labor department of the Judenrat.[14]

In the Warsaw ghetto, many took advantage of opportunities to establish new ventures together with Poles or under German companies' auspices. The army's demand for shoes, shoelaces, brushes, toothbrushes, textiles, metal products, and other items grew constantly. Jews used connections with Poles to obtain raw material and export finished goods from the ghetto. The Winkler report, kept in the Ringelblum Archive, reported on these economic ventures and on the many that were partly successful. These efforts sustained families and supported the market in many ways. Their impact on family life is attested, however, only in the scanty documentation that exists on the topic.[15]

---

12 Klinger, *I Am Writing These Words to You*, 16–19.

13 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leonciak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 380–529; Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 104–198.

14 Lazarson-Rostovski, Tamar, *Tamara's Diary Kovno, 1942–1946*, (Hebrew), (Bit Lohamie hageteaot: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1976): 44–46; Aron Einat, *Everyday Life in the Vilna Ghetto* (Hebrew) (Givat Haviva: Moreshet, 2013), 163–188.

15 YVA, M10 ARI.54, this report is part of the research project on ghetto life initiated by Oneg Shabbath people under the title "Two and a Half Years."

To pursue such endeavors, families had to act as a unit. For example, women would smuggle husbands' products out of the ghetto and bring commodities back either to sell or to aid their husbands' work. Children took part by helping to take care of stalls in the market, being street vendors, and using public transportation to cross into and out of the ghetto, as Jews were not allowed to do. Many women augmented their households' income by cleaning and laundering for better-off families or taking on knitting and sewing jobs.[16] In some ghettos, such as those in Vilna and Łódź, from a certain time onward all adults and adolescents, including younger ones, toiled in workshops or labor brigades, leaving even younger children to take care of the apartment.[17]

I now move to the last section of my analysis in a micro exploration of one father in one family in the Warsaw ghetto. Considering constraints of space, the discussion follows the basic concepts mentioned above.

Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem): Father, husband, and ghetto activist

Who was he?

Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem) (1900–1980) was one of the best known and most prolific figures of the Zionist Right in interwar Poland.[18] A proficient Hebraist, he kept a detailed journal of events in German-occupied Warsaw – a meticulous and excruciating chronicle of daily life and death and a poignant work of literature. Miraculously, Feldschu managed to preserve more than eight hundred pages of notes during his escape from the ghetto, more than a year in hiding, and a difficult journey to Palestine.[19]

16 On the different roles of women in family life, see Dalia Ofer and Lenore R Weitzman, "A Conceptual Framework for Explaining the Presence and the Disappearance of Traditional Gendered Behavior during the Holocaust," in Andrea Petö, Andrea Hecht, and Karolina Krasuska, eds., *Women and Holocaust: New Perspectives and Challenges (*Warsaw: IBL PAN, 2015), 27–63.

17 Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 226–264, diary of an anonymous girl from the Łódź ghetto.

18 Feldschu memoir, YVA, 033/959III. Whenever I cite the memoir, I place the page number next to the quotation. All translations from the memoir, written in Hebrew, are by Naftali Greenwood, who also edited this article.

19 Laurence Weinbaum, "'Shaking the Dust Off': The Story of the Warsaw Ghetto's Forgotten Chronicler, Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem)," *Jewish Political Studies Review,* 22, 3–4 (2010): 7–44.

Feldschu's text is a mixture of diary entries and comments that he added after the events at an unknown time. His text is therefore a mixture of diary with memoir. The detailed description in the text yields a compelling portrait of the multifaceted daily life of the ghetto. Below I center only on the issue of main concern to this article, even though the diary deserves a much deeper and wider analysis.

Feldschu married the musicologist Perła (Pnina) Richter (1900–1943) in 1928. He spent several years in Palestine in the 1920s but returned to Vienna because he was unable to endure the physical labor he was assigned to there. Active in right-wing circles of the Zionist Movement, he returned to Poland after finishing his studies in philosophy and obtaining rabbinical ordination.

When the war broke out, he and Perła were living at 66 Leszno Street. Their ten-year-old daughter, Josima, a talented pianist who performed in several concerts before the war and in the ghetto, seemed destined to enjoy a distinguished career as a pianist. The family escaped to the "Aryan" side of Warsaw in January 1943 in the hope of saving their lives. Josima died from tuberculosis there; her mother, unable to cope with her death, passed away a short time later. Feldschu survived the war and spent some time in Poland assisting survivors. In 1946, he immigrated to Mandate Palestine via Romania, where he remarried. The couple had a son and a daughter and lived in Israel.

In the diary, Feldschu appears to be a man of many faces. His public face is that of a man well oriented in public life and endowed with a strong sense of responsibility and awareness of the dangers his community was facing. He is an activist who conceives of ideas that position him as a leader even though his diary tells us nothing about his followers. Although well-known in Jewish cultural life, he has no formal standing in the ghetto institutions. In his diary, however, he reports projects that he devised that would benefit the public and himself. One example is an effort to organize immigration to Palestine. He invests a great deal in this effort, meets with Poles and Germans concerning it, and views it as a fight for rescue.[20] He demonstrates his sense of leadership through the projects he proposes.[21] He is keenly aware of the danger of collaborating with the Germans as he tries to act for the community, and he refuses to write for the German-sanctioned official ghetto periodical, the *Gazetą Żydowską*.[22] Feldschu attends profes-

---

The personal information about Feldschu and his family is found in this article and at https://www.hamichlol.org.il/ (accessed September 4, 2022).

20 Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 1–3, 7–9, 21–24.

21 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 212. An interesting project that he proposed in February 1942 was the creation of a workshop for the intelligentsia in order to productivize this class.

22 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 12.

sional and political meetings in the ghetto. He meets with friends and colleagues, all of whom are male, to discuss political issues and how to confront the new daily challenges. After becoming socially aware, he demonstrates compassion toward the needy and is willing to help as best he can. In late 1942 and in 1943 he becomes involved in the Zionist Revisionists' resistance movement, but not as a major figure. In his diary, he decries the democracies that shrug at the Jews' fate. The cruelty and suffering that he observes around him, beyond all historical experience, turns his protest toward the heavens. As a religious person and an ordained rabbi, he employs radical and bitter rhetoric.[23]

Feldschu and his family: Father and daughter

Taking care of the family is a major theme in Feldschu's diary. His responsibility as the provider and protector of his wife and daughter is central in the text. His strenuous efforts to arrange their emigration failed despite his connections with Poles and with the German travel company HAPAG. "It's my responsibility as a Jewish father" he wrote, expressing his concern regarding his failure.[24] Social initiatives that he hoped to undertake also foundered. When schools were opened in the ghetto, Feldschu looked for a job within the ghetto administration in the field of education. He failed to do so but does not explain why. The people whom he approached about the matter, he writes, appreciated his competencies relating to culture and education and considered him trustworthy. Whenever a hopeful opportunity emerged, however, something always got in the way and left him empty-handed. Once, when he and his family were confident of favorable results, he describes the shame he feels when he came home and had to recount another disappointment.

> At home, I couldn't muster the courage to tell my wife and daughter about my adventures. On the contrary: I told them that the thing is moving ahead and, in the customary manner of bureaucracies, . . . let's wait a little longer and my turn will come.[25]

Amidst this irony, he does not tell us whether his wife realized what the situation really was. Things were so depressing, however, that he could not sleep that night. He walked out to the inner courtyard of his apartment building and in the darkness of night he felt as though he were in a black grave.

23 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 214–215.
24 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 251.
25 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 210.

Still, Feldschu viewed his plight in proportion when he compared it with that of his next-door neighbors. While out in the yard in the dead of night, he listened to what he describes as the breathing of the ghetto, "half-alive and half-dying." Walking deeper into the back yard of the building, he confronted what he describes as a horrendous sight: six families with little children living in two rooms and a chicken coop, their demolished walls replaced with rags and paper. There was no division among the families and no blankets – an iconic representation of the poverty of the ghetto. He was lucky to have his family and their home, still a home. "Yes, we were not well-fed," he recounts. "We lacked bread, meat, and vegetables, the daily soup was mostly water, my daughter was pale, and we worried about her health. However, we had a decent home and the ability to share sorrow and happiness with each other."[26]

The combination of Feldschu's personal disappointment and shame, his sense of worthlessness, and his empathy and sorrow for the poor families in the back of his own courtyard generates a cry to heaven – a radical protest to the deaf Almighty Who has allowed such misery and want to exist.[27] His protest, to my mind, attests to his unwillingness to give up and admit total failure. He remains an active player.

Feldschu comes across as a loving, hugging, warm father, strongly attached to his daughter Josima. At night, before going to bed, he gazes at her with great compassion and tenderness; he kisses her and wishes health and wellbeing for her. He is concerned about her health as he realizes that she lacks the nutrition that a growing girl needs. He is sad to see her eyes glow as she describes the food and sweets that her girlfriends have. Feldschu knows that their fathers are well connected and have good jobs with the ghetto administration, the self-help organization, and the production system. Pitifully, he has failed in all his efforts to land such a job and has to content himself with private tutoring.

Long entries in the diary describe Josima's talent as a pianist. Aware of her special skill and her dreams for a musical future, Feldschu followed her musical progress with great dedication and enthusiasm. Despite the ghetto conditions and her meager nutrition, she played the piano for hours on end and composed her own music. Her dream of becoming a renowned pianist was nurtured by her parents and supported by musicians and others who heard her play. Feldschu narrates his own visions of Josima's professional future: She will perform in Jerusalem with the British high-and-mighty in the audience. They will exalt and admire her so passionately as to accept her plea for the realization of the Zionists' goals.

26 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 212.
27 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 213–216.

His dreams and love are a cause of both great anxiety and comfort, motivating him do the utmost to save his family and daughter.

Josima indeed demonstrated exceptional talent, performing at the Famina café and at Melodi. At Melodi, a concert was held in which she played Mozart's Concerto in D major, the Coronation, with an orchestra of renowned musicians in Warsaw now interned in the ghetto. In moving and emotional terms, Feldschu describes her playing and her precise timing, always in perfect alignment with the conductor's instructions. Her personal interpretation of the music moves him deeply. He also observes the musicians in the orchestra and reads their faces and body language, both testifying to their admiration. At the end, they give her a standing ovation. Josima is asked to play an encore and accedes repeatedly until the conductor hints that she should end. Only Mozart could have played the concerto that way, many listeners declared. Her teacher, a famous pianist in Warsaw who guided her in playing the concerto, is astonished over her success. At home, they prepare a small party for her and give her small presents and flowers that she cherishes. Adoringly he describes how she arranged all the presents and the flowers around her bed when she went to sleep; he observes her beauty and her maturing face as she slumbers serenely.[28]

However, her success and triumph also frighten him immensely:

> I could not flee with her to some other land, I could not emigrate on my own, and we have remained here. How many enemies lay in ambush for this lovely young soul! No bread, epidemic disease, the demons' voices, an unsure future, the occupier's pointless hatred and blood-revenge, coldness and cruelty even in her intimate circles. Who has the strength to rise up against all of these? [. . .] My God, my God, if You have already placed this treasure in my hands, if You have already given me a creature of beauty and enriched me with a wealth of light and magnificence, then give me the strength to deliver this treasure to its goal.[29]

Reflecting on his life, with its successes and failures, Feldschu treasures his daughter as his real triumph, one that would compensate for all his lack of success:

> I have succeeded in this creation, my daughter. She will reward me for all my suffering, she will repay me tenfold for all my strain and all that I have absorbed in life. She will ascend and ascend. In her I shall find spiritual and mental gratification.[30]

His wife shared these feelings; the two were much in harmony over the care and hopes for their beloved daughter.

28 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 185–189.
29 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 189.
30 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir.

> When my wife and I were alone and we delved into the rush of the day, we concluded that our entire lives thus far were for her, on her behalf, and by her. We were not created for nothing, did not move [here] for nothing, did not suffer for nothing, did not dream for nothing. This thing we have created has a purpose: to repair our souls.[31]

Throughout the diary, Feldschu describes his wife and her activities as complementary to his. She is supportive and believes in his ability to handle correctly the difficulties they encounter. She plays her role in the efforts to support the family. She takes care of the house and arranges the sale of their belongings to keep the family viable and fed.[32] She also cooperates with his social efforts, often opening their home to friends and relatives. She appreciates his variegated efforts and, according to his descriptions, does not complain when he spends lengthy hours away from home with political colleagues or participating in social events.

Feldschu expresses concern about his wife's health, noticing that she has become weaker and has lost weight. He tries to shelter her from his worries and often reports that he has gone outside to conceal them. Even though his writing attests to harmonious relations as a couple and a family, he addresses most of his expressions of love and tenderness to his daughter. Nevertheless, he offers no information about her professional life in the ghetto. Is she still teaching music? Is she among the musicians who perform or lecture at cultural events?

On the last Friday night in July, amid the horrific cruelty of the deportation, he still tries to bring some semblance of normality into the family nest, which still exists. He goes through the Friday night ritual of lighting candles, having a *challah,* and reciting a blessing. None of these commodities is there as in the past; alas, it is merely an Oneg Sabbath. At the same time, he feels that his efforts to outwit the deportation, the tricks he plays in the shops and at the Judenrat offices – particularly after Czerniaków's suicide – are not promising; he is looking for something beyond.

> That night I tried to test my instinct, [the force] that would give me a prediction and an explanation. Has the time of my people's utter demise already come? And what will become of me and my home? My heart flutters: then again silence, eruption, pounding, noise. I received no answer. At midnight I stood up, pressed my forehead to the dark pane, and waited for a finger [(a sign from the Almighty – D.O.); it did not come.[33]

31 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 79.

32 See Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 247–249, for a detailed description of his wife going to sell some tea that they had received from a relative in Switzerland, and her fears and the risks related to this enterprise.

33 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 355.

Concluding remarks

My intention above was to demonstrate how fathers and husbands tried to fulfill the responsibilities that their male identity assigned them. First I demonstrated the general conditions that challenged families, particularly heads of household, in confronting unprecedented and worsening conditions. I referred to situations that were common to most families and cited sources that described different social backgrounds in different ghettos. The issue of Jewish masculinity, or rather masculinities, and the tension between the traditional and modern understandings of self-identity stood at the front of my analysis. As the Nazis' murderous policies turned increasingly radical in limiting Jews' movements, economic activities, and social environments, I examined men's efforts to defy passivity, manipulate the edicts and rules, and go on living. I viewed these strategies as reflections of their male self-understanding. The examples from different ghettos, different men and women, and different families, before and during ghettoization, demonstrated a daring confrontation in a despairing reality. Alas, it did not assure survival, let alone success.

The macro description and analysis of life under Nazi occupation prior to the mass deportations in Poland, or in the communities conquered in the Barbarossa campaign, tells of males' enormous efforts to live up to the social and cultural expectations of men. Most continued to work to provide for their families. Fathers hoped to grant their sons basic Jewish knowledge, and sons went on to care for their elderly parents. Information about internal family relationships testify to the fact that husbands accepted the changes in women's rolls. Many adapted to a reality where women's activities included chores conventionally defined as masculine. Men's successes were partial and dependent on the particular situation of each community. The masculine identity however, was not abandoned and men endeavored to keep up with what was defined as their fundamental responsibilities.

Moving to a micro description of Feldschu and his family, I aimed to use the account of one head of household's confrontation with these realities in order to draw inferences about broader social groups – those who lived on meager means and kept their heads above water, unlike the starving masses in the ghetto. This micro description is not just an example, but rather mirrors the total reality that stands beyond the Feldschu family.

Feldschu represents the self-identity of a modern religious East European intellectual Zionist male who is involved in the community. His male image combines spirit and physicality. He socializes with male friends who hold similar political views, criticize ghetto institutions, and ponder alternatives – a shadow

continuation of the pre-war political gathering.[34] He proudly announces that he will not take off his hat when encountering a German in the ghetto. He recounts at length how he had been beaten and injured by a policeman as he walked along at the wrong time of day and failed to remove his hat. His description of this incident has a subtext: "I acted as should a proud and brave Jewish male who does not obey the enemy."[35] His self-image is one of a fighter whose battle it is to organize his family's life in the ghetto. He must win this time, despite the many past struggles that he has lost: "I am conducting two battles at this time: the apartment-battle and the job-battle. I feel I will lose the job-battle. Thus I wish to win the apartment-battle. War, war, and I'm conducting my battles, my own battles." This phrasing expresses a masculine self-awareness that justifies much of what he does.

Moreover, Feldschu's attitude toward his family stresses his complex position as a traditional and modern father, husband, and breadwinner, and the protector of his family. The physical wellbeing of his daughter and wife is most important, but in relation to his daughter it is her mental state that he considers critical. In this respect, he and his wife embody the modern generation of East European Jews who are influenced by psychology and theories of education. Their daughter's future as a virtuoso pianist will enhance his and his family's status. In this respect, a more traditional Jewish approach toward excellence is apparent.

As the peril in the ghetto intensified and deportation approached, Feldschu focused his thoughts on how to protect and save the family. He became active and was ready to use all his means to obtain shelter, even if it be only temporary. His account of the first weeks of the mass deportation, from July 21 to August, 1942, reveals his tireless efforts and multiple tactics to obtain a letter that would spare them from being sent to the Umschlagplatz and thus deported to their deaths. When he received a letter that would spare him as a shop worker, he sought to find any way to extend this offer to his entire family. He was willing to cheat, use connections, bribe, or flatter – any tactic that might lead him to his goal is right in his eyes.

On the last Friday night in July, 1942, amid the horrific cruelty of the deportation, he was still trying to bring some semblance of normality into the family nest, as reported above. And, as we reported above, he still found himself in a helpless situation, grasping at straws amidst an ocean of Jewish suffering and striving for survival.

34 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 204–206.
35 Feldschu (Ben Shem), memoir, 23–24.

Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem) was a fighter, a tireless activist aware of his abilities and inabilities. His self-identity as a Jewish man did not bely his spirit. Were all the Jewish men of his generation like Feldschu? Of course not. So, was he unique? The sources disagree. Might his conduct have manifested a general interpretation of men's conduct within the normative values of family life? Such an assumption should be modified when applied to times of extreme crisis. My take is that Ruben Feldschu was an individual of a particular character, one that reflected the values and norms of the social, cultural and ideological groups to which he belonged, albeit colored by his and his wife's individual experiences and traits.

Bibliography

Brenner, Michael, and Gideon Reuveni, eds. *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe*. Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.

Brinberg, Bajla. Testimony, Yad Vashem Archives, RING/I 678.

Carey, Maddy. *Jewish Masculinities in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Einat, Aron. *Everyday Life in the Vilna Ghetto* (Hebrew). Givat Haviva: Moreshet, 2013.

Engelking, Barbara, and Jacek Leonciak. *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Feldschu, Ruben (Ben Shem), memoir, Yad Vashem Archives, 033/959III.

Garnazarska-Kedari, Bina. "Changes in the Material Situation of the Jewish Workers in Poland, 1930–1939" (Hebrew). *Galed* 9 (1968): 135–173.

Jacobs, Jack. "The Politics of Jewish Sports Movements in Interwar Poland." In *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe*, edited by Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni, 93–105. Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.

Klinger, Chajka. *I Am Writing These Words to You: The Original Diaries, Bedzin 1943* (Hebrew). Jerusalem and Givat Haviva: Yad Vashem and Moreshet, 2016.

Kugelmass, Jack. "Why Sport?" In *Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship*, edited by Jack Kugelmass, 3–30. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Lazarson-Rostovsky, Tamar. *The Tamar Lazerson-Rostovsky Diaries 1942–1946* (Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Bet Lohame Hagetaot and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1976.

Mahler, Raphael. *The Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars: A Socioeconomic History and a Statistical Basis* (Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1968.

Ofer, Dalia. "Cohesion and Rupture: The Jewish Family in East European Ghettos during the Holocaust." *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, XIV (1998): 143–165.

Ofer, Dalia, and Weitzman, Lenore R. "A Conceptual Framework for Explaining the Presence and the Disappearance of Traditional Gendered Behavior during the Holocaust." In *Women and Holocaust: New Perspectives and Challenges*, *edited by* Andrea Petö, Andrea Hecht, and Karolina Krasuska, 27–63. Warsaw: IBL PAN, 2015.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel. *Last Writings*, vol. 2 (Hebrew). Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1994.

Rozycki, Stanislaw. "'Days in Lwów,' memoirs of June 1–September 15, 1941." Yad Vashem Archives, M10_ARI_427.
Shandler, Jeffrey, ed. *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
Slepak, Cecylia. Slepak Report, Notebook 1, narratives of Mrs. G., of the shoemaker Mr. F, and of Mr. K.R, Yad Vashem Archives, JM/217/4 and JM/215/3.
Stampfer, Shaul. "How Jewish Society Adapted to Change in Male/Female Relationships in 19th/Early 20th-Century Eastern Europe." In *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*, edited by Rivkah Blau, 65–83. New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, 2007.
Trunk, Isaiah. *Lodz Ghetto: A History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006.
Weinbaum, Laurence. "'Shaking the Dust Off': The Story of the Warsaw Ghetto's Forgotten Chronicler, Ruben Feldschu (Ben Shem)." *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 22, 3–4 (2010): 7–44.
Wiliczker Wells, Leon. *The Janowska Road*. Washington, DC: USHMM, 1999.
Yaari, Bela Hazan. *Bronislava Was My Name: On a Mission and Imprisoned, 1939–1945* (Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1991.
Yones, Eliyahu. *Smoke in the Sand: The Jews of Lwow during the War 1939–1944*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001.
Zapruder, Alexandra, ed. *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Natalia Aleksiun

"He was in our home like our own child": Discourses of surrogacy and family relations after the Holocaust

In the summer of 1947, Cecylia Piotrowska, a Polish woman from Warsaw, requested financial assistance from the Central Committee of Jews in Poland – the institution designed to represent the surviving Jewish community in the country. To support her request, she penned a brief account of her activities during the German occupation and stressed the many ways in which she had helped numerous Jews – both acquaintances and strangers.[1] Piotrowska gave succinct examples of how she and her children stored property at the request of their Jewish friends, provided shelter, ran errands, arranged false documents and smuggled Jews out of the Warsaw and Tarnów ghettos. Among these examples, she mentioned the case of a young Jewish man Roman Welczer who, in the summer of 1942,

> wrote to my son Jerzy from the ghetto in Przemyśl asking if we could help him, as a terrible disaster had befallen him: he lost his entire family. We immediately responded: Come right away. Roman arrived in October [1942]. **He was in our home like our own child** [emphasis NA]**.** After two months, he had to move out because – due to a denunciation – the Gestapo was searching for him in our place. Although he did not live with us after that, relations that tied him to our family were more than friendly, [they were] even brotherly. **He attached himself to our family as if to his own** [emphasis NA].[2]

1 For the genesis of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and the role it played in the immediate post-war period, see David Engel, "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communal Institutions in Postwar Poland: The Origins of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, 1944–1945," *East European Politics and Societies* 10, 1 (1996): 85–107.

2 Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, AŻIH), Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich (Central Committee of Jews in Poland, CKŻP), Wydział Opieki Społecznej (Department of Social Assistance, WOS), 303/VIII/235, Piotrowska Cecylia, 4, Letter from Cecylia Piotrowska to the Central Jewish Committee in Warsaw, dated August 8, 1947 in Warsaw. She describes the boy as the son of an engineer from Kraków, who lived at 2 Wygoda Street. In his statement, Józef Grossman identified the father of Roman as Izydor Welczer. Statement dated May 21, 1947, 303/VIII/235, Piotrowska Cecylia, 9. See Yad Vashem's Pages of Testimony for Izydor Welczer: https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_id=&s_lastName=Welczer&s_firstName=Izydor&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true. According to

Note: I would like to thank Maria Ferenc, Agnieszka Ilwicka-Karuna, Katarzyna Person, Anna Shternshis, Joanna Sliwa, Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych, and Deborah Yalen for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-005

In her application for assistance, Piotrowska underscored that not only was the Jewish youth treated as part of her nuclear, biological family, but also that he related to them as such. These mutual "brotherly ties" were symbolically reflected by Welczer having shared the tragic fate of Piotrowska's own son: "On 24 September 1944 he disappeared without a trace together with my son Zbigniew in the Warsaw Uprising."[3] Piotrowska's testimony points to the importance of emotional and family-like bonds that could emerge between Jews and non-Jews in the course of hiding or rescue efforts during the Holocaust. Her letter suggests that the experience of building family bonds may have constituted an important aspect of assisting Jewish men, women, and children in their struggle for survival, quite possibly its unexpected by-product. Cecylia Piotrowska's case is in many ways unique because of her wide circle of social relations with Jews before the war, the scope of her undertakings, and the active participation of her own children in assisting Jews. Despite these distinguishing features, her letter raises a question about how the narrative of incorporating a Jew into one's own family might function in such contexts.

Family bonds and family networks emerge as one of the central themes in Holocaust accounts from Eastern Europe. In their diaries, testimonies and memoirs, Jewish men, women, and children of all ages and social backgrounds reflect on the role their families played in their daily lives, how relatives lived together in overcrowded ghettos, shared resources, struggled and provided emotional support to one another, hid together during round-ups, and underwent selections together. Some resolved to stay together at any cost, while others were driven to leave family members behind.[4]

As biological families were forced to separate, and siblings, spouses, parents and children were murdered, many family units ceased to exist. In their stead, surviving relatives forged new bonds with individuals from outside the nuclear or extended family. In particular, it has been argued that, as the camp system separated families, the creation of new bonds helped inmates by providing them

---

the Yad Vashem Page of testimony filled by his cousin Josef Goren, Roman Welczer was born in 1922. See https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_id=&s_lastName=Welczer&s_firstName=Roman&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true.

3 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, 4, Letter from Cecylia Piotrowska to the Central Jewish Committee in Warsaw, dated August 8, 1947 in Warsaw.

4 See Dalia Ofer, "Jewish Families in Europe," in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 3–25; Natalia Aleksiun, "A Familial Turn in Holocaust Scholarship?," in *If this is a Woman. Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust*, ed. Denisa Nešťáková, Katja Grosse-Sommer, Borbála Klacsmann, and Jakub Drábik (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2021), 20–41.

with a network of mutual support.[5] Surrogate families played a variety of roles for Jewish men, women and children. In the ghettos and camps, or in hiding, new family-like relationships provided much-needed emotional and physical assistance. New non-biological bonds helped the bereaved to overcome a sense of anguish and powerlessness and to develop – even if only briefly – survival strategies. Some relationships came to replace lost families, providing support and meaning during and after the war, while other family-like arrangements served as protective covers for Jews from the outside world. Such pragmatic arrangements of "fictive kin" could also become emotional bonds that would then be formalized after the war.[6]

These complex relationships involved both non-Jewish families and individuals who agreed to shelter and who cared for Jewish children during and after the war, a topic that continues to attract scholarly attention.[7] Some wartime care-

5 In particular, "camp sisters" have been described as a source of material and psychological strength in place of parents and biological siblings. See Sybil Milton, "Women and the Holocaust: The Case of German and German-Jewish Women," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 311. See also Brana Gurewitsch, ed., *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 95–218; Hans Ellger, "Die Frauen-Aussenlager des KZ Neuengamme: Lebensbedingungen und Überlebensstrategien," in *Genozid und Geschlecht: jüdische Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Lagersystem*, ed. Gisela Bock (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 169–184; Rochelle G. Seidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Sarah Helm, *If This Is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück, Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (London: Little, Brown, 2015); Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 105; Sarah M. Cushman, *The Women of Birkenau* (PhD diss., Clark University, 2010), 135. Nechama Tec suggested that men in camps, too, formed bonding groups. See Tec, Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 119–204.

6 Katherine R. Allen, Rosemary Blieszner and Karen A. Roberto, "Perspectives on Extended Family and Fictive Kin in Later Years: Strategies and Meanings of Kin Reinterpretation," *Journal of Family Issues* 32, 9 (2011): 1156–1177.

7 For children's perspective during the Holocaust, see Joanna Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Krakow: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021). For the child survivors experiences see Nachum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Emunah Nachmany-Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006); Joanna Beata Michlic, "What Does a Child Remember? Recollections of the War and the Early Postwar Period among Child Survivors from Poland," in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 153–172; Anna Bikont, *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2022).

takers became legal parents of rescued children and raised them after the war as their own, at times without revealing their Jewish origins. For some gentile families who harboured Jewish children, and acted as their surrogate families, emotional bonds persisted after the war even when children returned to their biological families and Jewish organizations.[8] Most former hosts, however, severed such ties once the children were removed from these families: adults began rebuilding their lives, and most Jewish men, women, and children emigrated from Poland within a few years after the war.[9] The scope of familial bonds between Jews and non-Jews included also "mixed" marriages and relationships that were possibly pragmatic at first but which evolved into romantic entanglements, and other close ties, when non-Jews acted as surrogate families for survivors.

This chapter proposes to expand our understanding of familial bonds by exploring various family-like relationships and alliances beyond the end of the Second World War. It analyses narratives invoking familial relations, feelings and loyalties. In doing so, this study relies on a unique collection of letters sent to the Jewish committees in Poland in the immediate post-war period by non-Jewish helpers and by Jewish survivors.[10] In early post-war accounts, survivors focused on documenting the destruction of Jewish communities and crimes committed against the Jewish population, leaving many emotional aspects of their experiences unspoken.[11] However, letters sent to the Jewish committees offer glimpses into life-stories and reflect a strong emotional bond that could grow between non-Jews and Jews, both adults and children. Hoping to solicit immediate financial and material assistance, applicants – both non-Jewish helpers and Jewish survivors who supported their cause, did not always elaborate on what non-biological families had meant for them during the Holocaust.

---

8 For a discussion of surrogate bonds in the context of hiding, see Natalia Aleksiun, "Uneasy Bonds: On Jews in Hiding and the Making of Surrogate Families," in *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, eds. Eliyana R. Adler and Kateřina Čapková (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 85–99.

9 See Dariusz Stola, "Jewish emigration from communist Poland: the decline of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust," *East European Jewish Affairs* 47, 2–3 (2017): 169–188.

10 For more information on the collection see, Jewish Historical Institute, Tadeusz Epsztein, *Inwentarz Archiwum Wydziału Opieki Społecznej Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce 1944–1950*, accessed March 1, 2022, https://www.jhi.pl/storage/file/core_files/2021/9/9/04cd9826f656d3690f61a28a11ad8686/Wydzia%C5%82%20Opieki%20Spo%C5%82ecznej_303:VIII.pdf.

11 On survivors' Holocaust documentation, see Laura Jockusch, "Early chroniclers of the Holocaust Jewish historical commissions and documentation centres in the aftermath of the Second World War," in *Als der Holocaust noch keinen Namen hatte; zur frühen Aufarbeitung des NS-Massenmordes an den Juden = Before the Holocaust Had Its Name*, ed. Regina Fritz, Éva Kovács und Béla Rásky (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 23–44.

The context of the letters addressed to the Jewish committees is particularly important. Writing to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland or to its local branches, their authors were not interested in documenting rescue stories for history's sake. Rather, they petitioned for assistance and needed to make a case for themselves (or for their rescuers). They requested financial and material assistance: shoes, clothes, loans and money to alleviate their desperate poverty and the needs of their dependents.[12] In particular, former inhabitants of Warsaw lost their belongings in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and those who had lived in the Polish territories that became part of the Soviet Union left their homes behind. Some letter-writers were elderly, widowed and crippled or caring for sick spouses and children. They hoped that their role in assisting and rescuing Jews under the German occupation would help persuade the Jewish addressees of the righteousness of their cause. Some applicants pleaded for, while others demanded, a swift response, and some complained that the assistance they had been offered was insufficient. Still others insisted that they were driven to asking for assistance by a sense of misery and hopelessness. In some applications, their authors signalled the fact that Jewish men, women, and children on the run forged complex relationships with non-Jews.

Like many aspects of Jewish daily life during the Holocaust, emotional relationships are hard to reconstruct and interpret. We may use personal accounts to map them out, but the character of these relationships often remains unspoken or merely allusive, especially if it does not conform with social, cultural and religious norms.[13] It is therefore no wonder that only a small number of the letters stated or even implied that non-Jewish helpers related to the Jews they assisted as family members. A close reading of the language used by these authors – men and women from diverse social backgrounds – describing or referencing familial bonds suggests that the survivors already were or became part of a non-Jews' immediate family. What narrative forms of inclusion did they apply? How did this adoption play out in the narratives of rescue?

12 On the economic and social crisis in Poland in the aftermath of the Second World War, see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków: Znak, 2012).

13 Survivors' unconscious or conscious homophobia may confound historians' abilities to write about male bonding. See Anna Hájková, "Between Love and Coercion: Queer Desire, Sexual Barter and the Holocaust," *German History* 39, 1 (2021): 112–133. See also Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, 1 (2002): 14–44.

"Mixed marriages" and raising Jewish children

In hiding, some Jews who lost their spouses formed relationships not only with other Jews, but also with those who assisted them. For Jewish women seeking to hide in the countryside or pass as non-Jews in urban or rural settings, finding a male partner proved an invaluable survival strategy.[14] In particular, their dramatic vulnerability on the Aryan side may have led them to use or possibly to seek out intimate relationships with non-Jews. Despite the undeniable power imbalance, Jews were not completely devoid of agency in these arrangements. However, given this power imbalance, such relationships are fraught with ambiguities that are impossible to untangle, weaving together elements of barter, exploitation and coercion, but quite possibly also compatibility, gratefulness and fondness. The scope of these bonds is difficult to map out, as the documentation may be fragmentary at best.[15] In the case of the letters sent to Polish Jewish institutions, we find both men and women who provided shelter to their Jewish partners. Letters from spouses in "mixed" marriages constitute an important part of those invoking family bonds between Jews and non-Jews. There are letters written by non-Jewish women who hid their future Jewish husbands and applications for assistance from men who forged liaisons with Jewish women whom they had helped and with whom they continued living after the war. In some of these cases, non-Jewish rescuers painted a broad picture of the aid they gave to Jews without putting their relationship with a Jewish spouse at the center of the narrative. Such is the case with a letter from Olga Kijanowska, a well-to-do inhabitant of Rokitno in Volhynia. She listed the many forms of assistance she gave to the Jews in the ghetto and her efforts to hide Jews and provide material aid to those hiding in the nearby forests. Among them were the three Gołubowicz brothers. She explained their current status briefly: "Piotr Gołubowicz left for Palestine and is already working there. Samuel Gołubowicz lives in Bytom and works in the Jewish committee there and Feliks, who is at present my husband, lives in Zabrze."[16] However, her application and the statement signed by Feliks Gołubowicz referred to her by her

14 For a discussion on the role of gender in preparing hiding places and securing food provisions, see Natalia Aleksiun, "Gender and the Daily Life of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, 27 (2014): 38–61.

15 See Myrna Goldenberg, "Rape during the Holocaust," in *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Women and the Holocaust,* ed. Zygmunt Mazur, Jay T. Lees, Arnold Krammer, and Władysław Witalisz (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2007), 159–169; Anna Hájková, "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto," *Signs* 38, 3 (2013): 503–533. See also Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust*, 44, 109–110.

16 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Kijanowska Olga, 1, To the Jewish Committee in Zabrze (Do Żydowskiego Komitetu w Zabrzu).

maiden name. Was their relationship not formalized? Or did she not want to draw the attention of the Jewish committee, which employed him, to their "mixed" relationship? The letter does not allow us to contextualize Kijanowska's framing of her role in the rescue of the three brothers. It suggests, however, that it was not only Kijanowska who tied her fate to a Jewish man she assisted. Her neighbour, Julia Gryszkowicz, who helped her by cooking food for the hidden Jews, married another of the brothers – Samuel Gołubowicz. Struggling financially, Kijanowska was already caring for two school-age children and was pregnant with another child. She implored the committee for help, citing her health, which had been compromised by difficulties accompanying life in times of war; this, in turn, warranted the need for better food and medical treatment.[17] Interestingly, however, she did not clarify whether she was indeed about to give birth to Feliks Gołubowicz's child.

Like Kijanowska, other authors provide only sparse details about the contexts in which relationships between Jews and non-Jews began, and hardly any broader familial background. Indeed, the focus in their letters is on children and their critical needs in post-war Poland. The applicants suggested that these Jewish children were the reason why these requests deserved to be heard. In one case, Władysława Blitzerowa recalled hiding a "Jewish man, Blitzer Ludwig" during the German occupation. She also stated that she married him in 1941. It is unclear where and how the couple married, whether the marriage took place as part of the cover for the man's Christian identity.[18] Following a denunciation, the Blitzers were arrested and Ludwig perished in December 1942.[19] Blitzerowa did not ask for assistance for herself to compensate for her efforts during the war. Rather, she stated that her husband had left her with a child who was already six years old. To make her case clearer, she added, "I am a Christian woman; the child, however, is Jewish, and, therefore, I am entitled to assistance, which I need, because I am in a difficult material situation, unable to work because I have 60% disability from

17 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Kijanowska Olga, 2, Do Komitetu Żydowskiego w Zabrzu, letter written in Zabrze on January 2, 1947. Her husband added on her application that he was "personally saved by citizen Kijanowska O."

18 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Blitzerowa Władysława, 1, Letter to the Jewish Voyvodship Jewish Committee, Section for Childcare (Do Kom. Woj. przy CKŻP Opieka nad dzieckiem), application of Władysława Blizerowa residing in the county of Chodecz, district Włocławek (Podanie Władysławy Blitzerowej zam. w gminie Chodecz pow. Włocławski), received January 31, 1947. Blitzerowa identified her husband only as a man of Mosaic faith who was born on March 17, 1912. She did not disclose his profession or the circumstances under which they met.

19 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Blitzerowa Władysława, 1. She stated that they were denounced by a Jew from Kraków, Józef Fas, but mentioned no further details.

[my] health [being] ruined in prison."[20] Her husband and his child were not the only Jews she had helped. Blitzerowa mentioned more names and her testimony was corroborated by one of the Jewish survivors.[21]

Applications to Jewish committees arrived also from Jewish spouses. At the beginning of 1947, Dora Lichtsztajn – a survivor from Hrubieszów – appealed for financial assistance for herself and her rescuer. She declared that they were "naked and barefoot." She recalled how she was seeking refuge after the liquidation of the ghetto and found her way to Ignacy Pilitiuk, who sheltered her for two years and refused to betray her under torture because "he preferred to die at the hands of the perpetrators and not to let me die. Therefore, I am with him until this day and I have with him a beautiful son who will turn 5 months on January 9."[22] Lichtsztajn added that her husband suffered from ulcers and that they often went to sleep hungry.[23] Referencing the man's weak health helped to establish the fact that the couple was in dire situation and starving. Lichtsztajn also stated that her rescuer wanted to convert to Judaism, but there was no possibility to go through the process where they lived at the time. This stated interest in conversion may have been a pragmatic narrative trope meant for those reading the application, but it could also indicate how strong the ties had become, so much as to make the husband willing to consider joining the religion and tradition of his wife, whose links to her biological family had been broken in the war.

Letters sent to the Jewish committees suggest complex family bonds. In some cases, relations between Jews and their helpers likely changed over time, something authors did not relay in detail. However, we can assume that some non-Jews and the Jews they sheltered gradually came to forge families with each other. One such case of family making is the case of Jerzy Ponczyński from Równe (today Rivne, Ukraine). In 1948, he repeatedly asked Jewish committees in Poland for material help, citing the dire poverty in which he and his family lived and the assistance he gave to the Jews during the Holocaust. The string of letters allows us to map out the man's family relations. In February 1948, Ponczyński asked the local Jewish committee in Świdnica, in Lower Silesia, for assistance, mentioning that during the war he "sheltered a woman with two children, with whom I

20 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Blitzerowa Władysława, 1.

21 She identified Roma Haberman as an employee of the Otwock Children's Home run by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland. Her application was written in Chodecz on December 29, 1946. AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Blitzerowa Władysława, 1, 1–2.

22 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOP, 303/VIII/235, Pilitiuk Ignacy, 2. Letter of Dora Lichtsztajn, received on January 31, 1947.

23 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOP, 303/VIII/235, Pilitiuk Ignacy, 2. Letter of Dora Lichtsztajn, received on January 31, 1947.

live until today."[24] He focused on the "Jewish orphans" whom he was raising and underscored their poor health due to horrific experiences under the German occupation. Having arrived in Lower Silesia, in the newly Polish territories, Ponczyński was destitute and his meager salary as a mechanic in a factory in Świebodzice was insufficient to support his family. Also, he was expecting the birth of his fourth child (he did not account for the third child). On top of that, he indicated that his family lacked basic necessities for the winter. Added to his letter was a laconic note from Halina Szulmajster confirming that his account was trustworthy. In his August 1948 letter, Ponczyński identified Szulmajster as "Chaja [Haja]" and her children as "Waldemar' and "Elżbieta." The discrepancy between the Jewish first name of the woman and the Polish names of her two children suggested that the author referred to the children by their "Aryan" names, likely adopted under the occupation as a way to disguise their Jewishness. He also explained that he lived together with Szulmajster and that his family consisted of six individuals, because he also had two children with Szulmajster in addition to those he mentioned by name.[25]

Crucially, he noted that people mocked him for his poverty saying that "America is for all the Jews but not for him." By this statement he connected Jews, money, America and the expectation that those who rescued Jews enriched themselves by doing so. He may have also have alluded here to assistance coming from UNRRA and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, the Joint), or to the Jewish exodus from Poland. But this mockery also pointed at his family's liminality: they were perceived as being at a disadvantage because of their gentile father/husband. Ponczyński's wife supported his application with a note of confirmation written in Yiddish and signed with her Jewish name, Chaja Szulmajster, identifying herself clearly as a Jewish woman when addressing a Jewish organization.

The letters sent to and by Jewish committees in Poland point to a link between "mixed" marriage, rescue and family-like bonding. Those married to Jews may have also been more willing to assist other Jews, engaging in rescue beyond their immediate family. A Jewish committee in Kielce sought help for one such man – Bolesław Śliwiński, who was married to a Jewish woman and who sheltered in his

24 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Ponczyński Jerzy, 1, to the district Jewish committee in Świdnica, request of citizen Jerzy Ponczyński (Do Powiatowego komitetu żydowskiego w Świdnicy, Prośba obywatela Jerzego Ponczyńskiego). Dated February 17, 1948 in Świebodzice.

25 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Ponczyńsiki Jerzy, 2. Letter dated August 18, 1948 in Świebodzice. According to the Yad Vashem account, the rescued woman's name was Ita Zabara, born in 1925. She and Ponczyński raised eight children together. In 2011, he was recognized as an individual 'Righteous among the Nations'. See https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=8947516&ind=0 (accessed March 6, 2022).

home a Jewish child, Dawid Frydman, for whom he "cared in a fatherly manner, despite difficult financial conditions."[26] It is possible that this language reflected merely his treating the child well and not his becoming the child's surrogate father. While the letter did not indicate any further details about the marriage, it stated that the child was staying in Chorzów, which suggests that Frydman already lived in the Jewish children's home.

Jewish children in gentile families

Several accounts narrated in the letters focus on Jewish children rescued by non-Jewish helpers who cared for them and who declared themselves to be the children's biological parents. This declaration pertained in particular to the period of the occupation. Indeed, under the German occupation successful rescue sometimes relied on relationships that used family bonds between non-Jewish adults posing as parents or other close relatives and Jewish children as a ruse to legitimize the children's presence in the households. In Warsaw, Leokadia Wesołowska took care of her employee, Irena Steinberg, and her children. Having been the children's nanny before the war, she did not abandon them after the death of their father, the attorney Szymon Steinberg, who perished during the September 1939 campaign. Wesołowska cared for his widow, followed the family into the ghetto, and after their escape lived with them on the "Aryan side." Living separately with the four-year-old Elżbieta Steinberg, she presented herself as the child's aunt.[27] This coverup story served to protect the child, whom she may have known and cared for from infancy. She must have been intimately familiar with Elżbieta and committed to her rescue.[28]

26 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Śliwiński Bolesław, 1, letter written in Kielce on September 1, 1945 by the Voyvodship Jewish Committee in Kielce and signed by its General Secretary, Dr. Mandel, and its chairman, Dr. Kahane.

27 Wesołowska requested financial assistance, citing her material situation, age and poor health. AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, 1–2, Leokadia Wesołowska's letter to the board of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, received on April 24, 1947. See Yad Vashem's Pages of Testimony filled by his brother-in-law https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_id=&s_lastName=Steinberg&s_firstName=szymon&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true, accessed March 4, 2022.

28 On the role of nannies during the Holocaust, see Jennifer Marlow, "Female bonds and the domestic realm in Holocaust rescue: the role of Polish nannies," in *Hiding, Sheltering, and Borrowing Identities. Avenues of Rescue during the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center; International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2017), 293–308.

A rescuer in Lwów (today Lviv, Ukraine), Tekla Piasecka, insisted that a Jewish girl she sheltered in an apartment that was searched by the Germans was her own daughter. The girl's reciting of the Catholic prayers did not persuade the gendarmes. According to the account submitted by the father of the child after the war: "Only Piasecka's willingness to go with the child convinced the Germans about the truthfulness of her claims. They only instructed her to arrange for a new baptismal record, which supposedly had gotten lost."[29] Rescue accounts include testimonies about relationships in which non-Jews consciously created a cover story to protect the Jews who turned to them for help. This was particularly common among non-Jewish families who took in Jewish children, and youth. It could also occur with regard to some adults, and relations that developed into romantic and sexual ones. Jewish parents entrusted their children to non-Jews, hoping to return and claim them after the war. In some cases, wartime guardians refused to part with a child they rescued. It is also true that in some cases Jewish parent(s) lived with their child and the child's wartime rescuer for at least some time after the war, another thread in the social network. At the time of writing the letter, Tekla Piasecka lived in Wrocław, together with the Jews she had saved, having fed them behind a fake wall for twenty-two months; those so rescued included the girl's father.

Some letters only mention that the applicants sheltered a Jewish man, woman or child and then continued to do so after the war. Did this imply that their relationship had turned into a family-like bond? Such was the case with Jan Paluszek, who asked for a coat, clothes, undergarments, and shoes. He mentioned that he had sheltered and continued to support Łaja Feldberg. Paluszek had hidden her since the time the Warsaw ghetto was established. He sheltered her together with his own family, which consisted of five people, in a small apartment in Warsaw. After the Warsaw Uprising, he gave her documents which allowed Feldberg to leave Warsaw. When she returned to Warsaw after liberation, she found no one from among her family or friends. Without other options, she headed to the family she knew – the Paluszeks. They, however, were in much worse living con-

29 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, 2, Akt zeznania (testimony) signed by Bernard Sommer, Tzipora Sommerówna. Cipora was born in 1933 in Tel Aviv, and at the time of submitting her testimony, she lived in Wrocław. Other letters in the collection document that the family "ruse" was used also with regard to adults. For example, also in Lviv, another rescuer, Albina Stawnicza, introduced Rozalia Rajnisz as her own sister and, when the Jewish woman was arrested, managed to get her release with the help of some false identity papers. See AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Stawnicza Albina, 2, Application (podanie), 1–2, letter received on March 6, 1947. Rajnisz described how Stawnicza sheltered her first in 1941, introducing her as her sister, and then in 1943 hid her and cared for her as if Rajnisz was "her own child. AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Stawnicza Albina, 2, Application (podanie), 4–6, letter to the Central Committee of Jews in Warsaw from Rozalia Rekler (nee Rajnisz) and Herman Rekler, dated December, 2, 1947 in Bytom.

ditions than before. And yet, the Paluszeks extended their help to Feldberg again. Paluszek explained: "Our flat has been burned, I lost 45% of [my] health. So, I help her as well as I can. She is unable to work herself because she is ill, which can be confirmed by a TOZ doctor."[30]

After the war, most adult survivors began their independent lives, and children were claimed back by biological family members or Jewish organizations. The process, however, was fraught with apprehension and anguish. Michalina Pawel's account suggests that she saw her role as becoming the temporary family for a rescued Jewish child. As a stand-in parent, she faced a dilemma after the war as to whether or not to place the child in a Jewish institution and break the bond created during and after the war. For about two years – beginning in April 1942 – she sheltered a 12-year-old boy, Wolf Katz, the son of Mojżesz Katz from Mościska near Lwów. Her application did not elaborate on Pawel's experiences in the village of Lacka Wola (today Volytsya in Ukraine), where she lived during the German occupation.[31] What mattered most was that she continued to care for the boy after the war. She explained in her letter: "After liberation, I kept the child with my family as defenceless and destitute, knowing that nobody in his family had been rescued. I therefore felt obligated to take care of the underage boy and treated him on the same level as my children, until I received information about the existence of children's homes organized especially by the Jewish committees and, not wanting to cut him off from his normal mode of living, I have given him the option of returning to the Jewish community."[32] She was therefore not asking for assistance for the boy, but rather because of him and on account of her family's critical situation. She requested help to compensate her for having hidden and cared for a Jewish child.

---

30 See AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Paluszek Jan, 1. Warsaw, 18 April 1947. Łaja Feldberg wrote a short statement confirming the assistance she received. Her letter and that of Paluszek had some similar phrases, suggesting that it may have been dictated to her or that both documents were composed together (2). The Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej (Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population, TOZ) was established in Warsaw in 1921 to care of the welfare and well-being of Jews, adults and children, promote their health and expand their life expectancy. Under the German occupation, TOZ continued to operate in the ghettos with support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. After the Holocaust, TOZ began rebuilding its infrastructure under the aegis of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland.

31 See AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Pawel Michalina, 1. Her hand-written letter, written in the village of Dolna Kępa, county of Nowakowo, Elbląg, was directed to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland in Warsaw and received on May 16, 1947.

32 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, 1. For the children's homes organized by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, see Helena Datner, *Po Zagładzie: społeczna historia domów dziecka, szkół, kół studentów w dokumentach Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce* (Warsaw, ŻIH, 2016).

Wartime parenting and the ambivalence of inclusion

In their letters, non-Jewish helpers described their sacrifices and financial burden they had shouldered in order to protect Jewish women, men and children. Yet, having treated these Jews "like family" served as an additional powerful rhetorical device. It implied good treatment, but also a strong emotional bond. In the summer of 1948, H. Ciechocińska begged the Jewish community for help, which she believed she richly deserved. A widow, writing with multiple spelling and grammatical mistakes, she related how she had raised a Jewish boy, caring for him before, during and after the war. She believed that the bond between her and the child began when she nursed the new-born after it had lost his mother. Having nursed her own at the same time, Ciechocińska pitied the orphan and felt a "maternal obligation" towards him. She went on to raise the boy, having lost her own biological child and having – as she put it in her letter – "grown accustomed to and fallen in love with the child as if it were her own. Through nursing him, all the love for this child has been transferred to me."[33] She recalled protecting the child from "vile antisemitic people" by moving from Warsaw to Płock. She protected him also during the war, so that nobody discovered he was a "kike" [Żydek].[34] Separated from him after the Warsaw Uprising, she was eventually reunited with him and could again "press him to [her] heart."[35]

The same trope of familial intimacy appeared also in statements made by survivors. In the spring of 1947, Tadeusz and Zofia Bentkowski from Warsaw hoped to receive from the Central Committee of Polish Jews a sewing machine that would allow them to support themselves. To justify their request, the couple recalled having sheltered and assisted two Jewish women – Róża Winerowa together with her daughter Dora Joachimowicz. They also protected Lonia Złotnik from Włocławek by introducing themselves as her parents. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, they were deported to Germany, taking Złotnik along and continuing to care for her.[36] To "further underscore their attitude towards Jews," Bentkowskis provided letters sent to them by Złotnik in which she referred to them

33 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Ciechocińska J., letter written in Warsaw on March 1, 1948, 1–2.

34 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Ciechocińska J. Elsewhere in the letter, she misspelled the word "Żydek" as "Żytek."

35 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Ciechocińska J., 4. She concluded her letter by asking for her secret to be kept from "anti-Semites."

36 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Bentkowski Tomasz and Zofia, 1–2. Their hand-written application was registered on April 18, 1947.

as parents. In particular, she called Zofia Bentkowska her "beloved mommy," inquired about their lives, shared her hopes for emigration, and worried about the couple's well-being.[37] The young survivor internalized her short-lived role as the couple's daughter and continued to relate to them with a sense of tender love, loyalty and care. For Złotnik, her life-saving, newfound ties continued beyond her formal liberation.

In the letters sent to the Jewish committees, one finds statements made by Jewish children, who – at least in theory – in their own words recalled having been cared for like the biological children of their helpers. The ambivalence of the narratives is manifold, temporally and epistemologically.[38] Such explicit language describing becoming part of a family permeated the statement made by Cyla (Cesia) Weissberg from Stanisławów (today Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine). Weissberg approached Helena Jędruch after she escaped from the mass shooting of Jews at the Jewish cemetery: "She took me in and for three years I stayed with her. She fed me the same way she did other members of the household. Later, I started going to school, as a Catholic, and when the Red Army arrived, I left together with Jędruchowa to Wrocław. I stayed there for another year." Weissberg also stated that her helper "treated me like her own child." This inclusion proved temporary, as the woman eventually handed the girl over to the Jewish children's home in Pietrolesie in Lower Silesia and, after Weissberg's escape and return from there, handed her over again to the Jewish committee.[39] This points to the attachments that could be formed between a child and a rescuer. Weissberg felt she did not fit in with the Jews, desperately wanting to be reunited with her wartime protector. Weissberg's account reflects the difficulty that child survivors sought to reconcile, having been treated like family members and then seemingly abandoned and placed with strangers in a children's home.

At the same time, narratives combine the language of equality, emotional commitment and relating to Jews as family members with persistent language of othering. According to the letter sent by his helper Wiktoria Karwaszewska, Abram Krakus lived in Tartak, Radziejowice county in the General Gouverne-

37 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Bentkowski Tomasz and Zofia, 2. One of her notes was dated August 20, 1946 in Zeilsheim. She signed her letters with the Polish name Jadwiga.

38 On the ambivalence of power relationships, see Justyna Kowalska-Leder, *Nie wiem, jak ich mam cenić. Strefa ambiwalencji w świadectwach Polaków i Żydów* (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2019).

39 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Karwaszewski Władysław i Wiktoria, 1, protocol written down on March 31, 1947 at the Woyewodship Jewish Committee in Wrocław (Protokół spisany dnia 31 marca 1947 r. w W[ojewódzkim] K[omitecie] Ż[ydowskim] we Wrocławiu).

ment, together with her family for almost four years, until the fall of 1945. Theirs was a chance encounter that Karwaszewska described movingly in her letter. She saw the hungry child, dressed in rags when he knocked on her neighbour's door. Born in the village of Marysin, Nadarzyn county, the seven-year-old boy had escaped from a ghetto and wandered alone after the family who agreed to take him in had banished him. As the mother of one child, she decided to take him and present him as her own. Despite rumours, she registered the boy as "a family member." Importantly, she stated in her letter: "I treated the Jew the same way as my own [child]. He went everywhere with my child, even to the church and he begged me to have him baptized." After the war, however, on a request of a member of his family, she handed the boy over to the relative.[40] While Karwaszewska's letter referenced pity and concern for the boy's safety, her husband's application made no such allusions. Writing in a matter-of-fact tone, Władysław Karwaszewski requested financial renumeration to cover the cost of the "kike's" [Żydek] upkeep during the war.[41] The letters seem to point to different approaches to hiding Jewish children within one family. They suggest an asymmetry of emotions: the man saw an opportunity for compensation; the woman focused on describing the help. Numerous other letters point to an ambivalent, temporary inclusion and use familial language as a rhetorical device. In one such case, a child survivor, Witold Wajman, is referred to as a "kike" [Żydek] whom Wanda Skarbek-Tłuchowska claimed to have "treated like my own child."[42] Both she and her husband, Jan Skarbek-Piotrowski, issued a certification of Wajman's work between 1943 and 1945 on the estates Głosków and Częstoniew near Grójec: "He worked faithfully and we were very pleased with him."[43] Last but not least, Witold Wajman signed a typed statement using similar language. It detailed where he worked and that he "had it good there and was treated like their own son."[44]

40 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Karwaszewski Władysław i Wiktoria, 2–3, vitae of Krakus Abram (Życiorys Krakusa Abrama).

41 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Karwaszewski Władysław i Wiktoria, 1.

42 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Skarbek-Tłuchowska, 1, request (prośba), sent by Wanda Skarbek-Tłuchowska, written in Grójec on September 11, 1945.

43 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Skarbek-Tłuchowska, 2. Statement signed by Jan Skarbek-Tłuchowski and Wanda Skarbek-Tłuchowska in Częstoniew on September 11, 1945.

44 AŻIH, CKŻP, WOS, 303/VIII/235, Skarbek-Tłuchowska, 2. Statement signed in Grudziądz on September 5, 1945.

Conclusions

During the Holocaust, kinship came to include non-biological family relations that replaced murdered relatives. In ghettos and in camps, in the partisan units and in hiding Jewish men, women and children forged new relationships that resembled sibling relations, spousal liaisons, and foster parenting. In both urban and rural settings, surrogate families became an important fabric of daily lives, offering companionship, guidance, and material and emotional support. Some of these relationships included non-Jews, further complicating the notions of a traditional Jewish family and our understanding of the so-called 'Righteous Among the Nations'.[45] When non-Jews shared with Jewish men, women, and children their material resources and provided cover on the Aryan side, such family-like ties increased the chances of survival. Men in hiding seemed to have used similar coping strategies when forging surrogate familial bonds. As gender influenced Jewish behaviour in the camps, it also shaped the experiences of Jewish men, women and children in hiding and how they relied on surrogate families. In some cases, Jewish children who were orphaned or whose parents placed them with non-Jewish families formed strong bonds in the new homes. Some of these relationships continued after liberation, while others proved temporary. After the war, some Jewish men, women and children who had formed relations with non-Jews remained committed to their wartime bonds and continued to relate to them as family members.

The letters sent to the Jewish committees in Poland in the immediate aftermath of the war shed light on the relationships between the helpers and the helped. They reflect a complex web of emotional attachment, and gratitude, but also resentment and despair experienced by non-Jewish Poles and those Jews whom they had assisted during the war. The accounts of surrogate families, family-like bonds and alliances reveal the tension between intimacy and fear, attachment and animosity.

Historical discussions seeking to examine wartime relational bonds rely on personal testimonies in which all actors leave many aspects of their relationships unspoken.[46] Indeed, in the letters sent to the Jewish institutions in Poland requesting material assistance, some emotional bonds between Jewish men, women, and children and their non-Jewish helpers remain blurred and

45 For a discussion on intermarriage in interwar Poland, see Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech. Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2006), 193–205.

46 For a microhistory of one such relationship, see Natalia Aleksiun, "Gdy Fajga porzuciła Tadeusza. Wojenne związki ocalałych po Zagładzie," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 17 (2021): 229–260.

impossible to untangle. Yet, when reading these personal accounts of family-like bonds forged during the Holocaust, several patterns emerge. First, the authors of the applications – both Jewish and non-Jewish – seldom elaborate on the nature of the surrogate relations, even when we can assume that bonds were formed. Second, bonds that replaced family members seem to have been forged more often, although not exclusively, between individuals who had some pre-existing relationship. More accounts emerge of surrogate families forged by women and about women – as sisters, mothers or spouses. Beyond the explanation that personal relationships tend to be more important to women, men seem to have moved around a lot, while women seem to have been more stationary. Alternatively, perhaps men simply did not write about close male bonding relationships.

Inevitably, when reconstructing such narratives, we face the limitations of official letters as ego documents – requests and testimonials, which seldom elaborate on the precise nature of the relationships, possibly conditioned not only by the pragmatic purpose of the documents but also by their gendered notions of what constituted normative behavior in post-war Poland. It is up to the historian to bring these fragments to light and offer a careful reading of what they could tell us of support networks that grew beyond biological family networks and wartime relationships. By studying surrogate families and family-like bonds, we gain a glimpse not only into the daily lives of Jewish men, women and children, as well as the non-Jews who had assisted them, but also into the universe of emotions during the Holocaust and in its aftermath. A close reading, sometimes between the lines of letters as Holocaust testimonies about non-biological kinship, allows us to better understand the contours of class and generational patterns as well as gender roles in Jewish, non-Jewish and surrogate families during this period.

Bibliography

Allen, Katherine R., Rosemary Blieszner and Karen A. Roberto. "Perspectives on Extended Family and Fictive Kin in Later Years: Strategies and Meanings of Kin Reinterpretation." *Journal of Family Issues* 32, 9 (2011): 1156–1177.

Aleksiun, Natalia. "Gender and the Daily Life of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 27 (2014): 38–61.

Aleksiun, Natalia. "Uneasy Bonds: On Jews in Hiding and the Making of Surrogate Families." In *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*. Edited by Eliyana R. Adler, Kateřina Čapková. Rutgers, 85–99. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020.

Aleksiun, Natalia. "Gdy Fajga porzuciła Tadeusza. Wojenne związki ocalałych po Zagładzie." *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 17 (2021): 229–260.

Aleksiun, Natalia. "A Familial Turn in Holocaust Scholarship?" In *If this is a Woman. Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust*. Edited by Denisa Nešťáková, Katja Grosse-Sommer, Borbála Klacsmann, and Jakub Drábik, 20–41. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2021.

Bikont, Anna. *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie*. Wołowiec: Czarne, 2022.

Bogner, Nachum. *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009.

Butler, Judith. "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, 1 (2002): 14–44.

Cushman, Sarah M. *The Women of Birkenau*. PhD diss., Clark University, 2010.

Datner, Helena. *Po Zagładzie: społeczna historia domów dziecka, szkół, kół studentów w dokumentach Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce*. Warsaw: ŻIH, 2016.

Ellger, Hans. "Die Frauen-Aussenlager des KZ Neuengamme: Lebensbedingungen und Überlebensstrategien." In *Genozid und Geschlecht: jüdische Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Lagersystem*. Edited by Gisela Bock, 169–184. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005.

Engel, David. "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communal Institutions in Postwar Poland: The Origins of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, 1944–1945." *East European Politics and Societies* 10, 1 (1996): 85–107.

Goldenberg, Myrna. "Rape during the Holocaust." In *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Women and the Holocaust*. Edited by Zygmunt Mazur, Jay T. Lees, Arnold Krammer, and Władysław Witalisz, 159–169. Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2007.

Gurewitsch, Brana. ed. *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998.

Hájková, Anna. "Between Love and Coercion: Queer Desire, Sexual Barter and the Holocaust." *German History* 39, 1 (2021): 112–133.

Hájková, Anna. "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto." *Signs* 38, 3 (2013): 503–533.

Helm, Sarah. *If This Is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück, Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women*. London: Little, Brown, 2015.

Jockusch, Laura. "Early chroniclers of the Holocaust Jewish historical commissions and documentation centres in the aftermath of the Second World War." In *Als der Holocaust noch keinen Namen hatte; zur frühen Aufarbeitung des NS-Massenmordes an den Juden = Before the Holocaust Had Its Name*. Edited by Regina Fritz, Éva Kovács und Béla Rásky, 23–44. Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016.

Kowalska-Leder, Justyna. *Nie wiem, jak ich mam cenić. Strefa ambiwalencji w świadectwach Polaków i Żydów*. Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2019.

Landau-Czajka, Anna. *Syn będzie Lech. Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*. Warsaw: Neriton, 2006.

Marlow, Jennifer. "Female bonds and the domestic realm in Holocaust rescue: the role of Polish nannies." In *Hiding, Sheltering, and Borrowing Identities: Avenues of Rescue during the Holocaust*. Edited by Dan Michman, 293–308. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center; International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2017.

Michlic, Joanna Beata. "What Does a Child Remember? Recollections of the War and the Early Postwar Period among Child Survivors from Poland." *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation and Memory*. Edited by Joanna Beata Michlic, 153–172. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017.

Milton, Sybil. "Women and the Holocaust: The Case of German and German-Jewish Women." *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany*. Edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan, 297–333. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.

Nachmany-Gafny, Emunah. *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006.

Ofer, Dalia. "Jewish Families in Europe." In *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-present; History, Representation, and Memory*. Edited by Joanna Beata Michlic, 3–25, Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017.

Parkey, Joyce. "Camp Sisters: Women and the Holocaust." *VCU Menorah Review* 67 (2007): 4–17.

Seidel, Rochelle G. *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Sliwa, Joanna. *Jewish Childhood in Krakow: A Microhistory of the Holocaust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021.

Stola, Dariusz. "Jewish emigration from communist Poland: the decline of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust." *East European Jewish Affairs* 47, 2–3 (2017): 169–188.

Tec, Nechama. *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Waxman, Zoë. *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Zaremba, Marcin. *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys*. Kraków: Znak, 2012.

Displacement

Masha Cerovic

Strangers in a strange land: Refugees in Belarusian society under German occupation (1941–1944)

In 1941, war and occupation turned displacement into a mass phenomenon, an experience that was shared by dozens of millions of Soviet citizens facing the German invasion. The scale of displacement was staggering: while about 17 million civilians had fled or been evacuated to the East and over two million deported by the Soviet authorities during the Soviet-German war, the Germans deported over four million as *Ostarbeiter* to the *Reich*, and evacuated, often forcibly, at least 2.5 million Soviet inhabitants to the west during their military retreats.[1] Beyond these massive movements that were ordered, supervised, or at least partially overseen by state authorities and which made people cross state jurisdiction boundaries, there were untold numbers fleeing the arrival of armed forces, the frontline, genocide, hunger, the threat of deportation, to list only some of the main causes of flight.

While major work has been recently published on the plight of refugees and displaced people either in the Soviet rear or in Europe, this article focuses on the mostly hitherto invisible fate of those refugees who did not manage to actually leave the realm of the violence of war and occupation and instead remained in occupied Belarus.[2] The focus is thus on the "internally displaced" rather than on the more studied groups of people who had crossed borders or fronts in their flight, with the added characteristic that these internal refugees did not, could not escape the realm of war and occupation. These displaced persons could not

1 For a discussion of the numbers and an introductory reflection on the centrality of displacement to the Soviet war experience, see Mark Edele, "The Second World War as a History of Displacement: The Soviet Case," *History Australia* 12, 2 (January 1, 2015): 17–40.

2 The focus on Belarus, both under civilian and military occupation, is only meant as a pragmatic choice for the scope of the empirical case study. Beyond the stark contrasts between pre-1939 Soviet territory and territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939–40, the differences between Soviet territories under German occupation varied locally and regionally according to a plurality of factors, including, among many others, the status of the Nazi administration in charge, the demographic and economic make-up of the area, the presence or absence of strong partisan units. There is little indication that the "national" pre-war borders or identities of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine had much, if any, weight in the list of these factors. The war experience in north-eastern Belarus was likely closer to that of central Russia or northern Ukraine under occupation than to that of western, formerly Polish, Belarus.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-006

rely on their pre-war economic or social resources for shelter: as a consequence their survival depended on finding "refuge" in the form of help from others not bound to them by personal obligation.[3] They were forced to rely on "solidarity," loose political and social bonds, often described as mere "humanity," in a situation where mass violence was causing social disruption on a scale that many historians see in terms of total breakdown, anomy or anarchy. How did mass "refugeedom"[4] test, reveal, redefine social bonds and the social response to Nazi occupation, including in the forms of collaboration and resistance?

Refugees were one of the distinctive features of war itself. One villager, north of Minsk, thus recounted in 1943 how the war had started:

> in the village, we heard about the war proclamation about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. (. . .) [Following the mobilization order] on the 23rd, at 2 o'clock, everyone from the villages was sent to Lagojsk. In the village, panic started to spread. But we still did not believe that the Germans would come. (. . .) The first refugees appeared, some women, wives of commanding officers from Zaslavl' or something, but these were hiding from evacuation. But we knew for sure when the refugees from the west [i.e. Polish territories annexed to Belarus in 1939] appeared, and then Jews from Lithuania.[5]

Indeed, the Germans reached the village in the last days of June. This short testimony encapsulates the mass movements of population that signified the beginning of war and, days or weeks later, the occupation of Belarus in 1941: young men leaving for the army, members of the Soviet elite being evacuated or hiding from evacuation, the waves of civilian refugees, Jewish or not, fleeing the destruc-

---

3 This definition is a compromise, borne out of the necessity to describe *a minima* a common social experience of war displacement even in the absence of administrative or institutional actors, be they German or Soviet, who would construct this group as a distinct population category. As contemporary sources implicitly do, the definition excludes the many people who found shelter with relatives, often "returning" to villages they had left years ago. It also only marginally considers Jews in hiding, who required much more than shelter for survival and whose specific experience requires separate consideration. Contrary to contemporary sources, however, it includes former soldiers, as they were, as we shall see, a major part of the first wave of people seeking refuge, as "ordinary civilians" throughout the occupied territories during the first months of the war, even though acknowledging the numbers of soldiers fleeing war, basically turned back into civilians and victims, would have been and in Russia still is largely unthinkable, for reasons that are beyond the purpose of this article.

4 The overarching framework for this reflection on war-time displacement is Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

5 National Archive of the Republic of Belarus (hereafter NARB) f.1405, op. 1, d. 1171, p.154, report by a civilian on the village of Solodzhevichi to the *1ja Minskaja* partisan brigade, undated manuscript (possibly late 1942).

tion and violence unleashed by the Nazis as they marched.[6] Unable to rely on the authorities and official information, the villagers decoded the strategic and political situation by observing who was leaving and who was coming. Refugees were bringing information and rumors, emotions, needs and goods, but to this villager, they were first and foremost the heralds of war and occupation.

The ensuing three years of German occupation would bring many more people seeking refuge to the towns and villages of Belarus. In the months following the early influx mentioned above, Belarusian villages would see the arrival of thousands of people fleeing the starving cities to the countryside, former Red Army soldiers – deserters and escapees – seeking shelter, thousands of Jews who managed to escape from the ghettos. As the partisan movement grew and took control of some of the most rural and remote areas of the country, further waves of refugees tried to cross the ever more tense fronts between "partisans" and "German" or "police" territories. Some hoped to find shelter from the Germans in partisan territory, while those hostile to or threatened by the partisans, including – but not limited to – the village elders, the police and their families, fled to the safety of German-controlled towns. Although both partisans and policemen/Germans would consider this flight as a political decision *in favor of* whichever side was fled to, many refugees were mainly fleeing *from* the threat of random violence (including in the form of forced labor deportation) and economic predation. In the summer of 1943 – while civilians were being deported west from Belarus – the retreat of the German army from Russia marked the launch of the last great waves of war refugees to occupied Belarus, mixing civilians forced into displacement by the retreating army with those fleeing from that same army and with collaborators and their families fleeing with it.

The centrality of refugees to Belarusian society under occupation is unquestionable, but the topic has received scant attention in the existing literature. Leonid Rein, one of the few authors who has paid attention to the phenomenon, mentions refugees while discussing collaboration in the politics of repression, in a short sub-chapter entitled "against strangers." He asserts that "one of the effects that Nazi occupation had on Byelorussian society was that it heightened all of the old anxieties and animosities," thus turning "the villagers' traditional suspicion"

6 For comparison with the experience of September 1939, see Tomas Balkelis, "War, Ethnic Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in Lithuania, 1939–1940," *Contemporary European History* 16, 4 (2007): 461–477; Ben-Cion Pinchuk, "Jewish Refugees in Soviet Poland 1939–1941," in *Bystanders to the Holocaust*, ed. Michael Robert Marrus, vol. 3, The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews (Westport: Meckler, 1989), 1034–1051. On the mass evacuation to the rear, see Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

and "long-held wariness" "toward all strangers" into mass persecution from below against them – conflating, in the process, the wary "villagers" with "the local self-administration."[7] Beyond this broad framework of stranger persecution by Germans and locals, the question of refugees is also tightly linked in the existing literature with the genocide of the Jewish population, both because of the still insufficient state of research on Jewish survival in occupied Belarus[8] and because of the fact that non-Jewish refugees were one of the main official beneficiaries of looted Jewish goods and homes.[9] To the extent that historians have mentioned refugees in Soviet Belarus under Nazi occupation, they have thus mostly been seen as fringe elements, as the objects of Nazi persecutions, of rejection by ordinary Belarusians, and as signs and victims of the breakdown of the social order.

I will argue here that the phenomenon of flight and forced displacement was not marginal, but massive and central to the reorganization of Belarusian society under occupation, that the individual and collective strategies designed to cope with it were much more varied than the literature suggests, and that the multi-directional flows of refugees were a central and complex aspect of the dynamics of the partisan war in occupied Belarus. I will show that refugeedom had a massive social and economic impact and a central role in the redefinition of socio-political communities, on which the response to persecution, including in the form of armed resistance, relied. This chapter will first look at the local social response to

7 Leonid Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns: Collaboration in Byelorussia During World War II* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 302–303.

8 See Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Anika Walke, *Pioneers and Partisans: An Oral History of Nazi Genocide in Belorussia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), especially chapters 5 (Fighting for life and victory: Refugees from the Ghettos and the Soviet partisan movement) and 6 (Of refuge and resistance: Labor for survival in the "Zorin family unit"); for an overview of the Jewish experience of genocide in Belarus, see Leonid Smilovitsky, *Katastrofa Evreev v Belorussii, 1941–1944gg.* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveia Chernego, 2000); Il'ja Al'tman, ed., *Holokost Na Territorii SSSR: Êntsiklopedija* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009).

9 See, among others, Bernhard Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front: Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weissrussland 1941–1944* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1998); Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns*. Both Chiari and Rein note that the Weissruthenisches Selbsthilfewerk and the local administration were supposed to see to the needs of the refugees by drawing on the goods seized from the Jewish inhabitants, but that the real allocation of these goods was much more dependent on the political and personal priorities of the Belarusians in charge. The resettling of refugees was one of the pretexts used by the Nazis and their collaborators for ghettoizing and exterminating the Jewish population, but it is unclear to what extent refugees, rather than those same Nazis and collaborators, actually benefitted from the genocide. There is still much less work on these topics regarding Belarus (and other Soviet areas) than on other European countries, including neighboring Poland.

the massive displacement caused by war and Nazi occupation in the first months of the war, showing the importance of refugeedom for the definition of a new social order and the emergence of armed resistance. It will then explore the emergence of make-shift policies for dealing with refugees on the ground, with a focus on the ways the partisans coped with this challenge. Society under occupation became, in many ways, a refugee society, defined by a shared but far from homogenous experience of forced flight, shaped by the various resources and responses that the displaced could deploy, from the young men turned warriors, managing other refugees, to people whose flight marked them as possible spies, traitors, or, worse in those circumstances, Jews.

Strangers in a strange land: Refugees and the reordering of village life

As the opening quotation indicated, refugees started arriving in the Belarusian countryside from the very first days of the war. The mass displacement of people fleeing destruction, violence or the threat of Nazi persecution would go on for weeks or months, but the displaced and reactions to them were much more diverse than the existing literature suggests. For a start, it should be noted that different groups had wildly differing ways of categorizing and understanding the status of those fleeing. This was not a mere question of semantics; the labelling of the displaced was one of the ways in which communities would define themselves by defining three main categories – those that belong to the community, outsiders who might be worthy of help, even protection, and outsiders excluded from it. Very quickly, the Germans took measures to stem the flow of people on the move. Just as displacement heralded war, so settlement was supposed to be synonymous with peace. One partisan, Filipp Pestrak, thus summed up the shift in German policies after the initial period of conquest:

> The propaganda turned against Jews, the mass execution of Jews started. (. . .) Ghettos were organized for Jews. (. . .) All refugees who had left their homes had to return immediately. That decision was taken with the aim of pacification, with an aim at killing the belief that the Red Army would return. Already, see, everything is over, there is no war anymore, order is returning. The Germans, see, they have come forever and ever and irrevocably. Therefore there is no point in loitering on the roads, just return to peaceful work.[10]

10 Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (hereafter RGASPI) f.69, op.1, d.29, pp. 66–67, oral report by Filipp Pestrak with partisan headquarters in Moscow, 1943. Pestrak was from Poland, a member of the Communist Party, who had spent years in prison for that; he had

Sources in Russian are full of "refugees" (*bezhentsy*), but the Germans did not use the word (*Flüchtling*). They only saw – and mercilessly hunted down – the "vagabonds" and *Ortsfremde*, with a paranoid fear which made them see partisans and "*Freischärler*," Communists and Jews in every person who was not living where they "should."[11]

The responses of the local population to the German demand that people "return" to their pre-war residences were much more varied than what Leonid Rein suggests. The local administration – the village elders and the police – had a key role to play, as they were the ones responsible for drawing up the population lists and issuing documents, thereby confirming or denying residency and belonging. It must be noted, however, that the Soviet regime had already tried to severely restrain the movement of its people within the country (especially the mass migration of peasants to the cities, which the German invasion temporarily reversed), in part by issuing a range of mandatory personal documents that tied every Soviet citizen to a place (and included other information): even faced with extensive destruction of the local registers, the Nazis could and did take advantage of this reality, limiting the options of the local administration as well. Nonetheless, the collaboration of local authorities did play an important role in the implementation of Nazi policies.

Both proactive collaboration – the local police arresting outsiders, often Red Army soldiers trying to hide, and taking prisoners to the Germans – and reactive collaboration – the elders or police choosing to deliver refugees upon the arrival of Germans in the village or upon their request – are commonly found. There are many testimonies, however, suggesting that this collaboration was very often selective and that the delivery of refugees to the occupation authorities was only part of the local response, sometimes used as a strategy to protect others, whether local inhabitants or other refugees – what one village elder allegedly described as

---

been elected deputy in Grodno after the Soviet annexation of the area in 1939. According to his interview, in June 1941 he had left (or hidden?) his family in a village near Grodno before trying to flee eastwards, but could not reach Minsk before the German army. Not wanting to risk a return to the former Polish areas whence he came, probably to avoid being identified as a Communist, he found refuge in a village in Polesia, an isolated area of southern Belarus, safely east of the pre-1939 Polish-Soviet border, where he "waited" – for over a year – for a chance to join the partisans and behave with the heroic patriotism expected of a dedicated Communist. Like many other such men, who, as soldiers or Communists, were expected to fight, not flee or hide, he glosses over his experience as a refugee in very few words.

11 Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000), 879–880 *et alibi*; Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht: Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), 164–165.

"keeping the wolf satiated" in order to "save the sheep."[12] Subsequently, refugees seem to have been the first ones selected for deportation to Germany for forced labor, a selection made by the village authorities that the Germans put in charge of drawing up lists of young people drafted.[13] It is impossible to know how many refugees did find shelter in the villages, because refuge, when effective, meant that the village, including the local administration, would collude in pretending that the refugees were community members by issuing false statements to the Germans and modifying the population registers. It seems that refugees seen as "alien" – Jews especially, and "Poles" more generally[14] – could, sometimes, find individual help among villagers, but would very rarely benefit from cover by the community and were most likely to be delivered to the German authorities, even without their direct prompting.

The picture becomes much more complicated when it comes to non-Jewish Soviet citizens seeking refuge in the villages. The group we know least about are non-Jewish Soviet civilians who escaped to the countryside, often as family units, in the first weeks and months of the war, fleeing the early destruction of the cities, violence, economic collapse and starvation, among other things. They are not mentioned as people who risked being delivered to the Germans, possibly because the local population interpreted German paranoia over "*Ortsfremde*" as code for narrower groups (Jews, Communists, partisans) and chose to exclude "ordinary" civilians from the category. These "ordinary" civilian refugees do appear in documents of partisan units from 1942 onward, especially in relation to questions of land and resource allocation – because partisans would order that they be treated like other inhabitants when the kolkhoz land was redistributed, or, more often, because refugees would write to them with pleas for material help.[15] The becoming invisible of the non-Jewish civilian refugees hints at the fact

12 NARB f.1336, op.1, d.44, p. 17, testimony of a partisan in the Bogushevsk area, 1943.

13 Alena Kozlova et al., *Znak ne sotretsja. Sud'by Ostarbajterov v pis'makh, vospominanijakh i ustnykh rasskazakh* (Moscow: Agey Tomesh, 2016), 95.

14 It is impossible to know what is meant by "Poles" when used in such local testimony. Given the number of Jews among refugees from Poland, it is quite possible that the two are largely, though surely not entirely, synonymous.

15 One such example: on November 10, 1943, one Kazimir Karanev, from the village of Karen (in the region of Minsk), wrote to the commander of the partisan unit *Bol'shevik*: "I hereby ask you to free me from the tax, because I don't have anything with which to pay it. I am a refugee; at the very beginning of the war, I came from Pleshchenicy, I am a worker, I was not given seeds to sow the land, so that I could not sow the land that was given to me; the land is being sown by Randarevich F., Randarevich I., Maroz A. and Maroz R. I only have [a small plot of land] on which I sowed one *pud* of barley and 5 *pud* of potatoes; I work all the time as a hired hand; I have a family of three. Thus I request your mandate; please do not refuse me, and take my situation

that the village communities mostly did shelter and integrate them, even if their reappearance in the sources shows that this was far from frictionless. Where the German authorities did not actively fight it, basic social solidarity functioned, even in the midst of extreme insecurity and deprivation.

Between these two relatively well-defined groups – the "alien" outsiders and the completely integrated non-Jewish Soviet civilian refugees – former Red Army soldiers form a key liminal group. Whether they had deserted, given up on the desperate fight of the early months, or escaped from captivity, many such young men were seeking refuge all over the country, fleeing the sure death that the Nazi POW camps promised them.[16] They were, from the very start, one of the central targets of the German authorities, who were explicit in their repeated demands in 1941 and early 1942 that all former soldiers be turned in. The local population, however, was much more ambivalent in their views about these ordinary Soviet men. Thus, many Red Army soldiers found shelter in the villages, but, given German pressure, it was a precarious respite. They were at perpetual risk of betrayal. Yet beyond their "ordinariness" as Soviet citizens, they had the advantage that, being relatively young, fit and unattached men, they could easily be of use to the villagers, especially given that the war and mobilization had deprived the villages of a good share of their labor force. These Red Army soldiers often found shelter in homes bereft of their men, becoming "*primaki*" or "*pripisniki*" – the widespread use of these words as war-time slang hints at the ubiquity of these men, even if there is no way to give statistical estimates of their prevalence. These two words also point to the double-facetted nature of their integration into the village community. The "*primak*" used to designate – pejoratively – husbands who would join their wives' families, breaking the patrilocal tradition: the wartime *primaki* lived as husbands with local women. The "*pripisnik*"[17] often worked

into consideration, and free me from the tax, as I have nothing with which to pay it." (The commander ordered his men to check the veracity of the information). NARB f.1405, op. 1, d. 723, p. 38 (various documents of the *Bol'shevik* unit, *Logojsk* brigade).

16 It should be remembered that two million Soviet prisoners of war had died in German captivity before the end of the first winter, often in overcrowded camps on Soviet territory, where the surrounding population could witness their mass death. Cf. Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941 – 1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997).

17 Like many other words in these years, "*pripisnik*" was broadly used although its origin is unclear. It is most likely based on the description of the administrative process in which these men were added to the inhabitants' lists (*pripisalis'* – literally "they were written in addition"), which the Germans had originally little means of verifying. The term *pripisnik* also referred, before the war, to men assigned to a specific *voenkom* or military station. It may also have echoes of the *pripisnye krest'jane*, a category of serfs in imperial Russia. One way or another, it points to the ways in which villagers adopted and subverted the administrative practices of the state.

as a day laborer and was added to the residents' lists. Thus, refuge was both a matter of social integration on an interpersonal level, redrawing temporary, wartime families, and an administrative matter that necessitated the collusion of the whole community, including the elders and the police.

The village communities were actively redefining the boundaries of belonging in tension with the demands and categories that the Germans sought to impose on them; the villagers could actively use the German persecutions to get rid of unwanted persons, they could choose to sacrifice some to save others, and they could also actively collude in sheltering refugees by integrating them into the social and administrative fabric of the community. Pestrak, a refugee himself, recounted, for example, the disparate fate of Red Army soldiers in the village where he had himself found refuge:

> I was just standing on the street when 5 prisoners of war arrived in our village. We started talking. I told them that the village here is completely remote, I am one just like you, although not a soldier, and I live here. I asked them where they were coming from. From Poland, they had fled captivity near Warsaw. I told them: "there are few men here, you can find a place with any woman; will you work?" And they settled".[18]

These men, however, were betrayed by the local police and shot. On the other hand, the village elder did protect the witness and four other Soviet soldiers who had settled in the village, "saying that they had long lived there and that he was vouching for them."[19] It would be a mistake to read these decisions through the prism of "collaboration" and "resistance." What we see in the treatment of refugees on the local level is the ways in which the boundaries of community and belonging, far from being either closed and immutable or completely deconstructed, were negotiated, violently tested and redefined under the circumstances of the Nazi occupation. The occupied Belarusian village had, by 1942, been defined by refugees.

Simultaneously, this experience of forced marginality, of negotiating belonging at the risk of people's lives, was a seminal experience for the refugees themselves. Refugees had very different chances and trajectories, depending both on the predispositions of the local population towards them, based on social, economic, ethnic, religious factors, and on the disparate Nazi policies targeting them. Their experience of refugeedom shares some common traits nonetheless. Many of them had similar traumatic experiences of terror in camps and ghettos, of the breakdown of social bonds, of escapes during which they relied on sheer luck, of

18 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.29, pp. 64–65.

19 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.29, p. 65. It is, of course, impossible to know what Pestrak and the other survivors may have done to ingratiate themselves to the local authorities.

being forced to rely on the kindness of random strangers – very often women[20] – in their flight, although the Jews were infinitely more likely to encounter hostility and violence instead. Take for example the 1944 testimony of Lieutenant Ivan Vasil'evich Laktionov, who had been captured in the summer of 1941.[21] Like many others, he vividly remembered the terrible forced marches, during which the Germans "would give us nothing to eat or drink, they beat and killed the laggards," then the overfilled camp, from which "we [the prisoners] would see them carry out a hundred bodies every morning":

> The men are terrified: nobody knows anybody anymore, we are afraid to talk, but in silence, by exchanging glances, we understand each other. We must flee. (. . .) Some manage to do so, not us. I get sick, I suffer from hemorrhagic dysentery and pneumonia, I can't stand up. In the morning, I get up, I don't know how. (. . .) I see they're letting about 50 people through. I ask, "Where are they going?" They answer: "We're letting them go home." They are locals. Once they were sure they were civilians, they would take them out of the camp and send them home. (. . .) I put myself in their ranks and I came out with this group by chance. When I came out, I was overjoyed. I walked thirty meters away, nothing mattered, everything was light and fresh, I laid down. A prisoner (I later learned that it was Lieutenant Gartovich) picked me up, carried me for half a kilometer, we entered one of the hamlets and lay down in the grass. Then an old woman came to us, started crying and left. Then she came back with her husband, took me to her house. (. . .) The next morning I could speak more or less normally again, I could eat liquid food. (. . .) Then the master of the house gave me a jacket, a satchel where he put some biscuits, two cans, and he said: "Now go as you can."[22]

---

20 Pestrak asserted that at some point the Germans organized a meeting with only local women to convince them "that they should deliver all suspect people to the authorities etc. They summoned the women because women, of course, are the most active in helping, in giving food etc. A guy goes by, who does he ask? Well, of course, the mistress of the house" (RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.29, p. 62). The pivotal social function of women in the response to persecution deserves much more in-depth consideration, even though it is limited by the fact that in archival sources, women appear as largely anonymous marginal actors in male trajectories and testimonies.

21 NARB f.750, op.1, d.121, pp. 71–72. Interview of lieutenant Laktionov, unit commander in the *Razgrom* partisan brigade, with the Commission for the History of the Great Patriotic War, August 1944. Laktionov joined the Red Army in 1925 and had been a Party member since 1930. It may have been easier for younger soldiers to pass as "primaki" and villagers.

22 Compare with the testimonies of flight by Jewish survivors, for example in Walke, *Pioneers and Partisans*. Many, especially children, would also testify to "chance" escapes, marked by feelings of utter terror and uncertainty. Jews would sometimes manage to hide and flee, across rivers for example, during the chaotic rounding-up of inhabitants of smaller ghettos that were liquidated in the first year of the war. However, more escaping Jews seem to have relied on resistance organizations and coordinated attempts at securing flight. If the experience of miraculous escape and survival could be shared, to some extent, between Jews and POWs, the trajectories of escape differed, as Jews seem much less likely to rely on the kindness of strangers. Most of the fleeing Jews seem to have first turned to acquaintances and friends – carrying a major risk of

The two lieutenants, thus joined by happenstance, would remain close throughout the war. It is after this first traumatic period that Laktionov's trajectory starts wildly differing from Jews fleeing the ghettos, as he was lucky enough to join the ranks of those that the villagers cautiously welcomed into their communities. After leaving that first home, they wandered around the Belarusian countryside:

> I started working like an honest man. People see that, they are immediately friendly (. . .). Once I knew the people, my situation got radically better, I was no longer hungry. (. . .) When the harvest was over, I started wandering through the villages – you get wood for one inhabitant, you fix another's millstone. You work during the day, you get fed. During the night, you don't know where you'll sleep; in a word, you're a vagabond. (. . .) In early January 1942, Evdokij Kirillovich Zhukovskij (. . .) came to see me and said: "how long are you going to roam like that, come stay with me, I have a big house." (. . .) I take care of his cows, I carry the water, I go to the mill, I make brooms, I fix things. In a word, I already had six months of experience on occupied territory, I knew one could breathe. (. . .) On March 16, 1942, the Germans ordered that all *pripisniki* who lived in the villages assemble. (. . .) The staroste said: "well, my friend, you have to go, you are lost if you don't obey their order." I told him: "to cover yourself, tell them that I refused to go." But as I refused to go, I could no longer live in peace in the house. (. . .) In April, I crossed the Berezina to go find the partisans.

One of the defining characteristics of this early refugee experience was the total absence of any kind of organization, association or network that could help them in their flight. The Soviet regime had destroyed all independent organizations, so social life was dominated by organizations affiliated with or dominated by the Bolshevik party; the collapse of state and Party left the persecuted with no institutional resources whatsoever. They had no political parties, no professional organizations, no churches, no youth groups or cultural associations – even underground – which could provide active help or form the backbone of clandestine networks. The persecuted had to create the social networks necessary to their survival on their own; these networks, in turn, provided the social basis for the partisan war that tore the country apart starting in 1942. This is true in two respects. First, there were all the men like Laktionov, whose chance encounters with fellow prisoners, sympathetic villagers, integrated them into the local social

---

betrayal (cf. Natalia Aleksiun, "Daily Survival. Social History of Jews in Family Bunkers in Eastern Galicia," in *Lessons and Legacies. New Directions in Holocaust Research and Education*, ed. Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 309). It is possible that people would not think of turning to utter strangers in regions where they used to live, finding it hard to imagine that it would be safer to rely on the kindness of strangers than on the loyalty of friends. It is also possible that women and children would find it more difficult to flee as strangers, as their position of anonymous refugees may have raised more suspicions among villagers.

fabric; by the time Laktionov was forced by the Germans into rebellion, he left with a friend and the tacit support of the peasants, including the village elder, in stark contrast to the widespread hostility those same villagers had shown to would-be partisans in 1941. Second, in and around the cities, the people threatened by the Nazis tried to join forces in networks whose primary purpose was to get people (and weapons and goods) out of the cities and to create partisan units. Most of those usually short-lived networks were either based on military sociability or on clandestine ghetto rescue operations – the two types of organizations that remained distinct but intertwined in Belarus, especially around Minsk.[23] In the absence of social institutions capable of handling the flow of refugees fleeing Nazi persecution, the persecuted had to self-organize. Partisan resistance grew out of this autonomous response of people in flight and hiding. Partisan brigades became substitute families and social groups, primarily uniting men seeking both to escape Nazi persecution and to reassert a personal and social identity beyond the trauma of 1941.

Of spies and victims: Refugee policies

In turn, these partisans, who took to the forest in 1942 to escape Nazi persecution, had to develop responses to the subsequent waves of displaced civilians who continued to move through the occupied territory until its liberation, at which point the return of Soviet authorities transformed the status and experience of displacement.

The first reason given for the focus of partisans on managing displaced civilians was the fight against German espionage. This security rationale, casting people on the move as potential threat, was thus shared by all actors of the war – German, police and partisan forces alike. Faced with a society on the move and in massive flux, and regardless of their own experience of and role in this displacement, they reacted with brutal attempts to assert their own "order." This led to a cumulative drive to control, or even break off, contacts between populations in partisan and "police" or "German" territory, reinforcing the breakdown of territorial integrity. Partisans were trying to seal off "their" territories, which also meant enclosing "their" populations, through registration, documentation,

23 Professional networks – workers from a factory, or railway workers for example – could also offer resources for flight and rescue, but on a much more limited basis. For a history and testimony on rescue operations out of Minsk, both from the ghetto and from the city, see Hersh Smolar, *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989).

and the implementation of systems of "passes" and "border controls" to control the population's movements.[24] However, this striving for territorial and population control was, in reality, constantly challenged by the need to manage refugee flows. Partisans kept hesitating between their suspicion of refugees as possible spies and the necessity of providing help to civilian victims of Nazi terror, between their wish for the security of hermetic borders and the social reality of refugees. This was also a major, but ambiguous, political challenge at the heart of the partisans' self-proclaimed role as protectors and guardians of the civilian population.

The civilian refugee flows had various origins. Throughout the land, the partisan conquest had driven local authorities – elders, policemen, and their families – to flee to towns that remained in German hands, while relatives of men who had joined the partisans started flocking to their territory. Beyond this sorting of the population into "partisan" and "police" villages and towns, the main refugee flow in 1942 came from the ongoing exodus of starved city-dwellers to the countryside. As early as June 1942, a report noted that in the north-east of the Vitebsk region, the brigades of Rajcev and Dika were faced with a "massive flow of refugees, with all their belongings and children," fleeing Smolovki, a town that had become the main German center in the area.[25] In a neighboring area, the *First Belarus* (Shmyrev) Brigade reported that in June 1942, "thousands of families" had to be evacuated from the partisan zone because of a German attack, while the partisans also had to face "the settlement in the partisan zone of inhabitants of Vitebsk" and Orsha fleeing starvation in the cities. In order to manage these twin flows of refugees in and out of their territory, the brigade "organized a center to register them, issue certificates and provide first aid in the village of Timokhi" and sent men to the villages to assess the possibilities of settling the newcomers.[26] The partisans were thus trying to mimic state authority and to claim, at least on paper, legitimacy on that basis. Most partisans and inhabitants were, however, not particularly welcoming to the refugees, as these urban families were often seen as both an economic burden and a security risk. This was doubly true of Jews fleeing the ghettos – if fighting-age men and medical personnel could at

24 See Masha Cerovic, *Les Enfants de Staline. La guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944)* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), 146–150. Some of this "border control" was undeniably more wish than reality, but in several instances, the Germans would note that they were lacking intelligence on specific partisan-held areas because their agents failed to cross their "borders."

25 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.854, p. 3, report by KGB captain Yurin to Ponomarenko on the situation in the Vitebsk area as of June 16, 1942.

26 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.355, pp. 14–16, information report, June 25, 1942, by agent sent by the Communist Party as liaison to the Shmyrev partisan brigade.

least gamble and hope to find a place among the partisans, families were mostly not welcome.

The number of refugees increased rapidly during 1943, especially after the battle of Kursk. In addition to the adoption of "dead zone" tactics by the Germans against the partisans, the German retreat on the front was accompanied by three concomitant waves of flight that had different ranges, from a few to hundreds of kilometers: a renewed exodus of urban dwellers fleeing starvation and war-related destruction; the massive flight of village communities resettling to the forest, usually collectively; evacuation by the Germans of the areas close to the front, both to secure their rear and in application of a scorched earth strategy in addition to the evacuation or flight of collaborators with the Germans – all of this triggered a massive flux of refugees to the partisan areas, including collaborators and their families, who seized the chance to defect to the Soviet side once they were in areas where they could count on relative anonymity. Finally, on September 21, 1943, the Belarusian Communist Party's Central Committee redefined the goals of the partisan movement in Belarus to encompass the mission "to protect with all their might and by all means the civilian population from death and from being sent into slavery in Germany."[27] As the liberation of the Soviet Union was in sight, non-military objectives started to be taken into account by the high command, and the Soviet government started to care about the state of the territory they were to reconquer, and about the social and economic cost of Nazi occupation. The partisans had from the very beginning staked part of their legitimacy on their role as protectors on the ground; now that self-understanding was – at last – officially confirmed by the central authorities.

The management of these refugee populations remained hesitant but gradually led to the formulation of coordinated policies of population and territorial control at the regional level. Thus, in the region of Minsk, the question of refugees seems to have been articulated as a collective problem in May 1943, as part of the attempt by the local brigades to organize the government of a "Minsk partisan zone." A report addressed to the commander of the *First Minsk* Brigade on May 23, 1943 noted that "in the Rudensk district, there are as many as 1,500 refugees evacuated from the front zone. In the Mar'ina Gorka district, up to 400 families remain. (. . .) In addition, our outposts are stopping refugees from Minsk moving to partisan territory – they say they are fleeing the bombing."[28] These people were said to be "mostly police families." The author of the report was asking

27 NARB f.4, op.33a, d.146, p. 8.

28 NARB f.1405, op. 1, d. 1194, pp. 58–60, report by the "special department" (*osobyj otdel*, which would have been NKVD in the army) of the *First Minsk* brigade to brigade command, May 23, 1943.

for guidance in dealing with the massive numbers of people on the move. That problem was already fueling tensions between partisan brigades. Thus, the *1st Minsk* and the neighboring *For the Fatherland* (*Za rodinu*) brigades were, at that time, in open conflict over the question of settling refugee partisan families, let alone suspected police ones. The commander of the *For the Fatherland* brigade was adamantly opposed to taking in twenty or so families whose relatives were fighting for the *1st Minsk* brigade. The commander of the latter argued in reply that "if some inhabitants of villages in your zone are linked to my brigade, and others from my zone to your brigade, it does not seem to me that this should result in their moving from one zone to another, but that they should all be treated as partisan families with the same sympathy, as for all the Belarusian people, and offered shelter without harming their own interests."[29] Refugees were not just civilians; they were, by then, either "police" or "partisan," and "partisan" families were defined as such through their links with concrete brigades.

On November 22, 1943, representatives of the Party and the commanders of the brigades of the Minsk region finally met to discuss a coordinated policy regarding civilian refugees, in accordance with the instruction of September 21. The immediate aim was to organize the settlement of civilians fleeing Minsk and other German garrisons. 354 families were assigned to three brigades. The families were to come in first to the village of Janka Kupala, where the refugees were controlled by agents of the brigades' security services[30] before being sent on to the brigades. Further north, in the partisan area of Ushachi – Begoml', at the beginning of February 1944, there were 73,500 civilians, 75% of whom were women, in a partisan territory of 3,245 km^2. From September 1943 onwards, 7,500 refugees from other regions had been added, of whom a third came from the Orel region liberated by the Red Army – an increase of 10% in just a few months, not counting the flow of local population fleeing German towns and garrisons.[31] South from

29 NARB f.1405, op. 1, d. 1194, p. 28, letter from *First Minsk* brigade commander Balan to the commander of the *Za Rodinu im. Flegontova* brigade commander Filipskij, May 27, 1943; protest by Filipskij to Balan on the question of Balan's refugees addressed on May 24, 1943 (p. 23). There were several conflicts between the brigades both over the settlement of refugees and over violence by partisans against civilians in the other brigade's area.

30 These could be staffed by actual agents of the Soviet security and intelligence services, or they could just be partisans assigned to such functions without prior affiliation with these services. Partisan brigades mimicked many of the practices and institutions of the Soviet state even without its direct intervention.

31 NARB f.1450, op.2, d.1038, pp. 3–4, report by the operational group of the Central and Belarusian headquarters of the partisan movement in the Ushachi-Begoml' zone to the Red Army's 1st Baltic Front, not dated (early February 1944, from context).

there, the *Razgrom* brigade also reported, in early summer 1944, that 10% of the 28,500 inhabitants of the 56 villages under its control were refugees.[32]

The situation of these refugees was very ambivalent. They were heavily dependent on the help and protection of the local authorities, especially given that, by then, the resources of the "purely" civilian population (in contrast to families with members fighting for one of the parties) had been entirely depleted by years of war, occupation and predation. They were often quartered together in the existing, cramped living space of the villages, which became a breeding ground for infectious diseases, providing yet more reason for the partisans to try and control refugee movements. In northern Belarus, a partisan doctor thus explained that:

> typhus was brought to the area already in 1941, by our soldiers who fled fascist captivity and found shelter among the local population. (. . .) It was not realistically possible to stop that epidemic. The huge masses of refugees from other areas, overcrowding of living space (3–4 families per house), (. . .) made it impossible to radically combat typhus. The only thing we could do was to take all possible measures to stop typhus from spreading to partisan units.[33]

Refugees were not, however, necessarily the most deprived among the inhabitants. Some had arrived from areas where, for various reasons, the occupation had not been as devastatingly hard as in the impoverished and war-torn Belarusian countryside, and had taken some possessions with them, including cows. To give one typical example: in the village of Dubovyj Log in the region of Minsk, in the area of the partisan brigade *Razgrom*, there were 14 cows left in early March 1944, of which half belonged to partisans and their families, one to the village elder, and two to refugees.[34] By mid-March, 8 of those cows had been stolen by rival partisan brigades or "illegally" butchered. The remaining cows were those of the village elder, the refugees, and three of those belonging to partisans: the local civilian population not affiliated with the partisans had no cows left at all.

This gave refugees some leeway in negotiating their acceptance in their new surroundings, but could also make them targets of theft and violence. There are, however, no known instances of the specific targeting of non-Jewish ref-

32 NARB f.1450, op. 2, d. 1025, report on the brigades of the Minsk area as of June 1, 1944. It is impossible to ascertain the accuracy of these numbers; they should be considered as indicative of perceived proportions.

33 NARB f.1450, op.4, d.30, p. 162, report on the activity of the medical service of the *Stalin* brigade (Rossony) from May 1, 1942 to November 25, 1943.

34 NARB f.1405, op.1, d.1732, pp. 59–60 *et alibi*, investigation by the *Razgrom* brigade on the "disappearance" of cattle in its area, March 18, 1944. By then, cows were typically shared between 3 to 5 families.

ugees for their "riches" comparable to the anti-Semitic attacks on fleeing Jews for their imaginary gold. Nonetheless, economic factors may have played a role in the displays of mistrust toward refugees and their conflation with spies. This suspicion left refugees in an extremely vulnerable position and, indeed, cost an untold number of them their lives. One exceptionally well-documented example comes from the execution in the village of Dubrovo, in northeastern Belarus, of 49 people, aged 2 months to 70 years, as "traitors" by the partisans of the *Frunze* brigade in the early spring of 1943, in the immediate aftermath of the devastating German operation *Winterzauber*. A minority of the victims (of whom only 6 were adult men) were identified as "police families" whose relatives had allegedly participated in *Winterzauber*; 31 dead were refugees from the Sebezh area in neighboring Russia, who had fled an anti-partisan operation there. According to one local inhabitant, they were "not police, but simply alien" (*chuzhie*) – or, as the village elder put it, "they were all alien to us, and nobody misses them."[35]

Communities of survival: Sharing the forest

These flows of refugees and the massive destruction of villages by the Germans led considerable numbers of civilians to take refuge in the forests, establishing "civilian camps" that became makeshift villages and communities of survival. The first camps of this type had been organized by and for Jews fleeing the ghettos. Thus, in September 1942 in the Vitebsk region, "a series of Jewish refugees asked for help from Shmyrev," the commander of the *First Belarusian* brigade; the brigade command therefore installed them in a forest camp, "three soldiers were detached to them and all the women, children and old people settled in a *zemljanka*."[36] In November 1942, a report noted that in the region of Vilejka, "the Jewish population, terrorized and disarmed, took refuge in the forests (. . .); near Nevery there is a group of 300 Jews, 250 near Krasnoe, 63 near Panyshi, 87 near

35 NARB f.1450, op.2, d.58, pp. 1–12, investigation in September 1943 of the murder of civilians at the end of March – early April 1943 by partisans of the *Frunze* brigade. The investigation was part of an internal conflict among the command of the brigade and was mostly meant to discredit one of the commanders. This explains why this case is so exceptionally well documented. Violence against civilians is otherwise very difficult to document.

36 NARB f.1450, op.2, d.1284, operational log of the *First Belarusian* brigade, September 26, 1942. A *zemljanka* was a semi-buried dugout that was used to create shelter in the forests, both by partisans and civilians.

Zacherna etc."[37] In all, between ten and fifteen thousand Jews may have taken refuge in these civilian camps in the forest.

As the occupation and the war unfolded, many other civilians sought refuge in the forest. These camps were diverse and their function and organization evolved over time. At first, the main reason for this flight to the forest was the wholesale destruction of villages by the Germans as part of their anti-partisan strategy (although it should be noted that partisans would also destroy villages for various reasons, although on an incomparably smaller scale). As early as July 1942 in the forests of Brjansk, a report noted that "a totally forgotten area is that of the *balagany* [temporary huts] in the forests. The inhabitants of the burnt villages have settled there, the old men, women and children fleeing the bombardments take refuge there. Access to these new settlements is not monitored in any way. The village authorities and the [partisan] units don't care who lives there and what is done there."[38] In Belarus as well, such improvised civilian camps would flourish in the aftermath of German operations. The peak of this movement to the forest occurred in the last months of the occupation – in 1943 or 1944, according to the regions – as the front drew near, and villagers sought refuge both from the escalating violence of the occupiers and from the foreseeable destruction that the returning armies would bring.

---

37 NARB f.1450, op. 4, d. 60, p. 35–36 *et alibi*, report to the Vilejka regional Party secretary, from Karpov, intelligence liaison officer, November 27, 1942. Karpov's group had been sent to establish contact with possible partisans and gather intelligence on the situation on the ground; it was the first report that the Soviet authorities would get from the area. Karpov noted that there were tensions between the Jewish refugees and the surrounding population, that most partisans were not helping the Jews, with some exceptions, and that evacuation of the refugees to the Soviet rear would be welcome, to save them and "free the local peasants from the burden of feeding such a mass of people who produce nothing." See RGASPI f.69, op. 1, d. 746, p. 220 for a similar testimony in Ukraine, in the region of Rivne in September 1942. On Jewish family camps, see Yitzhak Arad, "Jewish Family Camps in the Forests: An Original Means of Rescue," in *Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust. Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroft (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 333–353; Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe: With a Historical Survey of the Jew as Fighter and Soldier in the Diaspora* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975); Lester Samuel Eckman, *The Jewish Resistance: The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia During the Nazi Occupation, 1940–1945* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1977).

38 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.746, p. 113, NKVD intelligence report on "problems in the area of the partisans under the command of Emljutin," July 15, 1942. The report claims that these wild installations of civilians in the forests pose a major security threat, both because of the possibility for spies and "counter-revolutionaries" to hide there, and because "women, cut off from their families, from active combat, are more prone to fascist fear-mongering and may seriously lean on their husbands and sons who are fighting with the partisans."

In other cases, such civilian camps were gradually organized by the villagers and partisans, as the anticipation of violence and destruction became part of the organization of everyday life. Civilian camps under partisan supervision generally served first as temporary refuge; civilians were not expected to live permanently in the forest, unlike the partisans. One partisan officer in the north of Minsk thus described the situation in June 1943: "The peasants began to move *en masse*, fleeing from the Germans to the villages and areas that make up the partisan zone. So a whole series of villages in the immediate vicinity of the forests where the partisans have their bases [follows list of villages] are chock full with refugees. On the other hand, the local population, on the advice of the partisans, has built civilian camps in the forest and they keep all their property, livestock and food supplies there. (. . .) The people live [in the villages] and work on their plots and in the fields, and at the first sound of the Germans approaching, they go into the forest."[39] Although the forest was a place of refuge, as it had been for Red Army "stragglers," Jews and would-be partisans since the first days of the war, villagers did not usually abandon their villages for the relative safety of the forest as long as the village physically existed. This preparation, however, allowed for a less chaotic transition to life in the forest once the village was destroyed by the Germans. The involvement of the partisans in this organization was variable. In the Rudensk region, for example, the *First Minsk* brigade reported in May 1943 that the partisans had no control over the organization by the villagers of these camps in the forest, noting that "some villages have built entire second settlements" there.[40] This proximity of civilian and partisan settlements was a major security concern, among other things because the woodcutting, the regular movement of people, and the economic activity of the villagers all made the partisan forest bases much easier to spot and more vulnerable to attack. On that ground, a neighboring brigade also protested against the habit of the *First Minsk* brigade of resettling partisan families forced to move to partisan areas in "civilian camps" in the forest.[41]

Over time, however, the partisans generally tried to better control the movement of people in the forests. Thus in October 1943, the *Death to Fascism* brigade (Borisov area, north of Minsk) organized a dual system of civilian camps, with,

39 RGASPI f.69, op.1, d.29, p. 11, minutes of the meeting with the commissar (B.G. Byvalyj) and chief of staff (major Ja.S. Chumakov) of the *Starik* brigade at the Belarusian headquarters of the partisan movement, June 1, 1943.

40 NARB f.1405, op.1, d.1194, p. 59, report of the *First Minsk* brigade's intelligence and security officer to the brigade command, May 23, 1943, section "on the problem of wood logging."

41 NARB f.1405, op.1, d.1194, p. 23, letter by the commander of the *Flegontov* brigade to the commander of the *First Minsk* brigade, May 24, 1943.

on the one hand, a permanent camp for civilians who had fled the Germans and no longer had their own homes, and on the other, forest camps that served as "second villages," refuges for emergency situations and able to provide permanent shelter in the event of destruction. All these camps were placed under the surveillance of the partisans; the property of the villagers was evacuated to the forest camps, and the inhabitants spent the day in their villages but the night in the camps.[42] Sometimes, this gradual settlement of the civilian population in the forest was also used by the partisans as part of their recruitment processes. The commissar of the *Bol'shevik* unit described this process in his diary as follows: the population had fled the Germans and the police into the forest, thus organizing "new sub-partisan camps" where the villagers began to arm themselves and organize in self-defense, then joining the partisans.[43] The end result was the emergence in and around those rather inhospitable forests of intertwined communities of destitution, with able-bodied adult men expected to bear arms and groups of civilians whose fate was ever more narrowly tied to that of the fighters. As the Germans increasingly militarized their anti-partisan policies, drafting Wehrmacht active forces, heavy artillery and aviation in their last operations before the return of the Red Army, they were attacking territories that comprised ever more civilian population. These civilian refugee masses were even less able to flee or protect themselves from such military tactics, of which they were the first victims, although nobody tracked their numbers.

Conclusion

In the end, war and occupation had turned Belarus into a society shaped by refugeedom. Flight, escape, and displacement were far from marginal experiences characteristic of persecuted groups, but formed one of the dominant, defining characteristics of the social experience of occupation. While rescue was one of the main aims, forms and drivers of resistance in Western Europe, survival was the core driver of action in Belarus. People displaced, fleeing, and hiding were forced to self-organize in order to survive. Communities adapted in various ways in order to accommodate flows of refugees that triggered economic and political reorganizations, new forms of solidarity, as much as mistrust, grievances and violence. These movements proved unceasing, as ever wider groups of the population were

42 NARB f.1405, op.1, d.915, pp. 3, 5, orders and internal reports of the *Death to Fascism* brigade, late October 1943.

43 NARB f.1404, op.1, d.86, diary entry May 21, 1943 ("lagery podpartizan").

engulfed in them, including, by the end of the war, the majority of the civilian rural population. Nevertheless, in spite of the omnipresent violence, one should not assume that this massive uprooting led to mere anarchy or social and communal collapse. In spite of their transient nature, vulnerability and precariousness, these communities of survival kept inventing ways of managing the catastrophe, organizing chaos, administering emergency, creating hierarchies, belonging, and collective identities. It should be stressed that the historians' way of talking about society in stable groups, tends to obfuscate this unstable and fluid nature of Belarusian society qua refugee society during the war. By the end of the German occupation, "locals," "peasants," and "civilians" had very little to do with the way these were understood before the war. Refugees had been incorporated into local society, while the few surviving Jews had become refugees. Civilians and fighters – heavily gendered categories – were sharing the same spaces and resources, and very few were lucky enough still to live where they had in early 1941.

Bibliography

Ainsztein, Reuben. *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe: With a Historical Survey of the Jew as Fighter and Soldier in the Diaspora*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975.

Aleksiun, Natalia. "Daily Survival. Social History of Jews in Family Bunkers in Eastern Galicia." In *Lessons and Legacies. New Directions in Holocaust Research and Education*, edited by Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi, 304–331. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017.

Al'tman, Il'ja, ed. *Kholokost Na Territorii SSSR: Êntsiklopedija*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009.

Arad, Yitzhak. "Jewish Family Camps in the Forests: An Original Means of Rescue." In *Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust. Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, edited by Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroft, 333–353. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977.

Balkelis, Tomas. "War, Ethnic Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in Lithuania, 1939–1940." *Contemporary European History* 16, 4 (2007): 461–477.

Cerovic, Masha. *Les Enfants de Staline. La guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944)*. Paris: Seuil, 2018.

Chiari, Bernhard. *Alltag hinter der Front: Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weissrussland 1941–1944*. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1998.

Dean, Martin. *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Eckman, Lester Samuel. *The Jewish Resistance: The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia During the Nazi* Occupation, *1940–1945*. New York: Shengold Publishers, 1977.

Edele, Mark. "The Second World War as a History of Displacement: The Soviet Case." *History Australia* 12, 2 (2015): 17–40.

Gatrell, Peter. *The Making of the Modern Refugee*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gerlach, Christian. *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000.

Kozlova Alena et al. *Znak ne sotretsja. Sud'by Ostarbajterov v pis'makh, vospominanijakh i ustnyh rasskazah*. Moscow: Agey Tomesh, 2016.

Manley, Rebecca. *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Pinchuk, Ben-Cion. "Jewish Refugees in Soviet Poland 1939–1941." In *Bystanders to the Holocaust*, Volume 3, edited by Michael Robert Marrus, 1034–1051. The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews. Westport: Meckler, 1989.

Pohl, Dieter. *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht: Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944*. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008.

Rein, Leonid. *The Kings and the Pawns: Collaboration in Byelorussia During World War II*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010.

Smilovitsky, Leonid. *Katastrofa Evreev v Belorussii, 1941–1944gg*. Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveja Chernego, 2000.

Smolar, Hersh. *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis*. New York: Holocaust Library, 1989.

Streit, Christian. *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945*. Bonn: Dietz, 1997.

Walke, Anika. *Pioneers and Partisans: An Oral History of Nazi Genocide in Belorussia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Andreas Zeman

Caught between the guerrilla and the colonial state: Refugee life in Northern Mozambique during the Independence War (1964–1974)

Introduction

This chapter looks at the war experiences of people in Northern Mozambique during the Mozambican War of Independence (1964–1974). As a Portuguese colony, Mozambique was among the last colonies in Africa to be decolonized. While the French and British empires had begun to dissolve, the Salazar dictatorship made no move to leave Africa, but rather began to further expand control over its colonies. This prompted nationalists in the colonies of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique to take up arms to fight for independence. In the case of Mozambique, the dominant movement was FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, Mozambique Liberation Front), which had set up its headquarters in neighboring Tanganyika.

The Mozambican War of Independence was in many ways a typical guerrilla war. The Portuguese forces responded to FRELIMO's Maoist-inspired insurgency with an extensive resettlement program aimed at preventing contacts between the nationalists and the population on whose support FRELIMO depended. The outbreak of the war left non-combatants with basically three "options," all of which required people to migrate and change their previous way of life: people could 1) "accept" their resettlement to one of the Portuguese strategic villages (the *aldeamentos*), 2) flee abroad, or 3) move to remote and sparsely populated woodlands of the region, where FRELIMO had set up its bases and which the movement began to call its "liberated zones."

The focus of my chapter lies on the experiences of the people that "chose" this third option. These people faced constant persecution by Portuguese forces who sought to force them into the *aldeamentos*, using a scorched earth policy. By analyzing people's experiences of this persecution, my chapter attempts to contribute to our understanding of processes of persecution by focusing on the perspective of the persecuted. In addition, it seeks to expand our knowledge of the

Note: This chapter builds on research conducted as part of my dissertation project, which was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (funding scheme n° 162216).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-007

history FRELIMO's "liberated zones." Those zones played a crucial role in FRELIMO's propaganda and nation-building project, but have received little serious attention from scholars so far. Much of what we know about them is "clouded in official myth"[1] and still strongly influenced by FRELIMO's "liberation narrative."[2]

In what follows, I will first present the research background and my sources, give an overview of the Mozambican War of Independence, and then analyze the war experiences of the people in those so-called "liberated zones."

Background of the present research

This chapter grew out of my PhD research, in which I examined the history of a village on the eastern shore of Lake Malawi from the time of the village's formation in the 19th century to the present. The period of the Mozambican War of Independence was part of the analysis in my thesis, but my focus was on those people who had been resettled, as the majority of the village's population ended up in one of the Portuguese strategic villages. In this chapter, I will focus on the experiences of the people living outside these villages. The geographical focus of my chapter is on the province[3] of Niassa (see Map 1).

As far as sources are concerned, this is challenging terrain since the people at the heart of this analysis generally left no written records. Interviews are a possible way to fill this gap. I have used them extensively for my research.[4] However, the use of oral history is hampered by two important limitations. First, and specific

1 Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London: Hurst, 1997), 31.

2 In some ways, the nationalist perspective has recently even been reinforced by books published in Mozambique: Joel das Neves Tembe, ed., *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*, vol. 1 (Maputo: Ministério dos Combatentes, 2014); David F. Ndegue, *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*, vol. 1 (Maputo: JV, 2009). But at the same time, the studies of Jonna Katto and Liazzat Bonate on female combatants of FRELIMO and that of Sayaka Funada-Classen on the district of Maúa have offered more critical perspectives. See Jonna Katto, *Women's Lived Landscapes of War and Liberation in Mozambique: Bodily Memory and the Gendered Aesthetics of Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2019); Liazzat Bonate, "Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado," *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 230–256; Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division, trans. Masako Osada* (Somerset West: African Minds, 2013).

3 Note that I am using the post-colonial terminology for administrative units.

4 My own interviews are identified by PA for "Personal Archives." Apart from my own interviews, I have used interviews from two other collections, namely the one of *Museu Local de Metangula* (MLM) and of the *Secção Oral* of the *Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique* (AHM).

Map 1: Mozambique at the time of the Independence War, source: NordNordWest, CC BY-SA 3.0.

to this analysis, my fieldwork did not focus on the experiences of those people in or near FRELIMO bases. Rather, I captured the experiences of these people as a by-product of my research. Secondly, the reach of oral history is limited by the large temporal difference between the moment of the experience and the moment of the "retelling" of that experience. In the case of the Mozambican War of Independence, we are confronted with the problem that the "memories" are not only filtered through more than 35 years of life experience, but they are also influenced

by the experience of another much deadlier war – the Mozambican Civil War – and the politics of memory of an (at least formerly) authoritarian government that has always made great efforts to influence the reading and interpretation of the war's events.[5]

I have worked extensively in the archives of the colonial state and of its military and intelligence services. The colonial documentation on the war is nowadays "entirely" accessible for consultation.[6] The situation is different in the case of the archives of the Mozambican nationalists. While FRELIMO has recently begun to adopt a more liberal policy regarding access to its party archives, I have not yet been able to benefit from this change. The future will tell in what way this documentation will improve our knowledge of the social history of the war and the history of those areas that were "controlled" by the nationalists. Recent publications of scholars who have been able to access this data suggest that they were able to consult mostly propagandistic sources.[7]

Although the available sources hardly allow for a "thick description" of people's lives during the war, they do allow for the identification of certain general patterns of their experiences.

The course of the war in a nutshell

FRELIMO was founded in Dar es Salaam in 1962 and began its armed struggle against the colonial state from its headquarters in Tanganyika (renamed Tanzania in the same year) in 1964. Initially, FRELIMO was able to make significant advances in the areas bordering Tanzania, namely in the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa. In the first phase of the war, FRELIMO was very successful

5 On this point, see: João Paulo Borges Coelho, "Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes," *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 10–19.

6 In this chapter I have used documents from the following colonial archives: *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (ANTT), Lisbon; *Arquivo da Defesa Nacional* (ADN), Paço de Arcos; *Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique* (AHM), Maputo; Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (AHD), Lisbon; Arquivo Histórico da Marinha (AHMar), Lisbon; *Arquivo Histórico Militar* (AHMil), Lisbon; *Arquivo Permanente do Gabinete do Governador de Niassa* (APGGN), Lichinga; *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (AHU), Lisbon. Additional sources come from the archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (AUNHCR) in Geneva and the archives of the Catholic missionary society *Instituto Missões Consolata* (AIMC).

7 See for example Jonna Katto, "Landscapes of Belonging: Female Ex-Combatants Remembering the Liberation Struggle in Urban Maputo," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 3 (2014): 539–557.

in garnering the support of the population in the form of recruits, food, and information. In large parts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, the Portuguese authorities lost control of the population, which sought refuge in the sparsely populated woodlands of the region where FRELIMO had established its bases.

As a consequence of FRELIMO's successes, the Portuguese military launched *the* paradigmatic counterinsurgency approach of the time, which combined the resettlement of rural residents with a promise to promote their lives economically and socially.[8] As part of this resettlement program, nearly one million people were relocated or "regrouped" into *aldeamentos*.[9] The politico-military success of the Portuguese counterinsurgency approach is highly contested in the literature, although in reality few empirically grounded studies have been conducted.[10] My own research suggests that the Portuguese forces were initially fairly effective in containing the insurgency in the northern parts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, and, as we will see in the next section, also in recovering portions of the population that had sided with FRELIMO at the beginning of the war. Internal documents of the Portuguese military and intelligence services suggest that the situation toward the end of the war was still favorable to their "cause" in Niassa but was deteriorating in Cabo Delgado and especially in Tete, where FRELIMO had successfully established a new front in 1971.[11]

8 For the paradigmatic nature of this approach, see Moritz Feichtinger, "'A Great Reformatory': Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late Colonial Kenya and Algeria, 1952–63," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, 1 (2017): 5; Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 5.

9 For a reliable number of the inhabitants of the *aldeamentos* in August 1973, see Amélia Neves de Souto, *Caetano e o Ocaso do "Império": Administração e Guerra Colonial em Moçambique durante o Marcelismo (1968–1974)* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2007), 231.

10 Studies on the Portuguese counter-insurgency approach include: Andreas Stucki, "Frequent Deaths: The Colonial Development of Concentration Camps Reconsidered, 1868–1974," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, 3 (2018): 305–326; Brendan F. Jundanian, "Resettlement Programs: Counterinsurgency in Mozambique," *Comparative Politics* 6, 4 (1974): 519–540; Thomas H. Henriksen, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964–1974 (*Westport: Greenwood, 1983); João Paulo Borges Coelho, "Protected Villages and Communal Villages in the Mozambican Province of Tete (1968–1982): A History of State Resettlement Policies, Development and War" (PhD thesis, University of Bradford, 1993); John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974* (Westport: Greenwood, 1997).

11 For examples, see: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 18, f. 331–342: DGS SUBVC, "Relatório de Situação do Dist do Niassa: Período de 30ABR a 15MAI73" (Vila Cabral, May 19, 1973); ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 17, fls. 32–49: DGS/SUBT, "Relatório de Situação Nº. 8/73: Período de 16 a 30ABR73" (Tete, May 3, 1973); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, Cx. 33 (NT 8966), f. 209–243: Delegação de DGS em Lourenço Marques, "Situação Actual em Moçambique, Março de 1974," Secreto (Lourenço Marques, March 4, 1974).

For most of its duration, the war was largely confined to remote and very sparsely populated areas of the colony.[12] Accounts that claim that FRELIMO was able to oust the colonial state from these areas usually ignore the fact that the state's presence in these areas had always been very weak, if not non-existent.[13] The colonial presence in these areas was in fact in many cases not weakened but strengthened as a result of the outbreak of the war. It was not until the establishment of the Tete front that FRELIMO was able to move into economically important areas of Mozambique.

While the war in Mozambique – along with the simultaneous wars in Angola and Guinea-Bissau – had a profound impact on political developments in Portugal, it must be underlined that the war was ultimately decided not militarily but politically, when the Carnation Revolution in Portugal paved the way for Mozambican Independence under the leadership of FRELIMO.

Analysis of people's experiences in the "liberated zones" of Niassa

My analysis of the war-time experiences of the population living in the so-called "liberated zones" of Niassa results in the following six main observations (discussed in more detail below):

1. Most people did not live outside the control of Portuguese forces for very long. In Niassa, the number of civilians living in FRELIMO's "liberated zones" was in fact tiny at the end of the war. Most of the people who had initially moved into the woodlands fled either abroad or to the Portuguese-controlled *aldeamentos*.
2. Hunger was the main reason for the rapid abandonment of the "liberated zones." Procuring food was the principal preoccupation of the people during their stay in the woodlands. People's difficulties in organizing food were exacerbated by the deliberate scorched earth policy of the Portuguese military, which aimed at destroying every means of subsistence outside the areas controlled by the colonial state.

12 Before the war, Niassa province had a population density of about three inhabitants per km².
13 For such misleading portrayals, see Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence*, 22; Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), 86.

3. The constant persecution by the Portuguese forces meant that life outside of the control of the Portuguese forces was very unstable. Constant migration was the consequence. This left little room for the alleged "revolutionary" reorganization of society in FRELIMO's "liberated zones."
4. Many of the persecuted were not captured by the persecutors but presented themselves to the Portuguese authorities.
5. Direct killings and direct physical violence by Portuguese forces were not as present as one might assume. Rather, Portuguese forces started to avoid such violence in the course of the war.
6. The persecution by Portuguese forces did not create a stronger bond between the people living under FRELIMO. On the contrary, it contributed to the spread of discord among them.

1 A short-term experience for the majority

Most people did not live outside the control of Portuguese forces within Niassa for long. In fact, the number of people living in FRELIMO's "liberated zones" of Niassa at the end of the war was tiny. Propagandistic maps of FRELIMO's "liberated zones" usually suggest a gradual growth of the territory of these zones.[14] These maps not only ignore the relative unimportance of territorial control in this war, but also hide the more dynamic nature of the number of people living in and next to FRELIMO bases during the war. Indeed, a closer look at population statistics and movements reveals that the number of people living in areas outside the control of Portuguese forces peaked shortly after the outbreak of the war, but then declined abruptly.

At least in the case of Niassa, living in areas outside the direct control of Portuguese forces was a short-term experience for most people, considering the overall duration of the war. This can be illustrated by the developments in the district of Lago, one of the areas most affected by the war. Here, most people left their villages in mid-1965 to live near FRELIMO bases in what had been sparsely populated woodlands. The desertion of the former villages was so complete that a Portuguese intelligence report from October 1965 noted that "almost the entire population has fled into the bush and is explicitly helping the terrorists."[15] However, by November, just before the rainy season began, many of the refugees

14 For an example, see Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique*, 33.

15 All translations are mine. ADN, FO/F002/SC002/38: Anexo "C" (Contra-Informação) ao PERINTREP N°. 94 (Lourenço Marques: QG/RMM/2a REP, October 4, 1965), 2.

had already again returned to the Portuguese sphere of control, and others had fled abroad, to Tanzania or Malawi.[16] More did so in the months and years to come. In 1971, the number of those people living inside the district but outside the control of Portuguese forces was most probably already less than five percent of the district's pre-war population. Just under 50 percent of the district's pre-war population lived in *aldeamentos*, while the majority of the rest was in exile either in Malawi or Tanzania.[17]

As for the province of Niassa as a whole, the clear majority of the population – more than ¾ of the total – continued to live or returned to live in areas controlled by the Portuguese forces. Of those who remained outside the Portuguese control until the end of the war, the majority fled abroad. A Portuguese secret police report from 1971 estimated the provincial population outside Portuguese control to be 40,000 outside the colony and 10,000 inside.[18] In 1972, an internal report of PIDE/DGS estimated the number of non-combatants living under the control of FRELIMO inside Niassa even lower, at a mere 2,900. The same report gave the number of FRELIMO combatants in Niassa at 920. This compares to a population of 291,935 living under the control of Portuguese forces.[19]

16 ADN, FO/F002/SC002/57: PERINTREP N°. 01 (Nampula: COMZIN/2a REP, November 22, 1965), 14; ADN, FO/F002/SC002/57: PERINTREP N°. 03 (Nampula: COMZIN/2a REP, December 6, 1965), 18–19; Luís S. de Baêna, Fuzileiros. Factos e Feitos na Guerra de África. 1961/1974, vol. 4: Crónica dos Feitos de Moçambique (Lisboa: INAPA, 2006), 41; AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 032/MO: Sérgio Zilhão, "Analise dos Acontecimentos do Niassa," Confidencial (Metangula, February 10, 1966).

17 For the numbers of those under Portuguese control throughout the war, see: AHM, GGM XX, Cx. 2097: Nuno Egídio, "O Niassa: Relatório Anual de 1970" (Vila Cabral, February 28, 1971), 192; AHM, ISANI, Cx. 99: Mário Freiria, "Relatório da Inspecção Ordinária a Circunscrição do Lago 1971" (Vila Cabral, July 4, 1971), 3; APGGN, 1A: Mapa do Movimento da População da Circunscrição do Lago, Decembro 1973 (Augusto Cardoso, January 12, 1974); APGGN, 1A: Mapa do Movimento da População da Circunscrição do Lago, Julho 1974 (Augusto Cardoso, August 9, 1974); AHU, Biblioteca, L9560: José Guardado Moreira, "Governo do Distrito do Niassa: Relatório do ano de 1972" (Vila Cabral, May 31, 1973), 158. For the situation in the areas outside the control of Portuguese forces, see: AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, "Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71" (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971).

18 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), DSI, NT: 7950, pt. 9, fls. 1–16: Relatório de Situação: Distrito de Niassa, 1971, 13.

19 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 9–10. See as well: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, Cx. 33 (NT 8966), f. 209–243: Delegação de DGS em Lourenço Marques, "Situação Actual em Moçambique, Março de 1974," Secreto (Lourenço Marques, March 4, 1974); AHMil, FO/63/7/938/3: J. F. Gravito, "Estudo da Situação N° 01 DO SECTOR „A" DA R.M.M." (Vila Cabral, 1969), 83.

Similar dynamics and patterns can be observed elsewhere. In Cabo Delgado, for example, the official population shortly before the war was 617,514. Two years after the beginning of the war, only 452,194 remained under Portuguese control, a loss of almost 27 percent of the population.[20] By 1972, however, Cabo Delgado's population under Portuguese control had grown again to 560,000 according to a PIDE/DGS report.[21]

Certainly, these figures should be taken with caution, especially when it comes to the population outside the control of Portuguese forces.[22] Still, there is no doubt that they reflect the general tendency correctly. In my eyes, there is no convincing basis for the claim that internal documents of the Portuguese military and security apparatus systematically misrepresented the realities on the ground in one direction. Furthermore, these figures also fit the statistics of Niassa's post-colonial authorities, who reported the number of post-war returnees from Tanzania and Malawi at 50,000 in 1976.[23] And last but not least, they perfectly reflect the absence of people in those so-called "liberated zones" after the war. As different accounts suggest, those who lived there after the war were mostly post-war returnees from Tanzania.[24]

20 AHD, MU/GM/GNP/RNP/0230/04537: Boletim de Difusão de Informações N.º [??]12/66, Confidencial (SCCIM, June 14, 1966).

21 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 4–17: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo I: Cabo Delgado (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 5.

22 For example, the 1972 report certainly underestimated the number of those living abroad, estimating them at a mere 13,500. See: ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 10.

23 APGGN, 1A: Relatório Político-Militar da Provincia do Niassa (Lichinga, March 24, 1976), 5. According to another report, there were even more than 67,000 returnees. This higher number might point to the inaccuracy of Portuguese pre-war census data or population growth. See: AUNHCR, Box 1083, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.GEN.MOZ[b], f. 177: Sérgio Vieira de Mello, "Memorandum 460/MOZ/77: Report on Mission to the Provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado from 4 to 13 July 1977" (Maputo, July 14, 1977), 15.

24 APGGN, 1A: Estudo e Projecto de Quatro Aldeias Comunais no Niassa: Msauíze, Mataca, M'kalapa e Chissindo, 1976, 82–83; AUNHCR, Box 1124, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.TAN.MOZ[b]: H. Idoyaga, "Memorandum HCR/MOZ/313/75: Excerpts Concerning Returned Mozambican Refugees from Speeches by Mozambican Minister of Interior, Mr. A. Guebuza" (Geneva, November 20, 1975); AUNHCR, Box 1083, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.GEN.MOZ[b], f. 177: Sérgio Vieira de Mello, "Memorandum 460/MOZ/77: Report on Mission to the Provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado from 4 to 13 July 1977" (Maputo, July 14, 1977), 7–8. See as well: AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 10: Germano Ntaula and Aly Saidy, N.º 162–163, Entrevista com o responsável da comissão de aldeias comunais (Mavago, Niassa), interview by José Negrão, 1980.

2 Procuring food for survival as principal preoccupation

In Niassa, the main reason people left the forest areas relatively quickly was their difficulty in obtaining food for their survival. In almost all accounts of life outside the control of Portuguese forces, lack of food figures most prominently.[25] Food-wise, most people of the region relied on subsistence production. At the beginning of the war, many of the refugees kept returning to their villages to collect food from their fields. They usually did this at night to avoid detection by Portuguese forces.[26] People lived relatively well as long as they had access to their old fields or the old fields of others. The fact that many returned to the Portuguese sphere of influence just before the rainy season began is a clear indication of their need to replant their fields. Those who tried to stay longer in the woodlands were sooner or later confronted with hunger. Or, as one interviewee put it:

> At first, we ate what we had left, what we had grown in our fields [. . .] When we saw that this food was getting used up, that's when the hunger started to hurt.[27]

Many of those who lived longer outside the control of Portuguese forces told how they had to eat *mipama* (tubers of a bitter kind of wild yam) for survival.[28] Some also recounted how they stole food from fields of others who lived under

25 PA, I051: interview with P0481 (♀, 1942) (Nkholongue, August 26, 2013), min 00:26:06-00:38:27; PA, I150: interview with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:14:30-00:20:33; PA, I100: interview with P0025 (♀, 1948) (Nkholongue, February 22, 2016), min 00:01:21-00:01:48; PA, I043: interview with P1148 (♂, 1960) (Malango, August 17, 2013), min 00:03:12-00:08:26; PA, I054: interview with P0554 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:08:44-00:09:09; PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:04:38-00:08:12; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 41–43: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Saide Adamo" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 10: Germano Ntaula and Aly Saidy, N.º 162–163, Entrevista com o responsável da comissão de aldeias comunais (Mavago, Niassa), interview by José Negrão, 1980, 6–7; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973).

26 PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:07:07-00:08:12; PA, I062: interview with P0713 (♂, 1944) (Nkholongue, August 30, 2013), min 00:19:56-00:22:24; PA, I085: interview with P0147 (♀, ~1928) (Nkholongue, September 9, 2013), min 00:05:35-00:09:46; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966).

27 PA, I150: interview with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:15:19-00:16:27.

28 PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:07:07-00:08:12; PA, I157: interview with P1455 (♂, 1952) (Tulo, June 18, 2016), min 00:21:55-00:22:25; PA, I051: interview with P0481 (♀, 1942) (Nkholongue, August 26, 2013), min 00:32:24-00:34:42; PA, I150: inter-

the control of the Portuguese forces.[29] According to a female FRELIMO veteran interviewed by Jonna Katto, there were times when people "only drank a type of tea made with leaves from the bush, just to fill their stomachs with something."[30]

Attempts to open new fields in the forests were often thwarted by the Portuguese forces, who began to systematically destroy any means of subsistence that they found in areas outside the *aldeamentos*. Foodstuffs were either destroyed or taken to the *aldeamentos*, plants were either harvested or uprooted, and huts were burned down. In this way, the Portuguese forces wanted to "create insecurity among the refugee population by gradually depriving them of their means of living," as the operational instructions of the military battalion BCaç 1891 stated.[31] Internal manuals of the Portuguese military described how different types of crops could be effectively destroyed,[32] and the enumeration of the quantity of food and extent of fields destroyed became an important part of most reports of military operations.[33]

Portuguese persecution complicated not only food production and collection, but also food preparation. The *mipama* tubers, for example, required a long cooking time. But accounts from people who lived next to FRELIMO bases show that people were often able to make fires only at night or in the very early morning

view with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:15:19-00:16:27. See as well: Tembe, História da Luta de Libertação Nacional, 529.

29 PA, I095: interview with P1453 (♂, ~1947), P1506 (♀, ~1950) (Malango, January 28, 2016), min 00:50:09-00:50:47; PA, I100: interview with P0025 (♀, 1948) (Nkholongue, February 22, 2016), min 00:01:21-00:01:48. See as well: AHMil, DIV/2/7/55/4: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906. História de Unidade, n.d., II–26; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 10, f. 671: DGS/SUBVC, "Relatório N.º 2782/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO/Roubo de Produtos Alimentares," August 23, 1972.

30 Jonna Katto, *"Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter": Life Memories of the Women Who Fought for Mozambique's Independence in Northern Niassa* (Tallinna: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda, 2018), 222.

31 AHMil, DIV/2/7/79/1: Batalhão de Caçadores 1891. História de Unidade (Vila Junqueiro, August 8, 1968), II–85.

32 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Foxtrot: Processos de Actuação na Contra-Guerrilha do Niassa, n.d., 5.

33 For examples, see: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: Comando do DFE 5, "Relatório de Missão de Intervenção do DFE5 Nº 47: 'Operação Refractário,'" Confidencial (Augusto Cardoso, October 21, 1967); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303/MO: José Teixeira, "Relatório de Operações Nº 32 (Operação 'Chavedouro'), de 210650 a 211700 Novembro de 1966" (Metangula: DFE 5, n.d.); AHMar, Coloredo 309-A/MO: Relatório de Missão de Intervenção Nº 13 (Operação 'Pancada') (Cobué: DFE 5, August 10, 1969); AHMar, Coloredo 315/MO: Relatório de Missão de Intervenção: Operação "Valentina 2" (Cobué: DFE 9, March 24, 1972).

hours to avoid detection by Portuguese forces.[34] The lack of food, coupled with lack of clothes and proper shelter, also led to a high incidence of disease.[35]

3 Forced to be always on the move

Another important element found in many accounts of people who lived in "liberated zones" is that of mobility. During their stay in those zones, most people were forced to constantly move on to new locations. Many of these relocations were made on the orders of FRELIMO fighters because they feared an attack by Portuguese forces. Relocations were for example often carried out after a Portuguese aircraft had flown over a camp. Other relocations were necessary when Portuguese ground troops were approaching.[36]

Examples of this degree of mobility can be found among the testimonies of people who fled from the district capital of Metangula in August 1965 and returned there again before the rainy reason. Thus, a 32-year-old man stated that his group (including his wife and three children) had stayed at the first location for only 14 days. They had built temporary houses and a certain kind of ditches in order to hide from Portuguese aircraft. Nevertheless, they were ordered by FRELIMO soldiers to leave the place after a Portuguese aircraft had flown over it. They remained at their new location for about a month, when an attack by Portuguese soldiers forced them to move on again. This time the group was split up and dif-

34 PA, I049: interview with P0267 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 23, 2013), min 00:12:06-00:15:55; PA, I054: interview with P0554 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:09:03-00:11:47.

35 For the numerous cases of sick people, see for example: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Window Amade (Vila Cabral, October 25, 1973), 2; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Paulo Tarua (Vila Cabral, October 11, 1973); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, "Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Lufame Saide," September 5, 1967. For the lack of clothing, see for example: AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 20/68 (BArt N.° 2838)" (Metangula, January 15, 1969); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Henriques Manuel Viegas da Silva, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 06/68 (CArt N.° 2326)" (Maniamba, June 19, 1968).

36 PA, I049: interview with P0267 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 23, 2013), min 00:22:20-00:29:42; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 41–43: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Saide Adamo" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, "Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Jaime Saíde," October 21, 1967; Ndegue, A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa, 1:108.

ferent people went to different locations. The informant stayed for about another month at a new location when another attack by Portuguese forces forced him again to relocate. He stayed at this fourth location for about 14 days before deciding to flee back to the Portuguese sphere of influence.[37]

While other FRELIMO bases certainly promised a bit more permanence, at least in Niassa few seem to have survived for very long,[38] and most were what an Italian missionary described as "mobile bases which are constantly being destroyed."[39] The constant forced relocation of FRELIMO bases in Niassa is also confirmed by Portuguese intelligence reports, which often speak of the *last* location of a FRELIMO base and at times even explicitly indicate the last date of its destruction.[40] To avoid detection by Portuguese forces, it also happened that FRELIMO soldiers prohibited people from building proper shelters, especially during the dry season.[41]

4 Returnees, not captives

In Niassa, the majority of people seem to have come to the *aldeamentos* of their 'own' accord, not because they were captured by Portuguese troops. This also means that there were fewer "direct" encounters between the persecutors and the persecuted than one might expect. In many cases, people were able to escape before Portuguese forces reached them. The Portuguese forces were aware that their mere presence in the region of a FRELIMO base could be beneficial to their objectives. The instructions of "Operation Gáveas,"[42] for example, stated that if it were not possible to kill or arrest enemies and capture fugitives, the troops should concentrate on making their presence felt in the region, forcing

37 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966).

38 See as well the testimonies of female FRELIMO veterans interviewed by Jonna Katto: Katto, "*Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter*," 27–28, 39, 45, 50–51, 57, 62, 73, 78, 99, 153, 158, 179, 191.

39 AIMC, VIII-7, 4, N. 23: Relazione della Delegazione del Niassa (Torino, May 10, 1969), 12.

40 For examples see: ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972); AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, "Anexo D (Conjunto de Fichas de Bases IN) ao Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71" (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971).

41 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973), 2–3; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Suena Mitrula (Vila Cabral, July 16, 1973).

42 That is, "Operation Topsails."

the enemy to leave and creating disorientation and insecurity among the population, which would provoke them to discredit the promises of the "enemy."[43]

The numerical importance of this "indirect" way of bringing people back into the Portuguese sphere of control can also be demonstrated by statistics. Table 1 shows the number of people "recuperated" and "lost" by Portuguese forces in the year 1971 in the different military regions of Mozambique. As is visible, the vast majority of the people "recuperated" in Niassa (Sectors A and E) was not captured, but returned to the Portuguese sphere of control of their 'own' volition.

Table 1: Population movements in Mozambique from the perspective of Portuguese forces in 1971. Source: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 060/MO.

	"Recuperated"		"Lost"		Balance
	Returnees	Captives	Escapes	Abductions	
Sector A (Niassa Ocidental)	1,089	77	42	145	+979
Sector E (Niassa Oriental)	557	0	3	24	+530
Sector B (Cabo Delgado)	183	220	158	180	+65
Sector F (Tete)	2,905	2,093	3,597	186	+1,215
Sector D (Moçambique)	1,390	0	0	7	+1,383

5 The relative absence of direct killings and direct physical violence

Given the Portuguese destruction policy and Portugal's reputation as an extremely brutal colonial power, it may come as a surprise that descriptions of direct killings and direct physical violence were rare in the oral accounts of the war presented to me. Various interviewees even explicitly emphasized the non-violence of Portuguese forces in this respect. One interviewee plainly stated that the "[colonial] government did not allow a soldier kill people in the bush. It did not allow it."[44]

43 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: José Teixeira, "Ordem de Operações Nº 2: Operação Gáveas" (Augusto Cardoso: DFE 5, September 21, 1967), 3. See as well: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 045/MO: Comando Naval de Moçambique, "IOMOC 16: Instruções Operacionais para Protecção, Recuperação e Internamento de Populações," Confidencial (Lourenço Marques, October 28, 1965), A6–7.

44 PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:39:12-00:39:52. For other similar accounts see: PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 01:03:06-01:04:23; MLM, 028: interview with A. A., Portuguese translation of the Chinyanja

While this might seem surprising at first glance, it fits perfectly with the approach that the colonial government began to adopt after the outbreak of the war. Internal reports and guidelines show that the Portuguese military operating in Niassa was well aware that the repressive actions of their troops after the initial appearance of FRELIMO had contributed to pushing people to flee into the forests and to side with FRELIMO.[45] They also reveal that they later strove to implement much of the psychological priorities of counterinsurgency warfare formulated in theory and propaganda. Killings were to be prevented, torture of prisoners was judged to be counter-productive.[46] Along the shores of Lake Malawi, even the firing of shots was to be limited. When people were running away from Portuguese troops, it was considered preferable for psychological reasons "to let them escape rather than shoot."[47] Portuguese military commanders repeatedly praised the discipline of their troops in this regard and positively highlighted operations in which the Portuguese had fired not a single shot despite being attacked by FRELIMO.[48] As an incentive to prevent killings, the Portuguese military began to pay fixed bonuses to its troops for every armed guerrilla brought into the *aldea-*

transcript (M'chepa, June 28, 2007); Funada-Classen, The Origins of War in Mozambique, 322–23; MLM, 005: interview with J. M. B., transcript Chinyanja (Messumba, June 19, 2007), 3.

45 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 6; AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 045/MO: Comando Naval de Moçambique, "IOMOC 16: Instruções Operacionais para Protecção, Recuperação e Internamento de Populações," Confidencial (Lourenço Marques, October 28, 1965), p. A-2.

46 AHMar, Coloredo 309/MO: António Tierno Bagulho, "Comando Naval de Moçambique ao Comando da Defesa Martima dos Portos do Lago e ao Comando da Defesa Maritima do Porto de Porto Amélia" (Nampula, July 16, 1969), 2; AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 9–10. See as well: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: Comando do DFE 5, "Relatório de Missão de Intervenção do DFE5 N° 47: 'Operação Refractário,'" Confidencial (Augusto Cardoso, October 21, 1967), 4.

47 AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 20/68 (BArt N.° 2838)" (Metangula, January 15, 1969).

48 AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 17/68 (CArt N.° 2325)" (Metangula, November 21, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 123, n.° 2: Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 21 (CCaç 1794) (Macaloge, March 26, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Int° Martinho de Carvalho Leal, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 9 (CArt N.° 2324)" (Metangula, December 16, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.° 2, p.° 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, "Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.° 15/68 (BArt N.° 2838)" (Metangula, November 19, 1968), 68.

mentos alive.[49] According to my interviewees, this bonus was also paid for the capture of unarmed individuals.[50]

This observation does not mean that killings and torture stopped occurring altogether. But the documents show that Portuguese forces did indeed strive to use violence in a more targeted manner and to refrain from certain "proceedings" called "inhumane" in one report.[51] This change in policy can be even found in the reports of the PIDE/DGS, Portugal's notorious secret police.[52] In 1969, for example, a PIDE/DGS officer from Niassa called for the replacement of a local administrator because of his mistreatment and torture of people returning from "liberated zones," which, according to the officer, was "an inconvenient and inopportune procedure in light of the policy we are all engaged in."[53] A similar observation can be made in the case of the massacre of Wiriyamu of December 1972, certainly the most infamous act of mass-violence committed by Portuguese forces during the war.[54] For, PIDE/DGS criticized the conduct of Operation "Marosca," the operation that led to the massacre, immediately after the operation and thus long before it became public knowledge in mid-1973. The respective report explicitly

49 Official directives from the Portuguese Ministry of Defense for the payment of this bonus were only issued in July 1972, but the bonus had been introduced and paid earlier, probably beginning in early 1971. See: AHMil, FO/63/21/961/2, doc. 26: Nota N.º 287/70: Prémios Por Material Capturado e Aumento Do Prémio Por Captura Ou Apreensão de Minas, October 19, 1970; AHMil, FO/63/21/961/3, doc. 35: Informação N.º 193/H: Prémios de Actividade Operacional Das NF, May 22, 1972; Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA), Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro I (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012), 120, 197. For the discussion around the introduction of this bonus, see as well: AHMil, FO/63/21/961/2: COM SEC "A" ao CEM/QG/AV (3a.REP): Prémios por material capturado (N.º 2856/c-70, P.º 505.01.05), December 21, 1970.

50 PA, I117: interview with P1458 (♂, ~1945) (Micundi, April 20, 2016), min 01:09:05-01:10:45; PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:39:12-00:43:01; PA, I119: interview with P0855 (♂, 1954) (Malango, April 21, 2016), min 00:35:00-00:36:12.

51 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 5.

52 The acronym PIDE stands for *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (International and State Defense Police). It was transformed into the *Direcção-Geral de Segurança* (DGS, Directorate-General of Security) in 1969.

53 APGGN, to Administrador da Circunscrição de Sanga, N.º 140/SEC/GAB, April 15, 1969. For other examples, see: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, fls. 18–24: DGS Moçambique, "Informação N.º 1/73/DI/IS" (Lourenço Marques, June 1, 1973), 7; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 30, f. 285–289: DGS Moçambique, "Informação N.º 2/74/DI/IS: Acontecimentos da Beira" (Lourenço Marques, January 26, 1974); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, fls. 32–38: DGS Moçambique, "Análise da Situação Geral CDelgado," January 16, 1974, 6–7.

54 Wiriyamu is in Tete.

complained about the massacre (it was referred to as such in the report) of about 100 civilians in Wiriyamu ("Wiliamo" in the report).[55]

Both testimonies from interviews and archival material show that the Portuguese forces generally became eager to gain the trust of the local population.[56] Behavior that was not conducive to this goal should be prevented. Thus, for example, a Portuguese settler was arrested in Maúa in September 1969 for mistreating several "Africans" and creating insecurity among the population with "nefarious political reflexes." The Governor of Niassa asked PIDE/DGS to arrange for his departure from the province, as his residence in Niassa was considered extremely inconvenient.[57] Similarly, in 1968, the deputy administrator of Sanga district was removed because of his "inability [to relate] with the local indigenous population." The Portuguese governor considered him incapable of performing his duties because of his constant drunkenness, "especially in a province affected by the insurgency, where all our efforts are directed at gaining the trust of the population."[58]

It has to be emphasized that this change of policy was not owed to a sudden appearance of general Portuguese goodheartedness, but to the logic of safeguarding the existence of the colonial state. Thus, the Portuguese individuals just mentioned were obviously not held legally accountable for their misdeeds, but were merely removed from the 'hot zone' of the war. The logic behind this strategy also appears in a report in which the PIDE/DGS office in Beira complained in November 1973 that a Portuguese medical brigade had carried anti-cholera vaccinations into areas where people were not yet living in *aldeamentos*. It stated:

> With vaccinations in areas not controlled by our troops, we vaccinate people [while] not discriminating whether they are on our side or on the side of the enemy, which is very humanitarian but maybe not the best way to contribute to the surrender [(*apresentação*)] of the people and their withdrawal from the control of the enemy.[59]

55 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cxa.13, fls. 128–151: DGS/SUBT, "Relatório de Situação N°. 24/72: Período de 16 a 31DEZ72" (Tete, January 2, 1973), 1–2.

56 AHMil, DIV/2/7/55/4: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906. História de Unidade, n.d., II–97; AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 11: Assumane Ntaúla and Chimanje Amido, N.° 119–125, Entrevista de Grupo em Nkalapa (Mavago, Niassa), interview by Gerhard Liesegang, Teresa Oliveira, and Mucojuane Mainga Vicente, July 13, 1981; John Paul, *Mozambique: Memoirs of a Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 190–191; Andreas Zeman, *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa Since the 19th Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming 2023), chap. 7.

57 APGGN, QJ: Carta N.° 283 C/GAB: Nuno de Melo Egídio (Governador do Niassa) ao Chefe da Subdelegação da Polícia International e de Defesa do Estado Vila Cabral (Vila Cabral, September 15, 1969).

58 APGGN, QJ: Carta N.° 268 C/GAB: Nuno de Melo Egídio (Governador do Niassa) ao Director Provincial dos Serviços de Administração Civil (Vila Cabral, September 2, 1969).

59 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 28, f. 677–679: DGS SUBR, "Relatório N.° 6107/73/DI/2/SC: Vacinaçáo C/Cólera," November 27, 1973.

6 The myth of unity

Previous research has often highlighted that Portuguese forces exploited ethnic, regionalist and religious tensions within FRELIMO to their advantage.[60] While the exploitation of such tensions – whether real or imagined – certainly played some part in the Portuguese propaganda, it needs to be emphasized that the actual operations by Portuguese forces on the ground first and foremost aimed at producing (economic) tensions over basic necessities among those controlled by FRELIMO.

Previous literature on the war has largely ignored or underestimated the fact that the difficult living conditions led to significant conflict among the population that "lived" under FRELIMO. On the contrary, many researchers have even suggested or claimed that the "shared suffering" fostered an even stronger bond between the people.[61] Such an interpretation also forms part of FRELIMO's officially sanctioned narrative of the "liberation war."[62] While it is reasonable to assume that the bond between those who stayed in the same boat until the end of the war became stronger, such a perspective completely ignores the fact that the number of those who did so was small and that, at least in the case of Niassa, most people abandoned FRELIMO precisely because they were suffering from hunger. The situation was further complicated by the fact that FRELIMO's soldiers relied on food contributions from the population.[63]

Both testimonies from captives and returnees and accounts from interviewees leave little doubt that hunger and other deprivations led to discontent among those living in areas under FRELIMO's influence.[64] According to a Portuguese mil-

60 Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence*, 27; Edward A. Alpers, "Ethnicity, Politics, and History in Mozambique," *Africa Today* 21, 4 (1974): 39–52; Jundanian, "Resettlement Programs."

61 For examples, see: Barry Munslow, *Mozambique: The Revolution and Its Origins* (London: Longman, 1983), 94; Bertil Egerö, *Mozambique, a Dream Undone: The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975–84* (Uppsala: Nordiska afrikainstitutet, 1990), 21. This also sometimes claimed by FRELIMO veterans. See Katto, *"Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter,"* 222. See as well: Patrick Chabal, "Lusophone Africa in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, by Patrick Chabal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 20–22.

62 Bonate, "Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado," 234.

63 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Camula Mula Saide e João Saide (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973), 2.

64 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 44–47: PIDE Subdelegação VC, "Auto de Perguntas: Momade Lezuani" (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, "Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Lufame Saide," September 5, 1967.

itary report from 1970, these problems resulted in ever-deeper rifts between the "refugees" and the nationalist fighters.[65] Returnees spoke of a "climate of intrigue and mistrust."[66] But the conflicts affected not only the relationship between fighters and non-combatants but also relations between the fighters themselves. Indeed, FRELIMO suffered greatly from numerous desertions in Niassa.[67] Most of my interviewees who had joined FRELIMO as fighters left the movement relatively early in the course of the war.[68]

It has been argued that the Portuguese policy of resettlement and scorched earth backfired on the colonial state.[69] My findings from Niassa do not support such an argument. Rather, they show that the Portuguese forces were fairly successful in spreading discord among the people living under the control of FRELIMO. The fact that many of those who moved into the *aldeamentos* began to support the military efforts of the colonial state as guides, militias and soldiers further contributed to growing animosities between the people.[70] The extent of the discord is also evident from the resentment FRELIMO officials expressed after the war towards both war-time deserters and civilians who had fled abroad. Deserters, for example, were sent in large numbers to re-education camps,[71] and returnees from abroad were reminded of their "vices," as shown in this excerpt recorded by an UNHCR official from a speech delivered to returnees from Tanzania in Chissindo in the second half of October 1975 by Armando Guebuza, then Mozambique's minister of the interior:

---

65 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 149/MO: Mário Tello Polléri, "Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 4/70" (Nampula, February 22, 1971), 20.

66 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: António Bonomar Namaumbo (Vila Cabral, November 13, 1973). See as well: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Relatório de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado N.º 05/73 (Olivença, June 1, 1973), 73.

67 See as well: Tembe, *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*, 530–531; João Facitela Pelembe, *Lutei pela Pátria: Memórias de um Combatente da Luta pela Libertação Nacional* (Maputo, 2012), 85–86.

68 PA, I056: interview with P1102 (♂, 1932) (Malango, August 28, 2013), min 00:40:40-00:47:20; PA, I038: interview with P1439 (♂, ~1940) (Malango, August 15, 2013), min 00:21:09-00:25:08; PA, I158: interview with P0764 (♂, 1962) (Nkholongue, June 20, 2016), min 00:07:05-00:08:21, 00:37:52-00:38:23; PA, I065: interview with P0583 (♂, 1972) (Nkholongue, September 1, 2013), min 00:04:12-00:06:47.

69 Jundanian, "Resettlement Programs," 540.

70 PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:19:28-00:20:25, 00:29:41-00:35:24; PA, I117: interview with P1458 (♂, ~1945) (Micundi, April 20, 2016), min 01:08:04-01:13:57; PA, I119: interview with P0855 (♂, 1954) (Malango, April 21, 2016); PA, I105: interview with P0242 (♂, 1945) (Malango, April 4, 2016).

71 For the files of these numerous deserters, see: APGGN, 1A: Fichas dos Desertores: Inquérito Tipo B (Desertores), n.d.

> At this meeting, there are only a few of those who participated in the war from the first day until today. [. . .] there are others who, when the war began, did not put up with the hunger, did not put up with the bombings, and then they left. [. . .] I think that all of you who did not participate in the war should applaud the population and the soldiers who participated. [. . .] You gave us extra work. [. . .] you did nothing. Therefore, now that you have come here, abandon your vices. [. . .] you, who were there in the refugee camps spent most of your time drinking, like in Mukuro; is that true or not? I know it, I passed by there and all I saw you doing was dancing.[72]

While FRELIMO had employed coercive mechanisms from the very beginning of the war,[73] I have little doubt that most people had initially supported the movement willingly. There is little doubt, however, that, at least in Niassa, the "glamour of 'freedom' as personified by FRELIMO [was quickly] wearing off" after the outbreak of the war.[74] Portuguese military reports suggest that FRELIMO's strategy of getting people on its side became more violent and repressive as the war progressed.[75] Many people found themselves increasingly caught between the guerrilla movement and the colonial state. One woman, captured by Portuguese troops in 1967, reported that the population "did not know where to go any more, being afraid of mines [. . .], the troops and the terrorists."[76]

Reports of the Portuguese military and accounts of refugees indicate that FRELIMO exercised significant physical and psychological control over the population living outside the areas controlled by the Portuguese forces, and that the level of this control increased as the war progressed. While there is evidence from the early years of the war of refugees attempting to survive largely independent

72 AUNHCR, Box 1124, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.TAN.MOZ[b]: H. Idoyaga, "Memorandum HCR/MOZ/313/75: Excerpts Concerning Returned Mozambican Refugees from Speeches by Mozambican Minister of Interior, Mr. A. Guebuza" (Geneva, November 20, 1975).

73 This included, for example, the killing of people who were considered Portuguese loyalists. For examples, see: Ndegue, *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*, 1.94; Paul, *Memoirs of a Revolution*, 115; Joan Antcliff, *Living in the Spirit* (Herefordshire: Orphans, 2004), 115; APGGN, António Gonçalves Marques, "Situação Política da Área do Lago, e Evolução dos Acontecimentos a partir do Dia Um do Janeiro de 1965 até à Presente Data" (Augusto Cardoso, October 23, 1965), 2; MLM, 003: interview with A. S., transcript Chinyanja (Micuio, June 18, 2007), 8.

74 These are the words of the Anglican missionary Joan Antcliff after a visit to the region in 1970. She had lived in Lago district from 1951 to 1965. See: Joan Antcliff, "In No Strange Land," *Lebombo Leaves* 61, 2 (1970): 35.

75 See especially: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 047/MO: Kaúlza Arriaga, "Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 3/70" (Nampula, November 25, 1970), 8–9.

76 AHMil, DIV/2/7, C. 126, n.º 16: Relatório de Acção Nº 8/67 (CCaç 1558/BCaç 1891), May 3, 1967, 2. See as well: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Maria David António (Vila Cabral, June 25, 1973).

of FRELIMO fighters,[77] there is no such evidence for the later years. Accounts of returnees clearly suggest that most of those who hesitated to flee abroad or return to the Portuguese sphere of influence did so because they were under intense pressure from FRELIMO, which, among other things, continued to successfully exploit people's fear of Portuguese forces.[78] A Portuguese military report from 1971 reflected this perspective by stating that "the majority of the population under the enemy's control was tired [of the war] but did not present themselves because of the control and constant psychological action the enemy exercised over them."[79]

Conclusion and outlook

For this chapter, I have analyzed the war-time experiences of people living in areas outside of the direct control of Portuguese forces in Niassa during the Mozambican War of Independence. My analysis has been somewhat limited as a result of the sources at my disposal. There is no doubt that more fieldwork and archival research with a specific focus on these areas would be necessary to provide a richer picture of people's lives under FRELIMO during the war. Nevertheless, I believe that the six observations presented in this chapter can help future research in asking the right questions.

As for the specific case of Mozambique, my findings challenge many of the previous narratives about these areas. This is especially true of the idea of the gradual growth of the "liberated zones" and the alleged growth of unity among people as a result of the shared suffering. My findings also allow for more light to be shed on FRELIMO's internal conflicts, which are well known at the level of its top cadres (the most prominent cases being the splits with Lazaro Nkavandame and Uria Simango),[80] but much less so at the level of its (foot) soldiers and supporters. However, to get a more complete picture of life in FRELIMO's "liberated

77 AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante João Batista Chambel, "Relatório de Acção N.º 06/68 (CArt N.º 2326)" (Maniamba, June 18, 1968).

78 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973); AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Suena Mitrula (Vila Cabral, July 16, 1973); AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Maria Adão (Vila Cabral, June 25, 1973).

79 AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, "Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71" (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971), 26.

80 For analyses of these conflicts see for example: Georgi Derluguian, "The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance: Re-Interpreting the 1968 Schism in Frelimo," in *Sure Road? National-*

zones," it would certainly be necessary to extend the research to other provinces such as Tete and Cabo Delgado, where FRELIMO was obviously more successful in fending off Portuguese persecution. And even in the case of Niassa, it would be essential to know more about the few who stayed with FRELIMO until the end of the war. But this would also include the question of whether these were in fact mostly the same people for the entire duration of the war, or whether FRELIMO in fact sustained itself in large part by constantly recruiting new people from areas that were (still) controlled by Portuguese forces.

As for the social history of persecution in general, two specific insights of my analysis seem noteworthy to me. First, this chapter has highlighted the vital importance for the persecuted to obtain food, pointing to the need to consider how much the search for food can affect social relations during times of persecutions. In this context, the chapter has demonstrated how a lack of food can create disunity among the persecuted. At first glance, this observation might seem to contrast somewhat the arguments of some other contributions in this volume, which have instead emphasized instances of sharing and solidarity.[81] However, taken together, these contributions illustrate the relevance of considering processes of social inclusion and exclusion under conditions of severe material suffering.

Second, this chapter has indicated that the perception of the persecuted as to who was the main persecutor could change over time. It has argued that many initially tried to escape Portuguese persecution, but felt increasingly pressured by FRELIMO or other fellow refugees as the war progressed. This points to the general need to consider the dynamics of the categories of persecutor and persecuted within war-time contexts.

However, reflections on the generalization of the case analyzed here are insufficient without highlighting its particularities. An important difference between my case and other types of persecution discussed in this book is that, in the case of Niassa, persecution was not linked to extermination but to a strong belief in "social engineering." The sources clearly show that the Portuguese strategy was based on the premise that people could be made to change their allegiance quickly. The general goal of the Portuguese forces was precisely not to expel or exterminate the persecuted, but to keep them in the country and even to win their "hearts and minds," even if this move to convince the local population was certainly not owed to some sudden drive to realize the older and indeed empty

isms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, ed. Eric Morier-Genoud (Leiden/Boston, 2012), 79–102.

81 See for example the contributions by Tim Cole and Masha Cerovic.

propaganda of luso-tropical racial harmony, but rather was made for reasons of state in order to safeguard the existence of the colonial state,[82] which marked an important ideological foundation for the Salazarist regime in Portugal.

Bibliography

Alpers, Edward A. "Ethnicity, Politics, and History in Mozambique." *Africa Today* 21, 4 (1974): 39–52.

Antcliff, Joan. "In No Strange Land." *Lebombo Leaves* 61, 2 (1970): 32–38.

Antcliff, Joan. *Living in the Spirit*. Herefordshire: Orphans, 2004.

Baêna, Luís S. de. *Fuzileiros. Factos e Feitos na Guerra de África. 1961/1974*. Vol. 4: Crónica dos Feitos de Moçambique. 4 vols. Lisboa: INAPA, 2006.

Bonate, Liazzat. "Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado." *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 230–256.

Borges Coelho, João Paulo. "Protected Villages and Communal Villages in the Mozambican Province of Tete (1968–1982): A History of State Resettlement Policies, Development and War." PhD thesis, University of Bradford, 1993.

Borges Coelho, João Paulo. "Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes." *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 10–19.

Cann, John P. *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974*. Westport: Greenwood, 1997.

Chabal, Patrick. "Lusophone Africa in Historical and Comparative Perspective." In *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, by Patrick Chabal, 1–134. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA). *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro I*. Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012.

Cooper, Frederick. "Routes Out of Empire." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, 2 (2017): 406–411.

Derluguian, Georgi. "The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance: Re-Interpreting the 1968 Schism in Frelimo." In *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, edited by Eric Morier-Genoud, 79–102. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012.

Egerö, Bertil. *Mozambique, a Dream Undone: The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975–84*. Uppsala: Nordiska afrikainstitutet, 1990.

Feichtinger, Moritz. "'A Great Reformatory': Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late Colonial Kenya and Algeria, 1952–63." *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, 1 (2017): 45–72.

Funada-Classen, Sayaka. *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division*. Translated by Masako Osada. Somerset West: African Minds, 2013.

82 In this regard, see as well Frederick Cooper's argument on the late colonial reforms in French West Africa: Frederick Cooper, "Routes Out of Empire," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, 2 (2017): 408.

Gerlach, Christian. *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
Hall, Margaret, and Tom Young. *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence*. London: Hurst, 1997.
Henriksen, Thomas H. *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964–1974*. Westport: Greenwood, 1983.
Isaacman, Allen, and Barbara Isaacman. *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution*. Boulder: Westview, 1983.
Jundanian, Brendan F. "Resettlement Programs: Counterinsurgency in Mozambique." *Comparative Politics* 6, 4 (1974): 519–540.
Katto, Jonna. "Landscapes of Belonging: Female Ex-Combatants Remembering the Liberation Struggle in Urban Maputo." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 3 (2014): 539–557.
Katto, Jonna. *"Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter": Life Memories of the Women Who Fought for Mozambique's Independence in Northern Niassa*. Tallinna: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda, 2018.
Katto, Jonna. *Women's Lived Landscapes of War and Liberation in Mozambique: Bodily Memory and the Gendered Aesthetics of Belonging*. London: Routledge, 2019.
Munslow, Barry. *Mozambique: The Revolution and Its Origins*. London: Longman, 1983.
Ndegue, David F. *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*. Vol. 1. Maputo: JV, 2009.
Paul, John. *Mozambique: Memoirs of a Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.
Pelembe, João Facitela. *Lutei pela Pátria: Memórias de um Combatente da Luta pela Libertação Nacional*. Maputo, 2012.
Souto, Amélia Neves de. *Caetano e o Ocaso do "Império". Administração e Guerra Colonial em Moçambique durante o Marcelismo (1968–1974)*. Porto: Afrontamento, 2007.
Stucki, Andreas. "Frequent Deaths: The Colonial Development of Concentration Camps Reconsidered, 1868–1974." *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, 3 (2018): 305–326.
Tembe, Joel das Neves, ed. *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*. Vol. 1. Maputo: Ministério dos Combatentes, 2014.
Zeman, Andreas. *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa Since the 19th Century*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming 2023.

Space

Tim Cole

Space and place: Placing everyday life during the Holocaust

That the Holocaust was enacted not simply in space, but also *through* space, is something to which geographical scholarship on the Holocaust has drawn attention.[1] The focus of this growing literature has largely been on teasing out Nazi spatiality, both in ideology and on the ground, as segregation and mass murder were imagined and implemented.[2] Drawing together some of this early work in the fifth edition of his influential *Dictionary of Human Geography*, Derek Gregory summarised a number of key elements of Nazi spatiality in his lengthy entry on the Holocaust:

> The realization of *Lebensraum* and *Entfernung* entailed at once a deterritorialization of physical space and its re-territorialization as social space. This involved the conjoint production of a series of physical and social spaces (a) from which Jews were excluded, (b) within which they were gathered and sequestered, and (c) through which they were subsequently transported to the camps. These spatial strategies . . . produced a vast genocidal archipelago.[3]

His classification of a "series of physical . . . spaces" in and through which prisoners were "gathered," assumes an individual concrete form in survivor memoirs and oral history interviews. A case in point is the late Elie Wiesel's recollections of being moved through a number of ever-restricted sites in the weeks after the German occupation of Hungary in spring 1944. Wiesel recalled how his "universe began shrinking" as "first we were supposed to leave our towns and concentrate in the larger cities. Then the towns shrank to the ghetto, and the ghetto to a house, the house to a room, the room to a cattle car . . ."[4] As I have suggested elsewhere, Wiesel's words "point to the Holocaust being experienced as a profoundly spatial event" characterised by "increasing physical concentration" and experiences of

1 See for example, Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Alberto Giordano, Anne Kelly Knowles, and Tim Cole, "Geographies of the Holocaust," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 1–17.

2 Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, eds., *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

3 Derek Gregory et al., eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009, fifth edition), 337–338. The entry on the Holocaust is written by Gregory.

4 Elie Wiesel, introduction to *The Holocaust in Hungary: Forty Years Later,* ed. Randolph L. Braham and Bela Vago (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xv.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-008

both "movement" and "stasis," although Simone Gigliotti is right to note that the current literature tends to privilege the concentratory spaces of ghettos and camps over movement to, from, and between these sites.[5]

But the need for more dynamic notions of space and place is not restricted to paying attention to movement that occurred alongside fixed sites of incarceration. As Wiesel's description of his own experience in what Gregory terms "a vast genocidal archipelago" signals, the spatiality of the Holocaust played out at multiple scales. Wiesel's experience was simultaneously,

> a story of European-wide deportation and subsequent deployment into the slave labour system where Auschwitz operated as a node in a network, a national story of Hungarian-German cooperation, a regional and local story of the deportation of Jews in the multi-ethnic borderland region of Transylvania, and the embodied gendered experience of a teenage Jewish boy within the military-industrial complex.[6]

And as I suggest elsewhere, "to do justice to Wiesel's story necessitates engaging with all of those scales at the same time."[7] This presents a narrative challenge.[8] Holocaust geographies need to grapple with how to write multi-scalar narratives of this multi-scalar event that encompassed continent-wide systemic and individual bodily experience (as well as all scales in between).[9]

Bringing Wiesel's embodied experience of a "shrinking" universe at a variety of scales into conversation with Gregory's rendering of Nazi "spatial strategies" producing "a vast genocidal archipelago" meshes with a longer-running set of historiographical and narrative concerns flagged by Saul Friedländer. He bemoaned the lack of "integrated" histories of the Holocaust that brought the paperwork of perpetrators and the voices of their victims together on the same page.[10] However, as has been the case with the wider historiography that Friedländer critiqued, the nascent literature on Holocaust geographies has tended to prioritise the "spatial

5 Tim Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust: Journeying in and out of the Ghettos* (London: Continuum, 2011) 3; Simone Gigliotti, The *Train Journey: Transit, Captivity and Witnessing in the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009) 2.

6 Tim Cole, "Geographies of the Holocaust," in *Wiley Companion to the Holocaust*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (New York: Wiley, 2020), 336.

7 Cole, "Geographies of the Holocaust," 336.

8 Claudio Fogu, "A 'Spatial Turn' in Holocaust Studies," in *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, ed. Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 218–239.

9 See my own attempt in Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

10 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

strategies" adopted by the perpetrators as they implemented genocide, rather than by their victims as they sought to evade it. This is beginning to change with Holocaust geographies shifting from thinking primarily about Nazi space to also considering Jewish place.[11]

In this essay I want to build on that nascent work by exploring a limited set of acts of victim place-making at a variety of scales within the camp system. In part, doing so is an important corrective to a tendency to see spatial agency – in the camps in particular – as lying solely with the perpetrators.[12] Such an approach characterises Wolfgang Sofsky's monolithic rendering of the concentration camp as "a system of rigorous surveillance" where "the possibility for prisoners to appropriate space for themselves has shrunk to virtually nil. Absolute power destroys space as a domain for acting and living."[13] Contra Sofsky, I am interested in uncovering what the authors of a recent review article on the history of *Alltagsgeschichte* after the spatial turn dub "the appropriation of places: how humans adapt, engage, shape, and experience these places."[14] But doing this is not simply an attempt to counterbalance work that has tended to privilege the spatial agency of the perpetrators by pointing out spatial strategies adopted by victims. Rather than setting perpetrator space and victim place against each other, I am interested in the connections between these as prisoners adapted and appropriated the geometry and geography of the SS camp system. These examples are suggestive of the ways that scholarship on the Holocaust might respond to Paul Jaskot's invitation to develop "relational" histories (and geographies) that intentionally seek to integrate the individual (the gendered body of someone like Elie Wiesel) and the systemic (the "genocidal archipelago").[15]

This essay works with, and then moves out from, one oral history narrative drawn from a series of interviews undertaken as part of the Oral History Project developed by the Holocaust Center of Northern California, San Francisco in 1990

11 Gigliotti, *Train Journey*; Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*; Anne Kelly Knowles, Levi Westerveld, and Laura Storm, "Inductive Visualization: A Humanistic Alternative to GIS," *GeoHumanities* 1, 2 (2015): 1–31; Simone Gigliotti, Marc Masurovsky, and Erik Steiner, "From the Camp to the Road: Representing the Evacuations from Auschwitz," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, ed. Knowles, Cole, and Giordano, 192–226.

12 Although there are important exceptions: see for example Maja Suderland, *Inside Concentration Camps. Social Life at the Extremes* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

13 Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camps* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 47.

14 Paul Steege, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healey, and Pamela E. Swett, "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 363.

15 Paul B. Jaskot, "Architecture of the Holocaust," Meyerhoff Annual Lecture (2015), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

with Helen Farkas who, like Elie Wiesel, was deported from Hungarian-controlled Transylvania in the late spring of 1944.[16] Farkas' interview is one of a number that I, and other colleagues, have examined using digital humanities methods drawn from corpus linguistics as well as adopting more traditional close reading. Working with tools for distant reading flagged Farkas' narrative as of particular interest. In particular, her overwhelming use of the pronoun "we" rather than "I" to narrate her experience signalled the importance of how she positioned herself not only among others, but also with others, in the space of the camp.[17]

Helen Farkas' story of ghettoization, deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau, construction work in a forced labour camp in Silesia, and evacuation from this camp and to and through a series of other camps is a fairly typical experience of young Jewish men and women who were deported from wartime Hungary. As she retold her story of Holocaust processes and spaces, Farkas placed herself among an ever-changing number of fellow-prisoners as she experienced a genocide that was enacted by gathering people together and then separating them out in and through a series of spaces. In the ghetto in her hometown, she recalled being housed with "thousands of people in a square, three, four blocks." From there, she was deported – "about 80 of us" – by cattle car to Auschwitz Birkenau in May 1944, where she ended up with "a thousand minimum" in one barracks in Lager C which held "31,000" women. In October 1944, Farkas was taken with a group of "2,500 of us" to a forced labour camp in Silesia, where "they divided us into two silos," each housing over a thousand women. Throughout her account, these numbers are used as shorthand for overcrowding: whether perching on her luggage with the 80 others crowded into the train wagon or with her sister sitting on her lap in the barracks shared with well over a thousand other women.

Telling her individual story as part of an ever-shifting group of others not only flagged overcrowding, but also the terrible toll of mass killings. When the makeshift labour camp took to the roads of Silesia in January 1945 during part of the wider evacuation of camps westward, Farkas became aware that "maybe about three, four hundred were missing. The ones that died, that one that froze,

16 Holocaust Oral History Project, Holocaust Center of Northern California, San Francisco, Interview by Evelyn Fielden and Lorie Rice with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990); Interview by Evelyn Fielden, Otto Monarch, Judy Welch and Warren Stern with Helen Farkas (December 20, 1990). Accessed via the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, USC, Los Angeles, 53123, where this collection now resides. See also VHA 27602 for the VHA interview with Helen Farkas (3 April, 1997).

17 Anne Kelly Knowles, Paul B. Jaskot, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, "Mind the Gap: Reading across the Holocaust Testimonial Archive," in *The Holocaust in the Twenty-First Century: Relevance and Challenges in the Digital Age. Lessons and Legacies Volume XIV*, ed. Tim Cole and Simone Gigliotti. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021), 216–241.

the ones they shot; maybe about two, three hundred were missing already." As well as losing prisoners, the group she was in gained prisoners with the addition of "500 Russian and Polish women." This rise in numbers was short-lived. After marching for over a month and arriving at a camp where they briefly stayed, she was aware that "we had lost probably about four or five hundred girls."[18]

As this brief discussion suggests, across her varied experiences Farkas placed herself within an ever-shifting number of fellow-prisoners that numbered from tens to tens of thousands of co-occupants of the spaces that she was moved into and between. However, as well as placing herself within these larger units of prisoners (if you like, the numbers created by the perpetrators), she also positioned herself within smaller and more stable units of known and named individuals where she sought to carve out a place of – and for – survival, in particular focused on sharing food (if you like, the numbers created by the victims). Telling her interviewer of life in the ghetto inhabited by "thousands of people," Farkas focused in on the one-bedroom apartment where her sister lived, which became a temporary home for "three, four families . . . my sister, her mother-in-law, father-in-law, their son . . . my parents, I was living there, my brothers." Although "terribly crowded," this small apartment occupied by extended family members was a site for sharing existing food in a place where "they didn't give us any food." This familial micro-site for sharing food continued in the crowded train wagon. Retelling the journey to Auschwitz, Farkas distanced herself and her family from the 80 transported with them who occupied the same audible space but were rendered almost invisible in her recollections:

> Lots of old people were crying. And you could hear sick people. Some of them were shouting, "Oh, he's dead! He's dead!" So, apparently, there were some dead ones, too. But we were much too busy when we arrived to check who's dead or who isn't. We just kept together, our little family, and we shared whatever we had.[19]

When they arrived at the camp, Farkas quickly became aware of the impossibilities of keeping her "little family" unit together within a gendered, genocidal space that separated out men and women, those deemed to have labour value and those condemned to a rapidly enacted mass death. Families were separated on arrival at the selection ramp in Auschwitz-Birkenau through a double separation in this place that functioned as both death camp and entry into the forced labour system. The former meant that families were split apart primarily along lines of age, with children and older adults sent directly to the gas chambers,

18 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
19 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).

while the latter meant that families were split apart along lines of gender. Farkas recalled this rapid separation as a blur of images of "my mother is going that way, my father, my brother. And my sister's mother-in-law, father-in-law, the baby. And she is trying to run again after the baby, and again, she is beaten back."[20] Her retelling of selection on the ramp shares much with Sofsky's portrayal of the camp system as spaces of absolute power that "packs people together, ordering them to and fro, hounding them back and forth," where "the individual is no longer the centrepoint of his or her world, but only an object in space."[21]

Having survived the initial selection, Farkas – like many others – sought to create a sense of familiar place within the unfamiliar space of the camp by constituting a new single-sex camp "family." Initially this was a story of sticking with her sister, among the "thousands standing around the building [the sauna] from other trains" and then the more than a thousand women in the barrack block in Lager C where they were sent after being shaved, disinfected and clothed. After a few days this new family unit doubled in size when she discovered that her older sister and niece – deported from the other side of Hungary – were also in Lager C, and they managed to find a place together for "all four of us . . . on the same bunk" in a barracks with "friends that used to live in a town where my uncle lived." The remaining narrative of her time in Auschwitz, the labour camp in Silesia, and most of the subsequent evacuation on foot, was framed around this group of four women – Farkas, her two sisters and her niece –a group which shared food, sought to evade the threat of separation posed by frequent selections and, during the evacuations, helped to carry each other.

These attempts to create and maintain a camp family through the remainder of the war are stories that social historians – and especially gender historians – of the Holocaust have highlighted.[22] However, they have tended to do this without reference to the systemic space of the camp.[23] Bringing awareness of the sites where these "small families" were formed points to how prisoners worked with and appropriated the geometry and geography of the camp system as they attempted to carve out micro sites of survival. In the camps, prisoners were broken down for ease of organisation and control within this complex modernist system and quasi-urban space into units of counting and feeding (rows

20 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).

21 Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 47.

22 See for example Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 105–107; Joan Ringelheim, "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10, 4 (1985): 741–761.

23 Arthur B. Shostak, *Stealth Altruism. Forbidden Care as Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2017), 178–179.

of five), of sleeping (e.g. nine in triple-decker bunks), of housing (barracks containing a thousand) and of control (sub-zone within the camp made up of tens of barracks). Within the camp system, each individual had their place within a barracks in a zone, where they slept alongside others in bunks and were counted and fed in a row of five. These units of control in the camp system both shaped, *and* were used to shape, single-sex social networks. Farkas' experience of adapting and appropriating the spatiality of control is something that can be seen within other narratives – in particular those of female survivors – which is suggestive of a "relational" geography of everyday life in the camp that operated at a number of scales.

Barracks within a zone

Auschwitz-Birkenau – and the wider camp system – utilised a zonal system of control. Within Birkenau, prisoners were confined to fenced-zones that operated as distinct sections or camps within the camp. Rather than being "incarcerated in individual cells," prisoners were "confined within geometric fields."[24] This sub-zoning both continued and made concrete the gendered separation enacted on arrival through the existence of distinct men's and women's camps. Farkas and her sister were placed into a zone housing what she estimated to be 31,000 women. Although demarcated and guarded, Farkas utilised a certain degree of freedom of movement within this zone. The zone was a space for what was known as "organising" – described by former prisoners as "the most important word in the Auschwitz language."[25] As another Auschwitz survivor, Felicia Berland Hyatt, explained, the evening was a "very important part of the day" when prisoners returned from labour assignments and were able to "go from one Block to another" within their zone, "visiting relatives of friends, or buying and selling merchandise."[26] This opportunity was seized upon by Farkas to engage in her own "organising." "They let us out, you know, they let us out free block," she explained and,

24 Sofsky, *Order of Terror*, 55.

25 Felicia Berland Hyatt, *Close Calls: Memoirs of a Survivor* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Library, 2000), 97–98; Michael Nitkiewicz, "Shame, guilt and anguish in Holocaust survivor testimony," *The Oral History Review* 30, 1 (2003): 9; Kitty Hart, *Return to Auschwitz* (London: Granada, 1983),83.

26 Hyatt, *Close Calls*, 97–98.

> that means you can go and mix yourself with the all the 31,000. So, we decided, since nobody knows us yet, now is the time to put down the stick and disappear from this block. We discovered friends that used to live in a town where my uncle lived, and they told us that they are in Block 10. Then, I discovered my future sister-in-laws. My husband became my husband after the war. His two sisters were in Block 10, and we discovered that they have bunks. We no longer have to be in the mud. So, we went and we went in and of course it was full too, to the brim. But, as others were beating each other for the bunks, so were we. We had to beat our way onto a bunk. And slowly, everybody found, you know some, if not in this block, they found in the other block then, they found relatives and exchanged. We were in business, I tell you. Some of the clothes were exchanged. Some people had a needle. You'd sell your piece of bread for a needle. We were haggling constantly. So, we had our place, already. And once you settled down, it was pretty much your place. Very seldom would someone beat you out of your place.[27]

For Farkas, her early days in the camp were about finding and establishing her "place" within this sub camp, which meant negotiating entry into a barracks that housed familiar others.

Bunks within a barracks

Once in the barracks, Farkas "beat" her way to a bunk that became her locus of place-making. It was here that she brought her sister and niece. As she explained,

> so the first or second day, we discovered my sister, my older sister who lived about 300 kilometres away. She lived – in Kolozsvár – with her daughter. . . . So we were terribly happy. And they happened to be in the Block 12, so we brought them over . . . we exchanged the place on the bunk, and we were able to, all four of us, be on the same bunk.[28]

Farkas' language of "four . . . on the same bunk" is one repeated by others who carved out differing sized groups of familiar faces. Regina Laks Gelb recalled her triple-decker bunk in Auschwitz-Birkenau as a "nine people's perch" where girls from her home town "talked all the time" to "their heart's content" in a shared language. Here she created her "own little world" of "privacy" peopled by women from her home town that she knew she "could always depend on."[29]

27 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
28 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
29 USHMM, RG-50.030*0410, Interview with Regina Laks Gelb (February 20, 2001).

Rows within a line

But for Farkas, the most important unit was the row of five that formed the basis not only for counting in the camp, but also for feeding. In recounting her arrival at Auschwitz, the phrase "five in a row" is among the first words that Farkas recalls hearing as she entered the camp system.[30] Relating how she left the final camp, she recalled hearing the same words once more: "set yourself in lines of five."[31] As she described leaving this camp where "they lined us up. They gave us bread and they started marching us," her interviewer interjected and asked, "one loaf for each of you?" Farkas responded by explaining, "no, a loaf for the five of us. See, we always had to set ourselves up . . . five in a row."[32] As she described earlier on in her interview,

> we had to line up in five rows and usually it was the same people. We chose each other. So we chose a Slovakian girl to us when we were in Block 10 from the second day on. And she was . . . our fifth to the line for as long as we were in Auschwitz. We had to have someone that you knew and you got used to because we had to share a bread . . . And we had to divide it in five equal pieces . . . So we were responsible for each other, all five of us. Now that we were were all together, all four of us and this Slovakian girl . . . [33]

Farkas' row of five was very much a case of four (Farkas, her two sisters and niece) plus one anonymous other ("this Slovakian girl"). Retelling when she was taken to a forced labour camp in Silesia, Farkas explained that "we had to stay again in a row of five. We lost the girl, because she remained back, the girl that was our fifth, so we got somebody else."[34]

Being the fifth person in what was effectively a row of four plus one meant occupying a vulnerable position on the edge. As one of those who was such a "plus one," Lily Rickman, explained:

> Each time, I had different friends. Each time I joined up with others because there had to be five; they gave bread to five. And if you ran into those types, that is if you were the fifth and they were four together, then they were really discriminating against you. So . . . I looked for people who were easy going, more willing to share, more able to help one another . . .[35]

30 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
31 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
32 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
33 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
34 Interview with Helen Farkas (September 13, 1990).
35 Lily Rickman, cited in Chaya Ostrower, *It Kept Us Alive: Humour in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014), 156.

While the "plus one" was interchangeable, the row of five was the core unit that Farkas used as she told about life in and between a series of camps. In a striking moment of self-reflection on her tendency to narrate her story in the plural rather than the singular, she explained to her interviewer, "I'm talking in plural because of my five in a row."[36]

The centrality of "five in a row" in constructing social relations can be seen in many other narratives. Bella Pasternak, deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau from northern Transylvania, recalled how she "stuck together" with two of her sisters and two cousins who were in the same barracks: "the five of us. Whenever we went, they counted us. We were together." Her group of five joined with another group of five that included "a girl from our town" and "a daughter of my mother's cousin who was by herself" and became a group of "ten together" that managed to "stick together" through to liberation. Pasternak explained that "everybody had their own group . . . you see, like when they were counting . . . we were ten. So they counted ten. So we tried to be together."[37] Margit Raab Kalina recalled, "I hurry to our barracks, where people are already standing in rows of five. My four friends, Sarah, Judith, Hela, and Ruth, are waiting for me. They don't want anybody else in their row."[38] Anna Patipa told her interviewer how ". . . we were my aunt, my cousin, my sister, my niece and I, we were five . . . we were five so my aunt would save – the five we would get a bread about the size of a brick and we would eat the thin slice of bread in the evening and we would leave some for the morning . . ."[39] The row of five was not simply a unit of counting which acquired significance in apportioning work units; it was also, critically, a unit of food distribution. Both food and labour were life and death matters, and the importance of sharing equally (or not, as Lily Rickman noted) among a trusted group of five is something stressed by survivors of the camp system.[40]

The importance of the row of five was heightened by dint of this being the only basic administrative unit that continued into the final stages of the war as the camps were evacuated. As I have suggested elsewhere, the evacuations – or "death marches" – were not simply about moving prisoners from the camp, but

36 Interview with Helen Farkas (December 20, 1990). On this see Knowles et. al, "Mind the Gap," 232–234.

37 USHMM, RG-50.030*0176, Interview with Bella Simon Pasternak (April 21, 1994).

38 Margit Raab Kalina, "Surviving a thousand deaths: Memoir: 1939–1945," in *Stolen Youth. Five Women's Survival in the Holocaust*, ed. David Silberklang. (New York: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2005), 220.

39 Holocaust Oral History Project, Interview with Anna Patipa (23 February, 1989). Accessed via VHA 52616.

40 USHMM, RG-50.030*0303, Interview with Fela Warschau (9 February 1995).

rather about placing the camp (and the camp system) itself on the road.[41] As Gigliotti et. al. note of the evacuations, "prisoners were part of a mobile confinement, akin to a deconstructed camp barrack, that also retained the perception of togetherness and community in an ostensibly free landscape."[42] During the evacuations, the physical infrastructure was left behind. Zoned barracks were replaced with the fleeting requisition of roadside barns to provide ad hoc sleeping places for, as Miriam Farcus Ingber estimated, 5,000 women – or multiple barracks on the move.[43] The camp fence was replaced by another boundary – the intersecting sightlines of armed guards who accompanied the columns of prisoners – as the genocide entered a "new mobile phase that relocated the camp's discipline and terror." But, as Gigliotti et. al. point out, as well as this relocation of "discipline and terror" there emerged the dynamic of "continuing the bond . . . forged" in the camp on the road, a social phenomenon which was shaped in and through one of those disciplinary mechanisms.[44]

One crucial aspect of camp discipline that was carried onto the road was the persistence of the basic administrative unit of five, as prisoners were marched in easy-to-count rows. This continuation of the basic structure of the camp system was something that Lily Margules recalled as she told how "in the morning . . . we had to . . . straighten ourselves, put ourselves in a column. They will count us. And we will go forwards."[45] Indeed, survivors emphasise the heightened importance of these rows of five as the camp took to the roads, given that these were not simply units of counting and food distribution, but of the physical support necessary to keep going and avoid death; as Helen Farkas put it, it was necessary "to hold on at all times so we don't fall."[46]

However, along the road, these rows of five began to fracture and fragment. As I have already noted, Farkas' row of five was very much a case of four plus one, with the additional anonymous woman replaceable and replaced. As she explains of the final stages of the evacuation: "finally, we decided – the four of us – we must do something when we are somewhere where there are a lot of trees or something, to make an escape."[47] In the context of the evacuations, not only did the five become more clearly four, but the four ultimately became two, after "we made my sister and her daughter escape," meaning "we have to organize somebody in the

41 Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, 178–180.
42 Gigliotti, Masurovsky, and Steiner, "From the Camp to the Road," 219.
43 USHMM, RG-50.030*0098, Interview with Miriam Farcus Ingber (30 October, 1990).
44 Giglotti, Masurovsky and Steiner, "From the Camp to the Road," 203, 219.
45 USHMM, RG-50.030*0150, Interview with Lily Margules (16 October, 1990).
46 Interview with Helen Farkas (13 September, 1990).
47 Interview with Helen Farkas (13 September, 1990).

line instead of my sister . . . and her daughter. What was happening, whenever we lost people, we had to re-organize the line of five you know. That, we have to do for ourself. So we reorganized ourself. We take . . . three other women."[48] Although part of a line of five once more, Farkas explained how she and her sister worked with two as the unit of survival in the last weeks of the war:

> The time came, my sister and I, end of April, that we decided that we can't go any further. We can't do it any longer. There's just the two of us to be responsible for. We're going to try and run away because we found out that now more and more were running away from amongst us. We were shrinking, you know, we were shrinking constantly. And we decided we'll try for it. So one night we were marching and they put us up on a hill. And on the snow, we had to lie down on the snow. The Germans put up their tents and they said, like other times, nobody is allowed to get up or to sit up. Just lying down because, if somebody sits up or gets up, they'll be shot. So we waited. My sister and I talked it over, just the two of us. We were afraid to tell the girl who was with us all along because the more we are the harder it is to hide. We didn't know what the future is for us. So just the two of us, we didn't tell anybody. . .[49]

This "shrinking" of those left alive on the march was mirrored by a shrinking of the row of five – or four plus one – that had been so central to Farkas' camp experience as she and her sister sought to, and successfully did, escape from the camp system. This breakdown of the structures of the camp system can be seen not only on the road but also in the complete breakdown of the post-genocidal landscapes of the overcrowded camps where the evacuated prisoners were dumped. These were not only desperately overcrowded spaces – Nina Kaleska, who was taken to Ravensbrück from Auschwitz, estimated that this was a camp "built for . . . maybe thirty-five hundred people" but now stuffed with "something like fifteen thousand people" – but also places where the systems such as counting prisoners in rows of five that structured camp life had collapsed.[50]

While those systems were mechanisms of control, they could be and were, as I argue here, adapted and appropriated by prisoners engaged in acts of place-making within genocidal space. The centrality of the line of five is one example that signals a coming together of the spaces created by the perpetrators and the places created by the victims. In suggesting that stories of everyday place-making can be found within the camp system and that these extended into the final weeks of the war, I do not seek to deny the power inequalities found within genocidal space.[51] While there may have been some room for manoeuvre within the barracks or

48 Interview with Helen Farkas (13 September, 1990).
49 Interview with Helen Farkas (20 December, 1990).
50 USHMM, RG-50.030*0101, Interview with Nina Kaleska (January 3, 1990).
51 Suderland, *Inside Concentration Camps*, 5.

zone within the camp, the external perimeter fence was electrified and guarded and, while not impenetrable, highly effective in controlling the prisoner population. Moreover, during the evacuations this perimeter fence morphed into the sightlines of armed guards who could, and did, shoot prisoners. But rather than positioning stories of adaptation and appropriation as a kind of counter-evidence asserting victim agency vis-à-vis the tendency to see agency lying solely with the perpetrators, I argue here for the importance of thinking relationally. Rather than seeing the individual and the systemic as separate, they were intimately linked as individuals responded to, appropriated and reshaped (and were reshaped by) the systemic. The coming together of the numbers created by the perpetrators and the victims in the rows of five is suggestive of this "relational" history and geography.

In closing, I am conscious of two things in telling this story. Firstly, the sources I draw on are survivor memoirs and oral history interviews which tend towards a post-facto assertion of agency, in part in and through the process of re-telling past time/past place.[52] Secondly, most of the examples that I use here come from women. What is hard to say with any certainty is, as Pascale Rachel Bos noted, whether this is evidence of different spatial behaviour on the part of women or the result of different narrative strategies, whereby women tell different stories and tell stories differently.[53] That question is one that deserves much fuller consideration.[54] It is also an important reminder that as we write histories and geographies that put victims and their acts of place-making in Nazi space to the fore, we do well to ensure that we do not operate with monolithic renderings of camp prisoners. Writing "relational" geographies of the Holocaust, it is not simply systemic space that needs to be gendered, but also the individuals who carved out places within the gendered "genocidal archipelago."[55]

52 On the spatiality of this see Tim Cole, "(Re)Placing the Past: Spatial Strategies of Retelling Difficult Stories," *The Oral History Review* 42, 1 (2015): 30–49.

53 Pascale Rachel Bos, "Women and the Holocaust: Analyzing Gender Difference," in *Women, the Nazis and the Holocaust*, ed. Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 23–50. The question of whether men and women prisoners developed different social networks within the camps or looked at these differently is one that has occupied the literature on gender and the Holocaust.

54 Knowles et al., "Mind the Gap."

55 On the importance of Holocaust landscapes as "gendered landscapes," see Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*.

Bibliography

Bos, Pascale Rachel. "Women and the Holocaust: Analyzing Gender Difference." In *Women, the Nazis and the Holocaust*, edited by Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, 23–50. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003.

Cole, Tim. *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Cole, Tim. *Traces of the Holocaust: Journeying in and out of the Ghettos*. London: Continuum, 2011.

Cole, Tim. "(Re)Placing the Past: Spatial Strategies of Retelling Difficult Stories," *The Oral History Review* 42, 1 (2015): 30–49.

Cole, Tim. *Holocaust Landscapes*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Cole, Tim. "Geographies of the Holocaust." In *Wiley Companion to the Holocaust*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, 331–347. New York: Wiley, 2020.

Fogu, Claudio. "A 'Spatial Turn' in Holocaust Studies." In *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, edited by Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner, 218–239. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

Giaccaria, Paolo, and Claudio Minca, eds. *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Gigliotti, Simone, The *Train Journey: Transit, Captivity and Witnessing in the Holocaust*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.

Gigliotti, Simone, Marc Masurovsky, and Erik Steiner. "From the Camp to the Road: Representing the Evacuations from Auschwitz." In *Geographies of the Holocaust*, edited by Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, 192–226. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Giordano, Alberto. Anne Kelly Knowles, and Tim Cole. "Geographies of the Holocaust." In *Geographies of the Holocaust*, edited by Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, 1–17. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Gregory, Derek et al., eds. *The Dictionary of Human Geography. Fifth Edition*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009.

Hart, Kitty. *Return to Auschwitz*. London: Granada, 1983.

Hyatt, Felicia Berland. *Close Calls: Memoirs of a Survivor*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Library, 2000.

Jaskot, Paul B. "Architecture of the Holocaust." Meyerhoff Annual Lecture (2015), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Kalina, Margit Raab. "Surviving a thousand deaths. Memoir: 1939–1945." In *Stolen Youth. Five Women's Survival in the Holocaust*, edited by David Silberklang, 187–229. New York: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2005.

Knowles, Anne Kelly, Levi Westerveld, and Laura Storm. "Inductive Visualization: A Humanistic Alternative to GIS." *GeoHumanities* 1, 2 (2015): 1–31.

Knowles, Anne Kelly, Paul B. Jaskot, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano. "Mind the Gap: Reading across the Holocaust Testimonial Archive." In *The Holocaust in the Twenty-First Century: Relevance and Challenges in the Digital Age. Lessons and Legacies Volume XIV*, edited by Tim Cole and Simone Gigliotti, 216–241. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021.

Nitkiewicz, Michael. "Shame, guilt and anguish in Holocaust survivor testimony." *The Oral History Review* 30, 1 (2003): 1–22.
Ostrower, Chaya. *It Kept Us Alive: Humour in the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014.
Ringelheim, Joan. "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10, 4 (1985): 741–761.
Shostak, Arthur B. *Stealth Altruism: Forbidden Care as Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* London: Routledge, 2017.
Sofsky, Wolfgang. *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camps*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
Steege, Paul, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healey, and Pamela E. Swett. "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter." *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 358–378.
Suderland, Maja. *Inside Concentration Camps: Social Life at the Extremes*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
Waxman, Zoë. *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Wiesel, Elie. *The Holocaust in Hungary: Forty Years Later*, edited by Randolph L. Braham and Bela Vago, xi–xv. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Nikita Hock

Hiding in the attic: Sounds and social situation

Introduction

This essay examines the everyday circumstances and experiences of a selection of Jews who went into hiding in rural regions of Eastern Europe after the dissolution of most ghettos in 1942. The focus is on a particular type of such clandestine survival: the inhabiting of attic spaces above barns and homes, most of the time with the help of local villagers. It draws on 15 diaries created by those hiding in such shelters, mostly in occupied Poland and Ukraine. Written at the time, these texts often document conditions and daily life in such hideouts which later testimony tends to gloss over as unimportant.[1]

To arrive at a picture of everyday life in these hideouts, this essay departs from the diarists' depictions of sounds. It is thus part of what has been variously termed aural history or sound history.[2] This relatively recent area of study relies on examining sounds and silences as they were perceived and described by historical actors in order to inquire into wider questions of experience and social conditions.[3] This approach is only beginning to be applied to the perspective of persecuted Jews during the Holocaust.[4]

1 Marta Janczewska, "Literatura Dokumentu Osobistego [The Literature of the Ego-Document]," in *Literatura Polska Wobec Zagłady*, eds. Alina Brodzka, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 92–153; Jacek Leociak, "Topografia i Chronologia Zapisów Zagłady [The Topography and Chronology of Accounts of the Holocaust]," in *Literatura Polska Wobec Zagłady*, eds. Alina Brodzka, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 24–31; Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53–57.

2 For overviews, see Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007), 41–58; Steve Mills, *Auditory Archaeology: Understanding Sound and Hearing in the Past* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), 48–51.

3 On the limitations and promises this approach, see Mark M. Smith, "Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History," *Journal of Social History* 40, 4 (2007): 841–858; Jürgen Müller, "The Sound of History and Acoustic Memory: Where Psychology and History Converge," *Culture & Psychology* 18, 4 (2012): 443–464; Jan-Friedrich Missfelder, "Period Ear: Perspektiven einer Klanggeschichte der Neuzeit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, 1 (2012): 21–47; Jan-Friedrich Missfelder, "Der Klang der Geschichte: Begriffe, Traditionen und Methoden der Sound History," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 66, 11/12 (2015): 633–649.

4 Christian Gerlach, "Echoes of Persecution: Sounds in Early Post-Liberation Jewish Memories," *Holocaust Studies* 24, 1 (2017): 1–25. Adjacent studies include: Carolyn Birdsall, *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-009

The aural dimension by necessity touched many facets of life in prolonged physical concealment. Those in hiding had to control their own sound production so as not to be discovered and were constantly engaged emotionally and mentally with what they were able to hear outside of their hiding places. To capture what these practices meant for the everyday experience of hiding, a combination of open coding and close reading of the diaries was employed. Codes for the different elements of anthrophony, biophony and geophony as they appear in the texts were created[5] and placed in relation to attitudes which the authors expressed about those sounds and their sources. This revealed a first set of prominent themes pertaining to psychological agency, belonging, and conflicts regarding safety. To tease out the relation that these experiences had with the particular settings of rural attic and loft hiding-places, the notions of space and place as they are conceptualized in human relational geography were applied. The first two sections provide contextual information on Jews hiding in lofts and attic spaces in Eastern Europe, as well as on their aural environments. This is followed by a brief introduction to the notions of space and place that inform the analysis of the everyday experience in and of these hiding places. The two subsequent sections discuss what the depicted sounds and attitudes reveal about the social meanings and dynamics that played a prominent role for the diarists in this type of hiding.

Hiding in the countryside of occupied Eastern Europe

Following the dissolution of most ghettos in 1942, Jews who managed to avoid deportation and death went into hiding. Those who sought refuge beyond the cities and larger towns had to account for and adapt to several factors specific to the Eastern European countryside. These factors limited and shaped patterns of hiding and ultimately contributed to the specific choice, or fate, of hiding in a barn or attic.

University Press, 2012); Renata Tańczuk and Sławomir Wieczorek, *Sounds of War and Peace: Soundscapes of European Cities in 1945* (Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2018). My work has been part of the project "Sounds of anti-Jewish persecution," Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Project no. 172597.

5 This classification along types of sound sources has its origins in soundscape ecology. "Anthrophony" refers to sounds produced by humans; "biophony" to sounds produced by any other living organisms; "geophony" to sounds of wind, weather, and geophysical elements of nature. Brian C. Pijanowski et al., "Soundscape Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape," *BioScience* 61, 3 (2011): 203–216.

If the less populated rural environment on first consideration might have appeared to increase the chances for Jews to go undetected, it in fact presented rather limited opportunities for hiding. For one, opportunities for hiding were limited by the dispersed features of the rural topography. Fewer buildings meant that the urban "cobblestones, pavements, tenement houses locking in the perspective of the street change into the open space of fields and forests, crossed by bands of roads."[6] Within such a landscape, staying in fields under open skies presented a last resort and temporary refuge.[7] The dense forests of eastern Poland and Ukraine provided a natural visual cover. However, these represented to most a wholly unfamiliar topography, were similarly exposed to harsh weather, and thus were often only used for temporary refuge, save for the camps of larger partisan fighting groups.[8]

Even more importantly, the more remote or peripheral the hiding places of fugitive Jews, the more precarious the supply possibilities became. This all but eliminated hiding too far from inhabited places, as either those in hiding or the farmers they relied on were generally dependent on the villages for accessing food supplies. Those who hid beyond cities thus predominantly used or adapted spaces close to small towns, villages, and their immediate surroundings.[9]

This enforced proximity to and reliance on the local non-Jewish population was considerably complicated by the fact that denunciations of and attacks on Jews were common.[10] Possessing a social network before the war presented a dis-

6 Jacek Leociak, "Wizerunek Polaków w zapisach Żydów z dystryktu warszawskiego [The image of Poles in the writings of Jews from the Warsaw district]," in *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie Warszawskim*, eds. Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka (Warszawa: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2007), 395.

7 See, for example, hiding in fields: Aryeh Klonitski, *The Diary of Adam's Father* (Jerusalem: Beit Lohamei Haghetaot/Ghetto Fighters House, 1973); Chaim Yitzchok Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary: A Chronicle of Tears* (Lakewood, NJ: Israel Bookshop Publications, 2015).

8 Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes* (London et al.: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016), 51.

9 Marta Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave: Wartime Hiding Places of Jews in Occupied Poland* (Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2018).

10 Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie: Opowiesci Polakow i Żydow [Rescue: Accounts by Poles and Jews]* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010); Barbara Engelking et al., *Zarys krajobrazu: Wieś Polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945 [An Outline of the Landscape: The Polish Countryside in the Face of the Extermination of Jews 1942–1945]* (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds. *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski [Night without End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Districts of Occupied Poland]* (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018); Karolina Koprowska, *Postronni?: Zagłada w relacjach chłopskich*

tinct advantage.[11] Once in the countryside, Polish acquaintances or other Jews in hiding formed definite points of reference that determined the path of Jews wandering in search of shelter.[12] Fela Fiszbein managed to escape along with her husband's family during a deportation from Subcarpathian Rymanów and was able to activate a network of acquaintances and their relatives. Relying on both paid and unpaid help, the Fiszbeins were able to hide in various houses and attics in and around the village of Zawodzie for months at a time.[13] A typical counterexample is the fate of Sosia Zimmerman, a mother who fled with her family from Skala in Ternopil oblast. Her diary reflects the agony of having to relocate frequently, as the family would only be hidden for days at a time by suspicious and often hostile peasants in exchange for money.[14]

The more tenuous the contacts between the authors and the rural population, the more improvised and spontaneous the path of their wanderings in the countryside became, and the less likely were they to find themselves in a pre-planned, well-constructed and stable hiding place. Diaries written in hiding places such as converted basements, earthen dug-outs, or even carefully constructed hidden annexes and rooms describe a situation in which more careful planning had been possible, and in which support came from a limited number of helpers. In contrast, diaries that reach us from rural barn lofts and attics were written by Jews whose refuge there was often temporary and contingent on a larger network of contacts. These diaries most often testify to the largely itinerant and unstable lifestyle of their authors.[15]

świadków [Bystanders?: The Holocaust in Peasant Witness Accounts] (Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas Kraków, 2018).

11 Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Natalia Aleksiun, "Daily Survival: Social History of Jews in Family Bunkers in Eastern Galicia," in *Lessons & Legacies*, eds. Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 304–331; Natalia Aleksiun, "Social Networks of Support: Trajectories of Escape, Rescue and Survival," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, eds. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020), 279–293.

12 Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 79, 155.

13 Barbara Engelking, "'. . . Zupełnie Zdani Jesteśmy Na Nich . . .' : Codzienność ukrywania się i relacje z gospodarzami na podstawie dziennika Feli Fischbein ['. . . We Completely Depend on Them . . .': Everyday Hiding and Relationships with Hosts Based on the Diary of Fela Fischbein]," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008): 144–169.

14 Sosia Gottesfeld Zimmerman, *A Mother's Diary: Surviving the Holocaust in Ukraine 1941–1944* (Morgan Hill, CA: Bookstand Publishing, 2015).

15 An analysis of the interplay of these factors can be found in the author's upcoming PhD thesis, which presents an aural history of Jews in hiding places during the Holocaust. For more on the experience of "roaming" of Jews in rural Poland, see Barbara Engelking, *Such a Beautiful*

Rural sounds and rural attics

In order to understand the experience and significance of sounds produced or heard in hiding, it is necessary to consider the wider acoustic environment in which they emerged. The diaries written by Jews in rural hideouts in Eastern Europe were written in a particular acoustic setting that had a profound impact on how their hiding places could be and were inhabited.

Characteristic of the countryside was the lack of mechanical noise. Most operations in peasant agriculture were performed by human labor or with animal-drawn implements.[16] The energy for retail trade and crafts was sourced by hand, horse, or water; mills in wood-rich areas by the mid-1930s relied on steam (*półlokomobila*) or wood-gas engines.[17] The loudest sounds in smaller towns of the 1930s and 1940s would have been isolated wood and metal works.[18] The same can be said for transport, which was dominated by animal-drawn implements, with motorized vehicles a rarity.[19] Inhabitants of rural areas generally can be said to have lived in low-energy environments, which limited the acoustic ecology of the village to few distinct sounds. This was exacerbated during the occupation due to the conditions of war, and also due to the fact that Germans did not want to cede resources.[20]

The aural environment of the Polish and Ukrainian village was therefore dominated by the sounds of nature and animals, of occasional building or home repairs, as well as of low-energy transport on dirt or (in small towns) cobblestone streets. Sounds reaching the outside from within houses remained limited to the

Sunny Day . . .: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2016), 59–108.

16 Derek Howard Aldcroft, "Characteristics of the European Periphery," in *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 3–14.

17 Grzegorz Miliszkiewicz, "Elektryfikacja Lubelszczyzny [The Electrification of Lublin Region]," in *Założenia, projekty i materiały do ekspozycji zagadnienia elektryfikacji Lubelszczyzny oraz do zajęć edukacyjnych i działań parateatralnych w Muzeum Wsi Lubelskiej* (Lublin: Mps. w Archiwum MWL, 2005), 5.

18 Maria Poprzęcka, *Kuźnia: Mit, Alegoria, Symbol [The Forge: Myth, Allegory, Symbol]* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1972), 9.

19 Grzegorz Miliszkiewicz, "Klimat Dźwiękowy Miasteczka Czasów II Rzeczypospolitej – Podstawy Do Muzealnej Rekonstrukcji," *Wieś Radomska* 8 (2007) : 205–223.

20 Gerlach, "Echoes of Persecution," 12.

echoes of house work and small crafts.[21] The conditions of occupation curtailed the already low presence of radio receivers, telephones, and gramophones.[22]

Jews who went into hiding in the countryside thus found themselves in an environment with a low ambient noise level. In urban settings, sounds produced could blend with other noises in densely populated urban environments, even those who fell relatively quiet during the war.[23] In contrast, the minimal overlap of sound sources in the dispersed rural topography meant that individual sounds remained distinct. To describe such acoustic environments or "soundscapes," Sound Studies progenitor R. Murray Schafer introduced the term "hi-fi":

> The hi-fi soundscape is one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level. [. . .] In the hi-fi soundscape, sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective – foreground and background. [. . .] In a low-fi soundscape individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds. [. . .] There is cross-talk on all the channels, and in order for the most ordinary sounds to be heard they have to be increasingly amplified.[24]

Notes from attic diaries demonstrate what this lack of overlap meant in practice. The presence of people appeared clear and distinct. Sosia Zimmerman, walking through a small rural town, reported that "I could hear my footfalls very clearly."[25] Unusual sounds stood out and were clearly traceable, such as the appearance of motorized vehicles.[26] Writing in an attic in the Masovian village of Żwirówka, diarist Brandla Siekierka reported: "We heard the whirr [*warkot*] of a motor, and a motorbike stopped nearby. We know in which place, and know who lives there, which is why we pray all together that God may look after us and after you, our dear friend."[27]

---

21 Grzegorz Miliszkiewicz, "Klimat dźwiękowy miasteczka czasów II Rzeczypospolitej – Podstawy do muzealnej rekonstrukcji [Sound Climate of a Town During the Second Polish Republic – Materials for a Museum Reconstruction]," *Wieś Radomska* 8 (2007) : 215–216. Cf. Sebastian Bernat and Józef Hernik, "Polnische Klanglandschaft um die Jahrhundertwende," in *Transformation und Landschaft: die Folgen sozialer Wandlungsprozesse auf Landschaft*, eds. Olaf Kühne et al. (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015), 247–268.

22 Gerlach, "Echoes of Persecution," 12.

23 Annelies Jacobs, "The Silence of Amsterdam before and during World War II: Ecology, Semiotics and Politics of Urban Sound," in *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th and 20th Century Europe*, ed. Daniel Morat (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 305–325.

24 Murray R. Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994), 43.

25 Zimmerman, December 25, 1942.

26 Koprowska, *Postronni?*, 104. Cf. the memoirs of Michał Głowiński: "Cars passed by only rarely and belonged exclusively to Germans. When one appeared on that pitiful, out-of-the-way road, it portended nothing good. The sound of an engine could be the harbinger of death." Michał Głowiński, *The Black Seasons* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 69.

27 Siekierka, June 16, 1944.

Within this hi-fi environment, the hiding place of the rural attic presented only a rudimentary acoustic screen between those hiding inside and the wider rural environment. Two general types of attics can be identified that played different roles for the acoustic exposure of hidden Jews, and consequently for the patterns of their hidden life there. One is the attic loft of a barn or stable. These were usually located at some distance from the peasants' house, or in a structure contiguous to it.[28] This also meant that they were more spacious. In her attic close to Galician Mikulińce, Miriam Guensberg estimated its measurements as ten meters long and two meters wide, not very high, but enough to stand up in a hunched position.[29] Such dimensions allowed for using available hay and straw to further conceal oneself, or to create isolation during inclement weather.[30] Fela Fiszbein hid in a similarly elongated attic, and used bails of hay to construct a rudimentary second shelter inside: "I told my husband that a hut, a "suka", can be made from straw [. . .] the ceiling was made of an iron bed[frame]. [. . .] There was a vent [that I] closed with snow."[31] This provided relief from winds blowing through the thatched roof of the barn and trapped some warmth in the winter months. The second, more rare type of attic featured in diaries of Jews in hiding is one located directly above a farm-house. Such an attic placed those in hiding directly above their hosts. With only wooden floorboards separating them, clearly transmitting any movements, life in such attics brought hidden Jews and hosts into close contact.[32]

The acoustic properties of both types of attics profoundly shaped the experience of Jews hiding in them. To understand the wider implications of these conditions and constraints, the following section, "Sound and the making of place," takes inspiration from human geography. It describes the role of sensory perception in general and sound in particular in charging a location with meaning, turning a hiding site into more than a mere location in which survival happened.

Sound and the making of place

The analytical distinction between space and place helps approach the specific experiences of survival in hideouts. Human geographers distinguish the two, roughly taking space as an abstract category related to quantification, mapping and

28 Guensberg, August 10, 1942; Engel, October 24, 1943.
29 Guensberg, August 11, 1942.
30 Guensberg, November 15, 1942.
31 Fiszbein, November 27, 1942.
32 Siekierka, June 28, 1944.

planning, and contrasting it with the notion of place associated with experiential, subjective and social aspects.[33] Within this opposition, scholarship in Holocaust geography so far "tends to privilege Nazi space over victim place, and gives greater spatial agency to the former than the latter."[34] By foregrounding place, this essay follows a recent call by Tim Cole to shift attention to the agency of persecuted Jews as they engaged with their natural and built environments.[35]

An influential theoretization of place that is particularly useful here was developed by human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan builds on the concept of experience, a broad term encompassing "the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality."[36] Place here serves as "a center of meaning constructed by experience."[37] It is constituted when humans relate to familiar and new environments. This happens both directly and viscerally through the senses, as well as indirectly through knowledge and symbolic forms. Such a distinction between unstructured space on the one hand, and place established through perception and meaning on the other, helps interpret phenomena such as the nostalgia for childhood places and the anthropology of homeland and home.[38]

The audible plays a key role in the establishment of place. Sound and the perception of space are closely linked, as "the qualities of a space affect how we perceive a sound and those of a sound affect how we perceive a space."[39] Similarly to the modalities involved in the emergence of place, this experience can range from the direct and visceral to the culturally and socially mediated: from the sense of space imbued by the reverb of a cathedral to the emotions and mean-

33 With varying gradations between these poles and attempts to reconcile them: John Agnew, "Space:Place," in *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*, eds. Paul J. Cloke and R. J. Johnston (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005), 89. Here especially: Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," in *Philosophy in Geography*, eds. Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1979), 388–389.

34 Tim Cole, "Geographies of the Holocaust," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, eds. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020), 339. For scholarship from this perspective, see esp. Simone Gigliotti, *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*. Recent contributions include Maël Le Noc and Eric Sarmiento, "'We Were Turned into Jews': Space, Subjectivation, and Resistance in Occupied Paris," *Social & Cultural Geography* (July 7, 2021) : 1–17; Natalia Aleksiun et al., *Places, Spaces and Voids in the Holocaust* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021).

35 Cole, "Geographies of the Holocaust." See also Cole's chapter in this volume.

36 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 8.

37 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, 2 (1975) : 152.

38 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 144–146, 188.

39 Colin Ripley, "Introduction," *In the Place of Sound: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 2.

ings evoked for coastal inhabitants by the familiar rhythm of waves.[40] Localizable sounds thus not just demarcate and structure space, but "besides vision and smell charge space with meanings and affectivity."[41] In engaging physical, emotional and social registers of human relationships to space and location, sound is generative and co-constitutive of place.

Conceiving of experience as central to the constitution of place links place to the media of this experience: the senses and the body. Scholars have developed this by stressing the role that movement through space and engagement with the physical environment play in establishing place, and in enacting dwelling as a mode of being in it.[42] This raises the question of what it means for these tools of creating "a center of meaning constructed by experience" to be curtailed. The next section, "Experiencing the rural attic," argues that the transparent acoustics of open attic spaces within the hi-fi environment of the village undercut bodily practices which Tuan and other human geographers have identified as central for the construction of lived and meaningful place, impacting perceptions of individual agency and social belonging.

As a site of human intervention, practice, and interaction, place is not the construction of just one individual. This goes beyond the notion that place can serve as an index of the social, with one's location (under the earth, in the storage attic, in a barn) expressing one's social position.[43] Places are "ultimately social in nature: the product of human labor, gestures, and interactions."[44] The dependence of hidden Jews on hosts, and of the hosts on their social network, meant that for those in hiding, place, with immediate and existential importance, was "formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular

40 Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 15, 90; Michalle Duffy and Gordon Waitt, "Home Sounds: Experiential Practices and Performativities of Hearing and Listening," *Social & Cultural Geography* 14, 4 (2013) : 466–481.

41 Eckehard Pistrick and Cyril Isnart, "Landscapes, Soundscapes, Mindscapes: Introduction," *Etnografica* 17, 3 (2013): 506.

42 Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 156. Cf. Tim Ingold's notion of *taskscape* as the array of activities that constitute human dwelling: Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology* 25, 2 (1993): 152–171.

43 Hiding during the Holocaust thus forms a particularly extreme case for Tuan's thesis: "Spatial location derives from position in society rather than vice-versa. The infant's place is the crib; the child's place is the playroom; the social distance between the chairman of the board and myself is as evident in the places we sit at the banquet as in the places we domicile; the Jones' live on the wrong side of the tracks because of their low socio-economic position." Tuan, "Space and Place," 409.

44 Steege et al., "The History of Everyday Life," 363.

location."[45] Sounds depicted in the diaries serve as an index of such interactions. They make legible the social relationships of Jews, hosts, and their rural social environment. The section on "Negotiating social dynamics" argues that, with attention to sounds as they were described in and around attic spaces, these relationships quickly begin to emerge as atomized and highly unstable.

Experiencing the rural attic

Pharmacist Marceli Neider and his companions were fortunate enough to hide in an elaborate earthen dugout located under a barn in Galicia.[46] After nearly four months of life in this "*bunkier*," he records in his diary plans to leave it and relocate to the attic of their peasant's house. The discussion centers around organizing straw mattresses, because unlike their dugout, "in the attic we will only be able to lie motionless."[47] What Neider acknowledges is a significant aspect characterizing life hidden in a rural attic: the open, wooden architecture of attics meant that every physical movement easily penetrated the space below and outside. For long stretches of the day, even moving about in the straw produced rustling that, in the hi-fi environment of the village, could be picked up by someone standing below. Thus, Sosia Zimmerman's family was wary of farmers passing and working nearby, as well as women washing clothes.[48] Several hidden Jews had to remain not just mute, but immobile. In his farm attic in Mazovia, Morris Breitbart had a place to stand, for long stretches of time, "petrified, unneeded, statue-like."[49] Selma Engel, hiding with her husband in a barn loft in Lublin district, noted regular periods of complete stillness "like mummies" while the cows were led back into the barn.[50] Depending on the foot traffic around the hideout, such stillness could last for days on end. This was the case even when the larger barn attic structure allowed for creating an inner enclosure from straw, as noted by Miriam Guensberg, who nonetheless had to "lie entire days under blankets – and wait."[51] While rural attics, especially the large attic spaces located above barns, did not restrain those in hiding through physical limits (such as the brick walls in a res-

45 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 12.
46 Aleksandra Grzemska, "Odmierzanie Pamięci [Measuring Memory]," *Autobiografia. Literatura. Kultura. Media* 2, 3 (2014): 151–164.
47 Neider, April 23, 1943.
48 Zimmerman, passim.
49 Breitbart, November 16, 1943.
50 Engel, June 22, 1944.
51 Guensberg, November 15, 1942.

idential area, the cement walls of converted basements, or the damp and tight earthen walls of a dugout under a barn), they effectively confined their Jewish inhabitants even more. Surrounded by air, those hiding in the attics were more constricted in their movements than those enclosed by the earth and walls of other hiding places.

This immobility prevented many practices described by Jews hiding in more insulated spaces: Preparing food using fire and stoves, listening to news from the front by radio, modifying the hideout itself, and even pursuing handicrafts to pass time or to sustain oneself economically while in hiding.[52] Instead, those in attics developed different strategies to cope with the day. When Irena Chess could not quietly re-tell movies and events from her school days to her younger cousin, they read old calendars and "pamphlets from the time of Franz Joseph" scraped together by their hosts.[53] She also devoted a lot of time to reveries: "I let my look drift far, through the cracks in the boards towards the featureless greenery . . . how good is it to lie, lie and not think, but just feel, feel, feel."[54] For Brandla Siekierka, hiding in an attic in Mazovia, long summer days in the attic were spent with the collection of lice, an odious task that turns into rudimentary distraction.[55] Maria Koper makes numerous references to the writing of the diary as her way of coping, a pattern also present in other attic diaries.[56]

The reduced breadth of activities directly impacted the bodies of those in hiding: "The endless, forced lying, and we have been lying here for close to five weeks now, has emaciated us to the degree that we can't stay on our feet. We try to walk below, but we stagger like small children."[57] The effects of immobility in hiding, however, go beyond the physical. Underground hideouts allowed for movements and activities that provided psychological relief, allowed for killing time, and offered a certain degree of imaginatory escape.[58] For many diarists in rural attics, in contrast, the immobility and lack of stimulation provoked profound inner unrest. Suffering heat and insects in summer and the cold in winter, as well as illnesses, many found that sleep was difficult, but when it was possible,

52 Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave*, 119, 186.

53 Chess, June 16, 1943. Cf. Engel, October 28, 1943. For more on "newspaper reading" as a practice in hiding, see Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 58–94. For a similar "discussion culture," cf. Edmund Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler: Lwow, Poland, 1942–1944* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010).

54 Chess, August 3, 1943.

55 Siekierka, June 15, 1944.

56 Koper, passim.

57 Chess, June 10, 1943; cf. Engel, May 18, 1944.

58 Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave*, 186.

it served as a welcome reprieve to kill time.[59] For Irena Chess, being awake meant that "I am lying all day with different thoughts in my head;"[60] she noted feeling "like a person who sits on hot coals or needles."[61] On a particularly slow-moving, quiet, hot and motionless day, she noted that "even the life of a criminal is worthy of envy compared to ours."[62] Baruch Milch's verdict is similarly grim: "We felt worse than prisoners. Prisoners can talk aloud in their cell."[63] Perhaps not surprisingly, the experience of time becomes a major problem in such circumstances. The diaries are replete with complaints about the slow movement of time: Chess compulsively checked a clock, counting every hour.[64] Brandla Siekierka noted that for her, "each day is like a year."[65]

Of particular significance among the time-passing activities curtailed in the attic was social talking. For diarist writing in insulated underground dugouts, this activity regularly appears as an important part of coping. Twelve-year old Melania Weissenberg, hidden with an older cousin under a barn in southern Poland, writes that "the most bearable times of day are the evenings, when we lie under the warm eiderdown and Kitten tells me various stories, which often make me burst out laughing."[66] Further east, in an earth dugout in the eastern Galician town of Krzemeniec, M. Landsberg[67] and his companion Rudy spent half of their day on what the author terms "discussions after dark."[68] The loss of this ability to speak is experienced as particularly traumatic, as speaking is associated with exerting autonomy. Irena Chess notes: "When I was still in the house, I had at least the freedom of a dog on a leash; it was half bad. I could go to the garden, speak loudly, play with Onia, listen to stories and news that Dr. R. brought from the town, chat with Sławek."[69] Fela Fiszbein writes that even while her husband is only feet away, for large stretches of time "I have nobody to talk to. I keep all of it inside. I look bad. So does my husband."[70]

59 Engel, June 24, 1943.
60 Chess, June 25, 1943.
61 Chess, June 23, 1943.
62 Chess, June 16, 1943.
63 Milch, undated, p. 184.
64 Chess, June 16, 1943.
65 Siekierka, June 14, 1944.
66 Weissenberg, November 1943.
67 First name unknown.
68 Landsberg, undated, 24.
69 Chess, June 25, 1943.
70 Fiszbein, May 30, 1942; cf. Engel, July 3, 1944.

The structure and acoustic properties of the attic, then, robbed those hiding there of the possibility to be mobile, conduct their daily activities and distractions, or exert perceived agency by talking inside their hiding place.

On the other hand, it allowed those in hiding to hear the outside. A striking feature of diaries written in rural attics in this respect are the extensive depictions of outside sounds of nature. Irena Chess illustrated how immediate such acoustic contact with natural sounds could be: When she woke up in the morning, "before my eyes I see the chipped boards that separate us from the supposed world, I can hear the gru-gru- of pigeons who grumble like old grannies [. . .] I can even distinguish individual voices. Some small bird sings somewhere close in the garden, but it has such a colorful voice that it often seems to me to be that of a woman. One can also hear a myriad of other voices and the accompaniment of frogs."[71] If this is, on the face of it, a positive experience, it could also turn into a painful reminder of a distant life that was, in the typical words of Maria Koper, "not for me."[72]

The second large category of external sounds catalogued in diaries of Jews hiding in open spaces such as attics are human voices. With these, the perceived disconnect is even more pronounced. Irena Chess notes: "Through the cracks in the boards one can see [. . .] the backyard and the neighboring garden, in which from dusk till dawn resound [*rozbrzmiewają*] happy children's voices."[73] Sosia Zimmerman opens her notes with playing children and their "ringing, little voices," for her are a stark reminder of her own imprisonment.[74] Throughout these diaries, the sound of free people turns out to be the hardest to endure. Baruch Milch learns to dread Sundays, when local youths gather in nearby a forest glade to sing.[75] Fela Fiszbein became an ear-witness to a wedding, and "in the morning, the musicians arrived. As soon as the first chords resounded, I burst out in tears; this was an extreme contrast to our deathly [*trupiego*] life."[76]

Summing up the above observations, the following can be noted. The interplay of the rural hi-fi environment on the one hand, and the highly acoustically transparent space of the attic on the other, creates a precarious situation. Unlike hiding places such as cellars and dugouts, rural attics lacked the proximity of earth or cement walls and ceilings. They provided ample physical space, as well as direct sensory contact with the outside world, including nature and voices.

71 Chess, June 25, 1943.
72 Koper, May 5, 1943.
73 Chess, June 25, 1943.
74 Zimmerman, undated, p. 1.
75 Milch, undated, p. 179.
76 Fiszbein, October 2, 1943.

One might expect this to provide a feeling of physical freedom. However, as even the slightest sound immediately announced their presence to the hi-fi environment outside, Jews hiding in these spaces effectively found themselves immobilized for large stretches of time. For them, the enclosure of air turned out to be more restrictive than that of earth, cement, and clay.

This had two notable consequences. Firstly, the arrested movement restricted basic cultural and social practices that were available in more insulated hideouts, such as preparing food, holding conversations, or, with few exceptions, taking an active part in designing one's surroundings. In doing so, it set a limit on exerting even the smallest measure of control over one's immediate environment. In an article examining Jews hiding on the "Aryan side" of Warsaw, Małgorzata Melchior points out that Jewish fugitives experienced a partial or complete loss of power over the course of their life.[77] Understood in terms of qualitative – and in particular life-course – sociology, such experiences, associated with feelings of chaos and suffering, highlight a relationship with the overall "trajectory" of one's life.[78] In reacting to such experiences, people may undertake active attempts to regain control, an aspect made prominent in the work of sociologist Anselm Strauss, or process and accept the events as fate, a reaction stressed by authors such as Fritz Schütze.[79] In the case of Jews in hiding, Melchior identifies a control-regaining strategy in the seeking out and designing of hiding places.[80] However, almost all such activity was arrested in lofts and attics. The survey of the diaries with an ear for sound shows that for Jews in such hideouts, the loss of these last tools to actively regain control takes center stage. This indicates that under these circumstances, such assertion was perceived as more important than finding successful means of acceptance and coping. Tentatively, the counter-strategies of fugitive Jews in the face of their life trajectories, which were noted by Melchior, can be extended by

77 Małgorzata Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett po „stronie aryjskiej" na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania [Ghetto Fugitives on the 'Aryan side' in the Provincial Part of the Warsaw District – Ways of Survival]," in *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie Warszawskim*, eds. Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka (Warszawa: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2007), 312–372.

78 Ronald J. Berger, *Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4–5.

79 Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schütze, "'Trajectory' as a basic theoretical concept for analyzing suffering and disorderly social processes," in *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*, ed. David Maines (New York: de Gruyter, 1991), 333–357.

80 Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett"; cf. Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave*, 253. See also Maddy Carey's remarks on Jewish men asserting their agentive masculinity by organizing hiding places for their families: Maddy Carey, *Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 101.

pointing not just to the process of looking for and constructing shelters, but also to the above-mentioned micro-exertions of agency – small measures that are lost in acoustically transparent spaces, leading to an almost entirely passive state.

Secondly, the loss of these bodily practices also meant a loss of the ability to produce "local" sound in hiding. The acoustic ecology of these hideouts instead was characterized by the sounds of the village. In describing these, the diarists noted fears of being discovered, but also, with at least equal extent and intensity, feelings of exclusion. Especially voices testifying to others' free and communal life are consistently described as reminders of an environment that was "not for" hidden Jews. In her study on hiding places in occupied Poland, Marta Cobel-Tokarska notes the importance of the spatial environment for establishing a place of one's own. "An attic, shed, basement, bunker, and a dugout can qualify to be surrogate homes. Wardrobes, barrels, sheets of tin – not really. It is hard to pinpoint a terminal point in this continuum of spatial forms of the hiding places we know about."[81] Different spatial forms provided different opportunities to transform a site of survival into a place imbued with meaning and sociality. With the place-making functions of sound in mind, described in the previous section, the criteria for minimal "surrogate homes" ought to include the ability to create one's own sound-world in said hiding place. In facilitating humans' felt and recognized relationships to particular spaces, sound "helps heighten a sense of where the body feels 'at home', or not, that might be expressed in terms of belonging and alienation."[82] For those hiding in attic spaces, the environment was filled with the alienating sounds of other bodies and spaces. Without the sensory presence of the sound producers themselves and their co-habitants, their hiding sites lacked an important element that would allow them to turn a site of survival into a place to which and within which they could establish relationship. In insulated hideouts, this role could be played by the sound of a radio, everyday sounds of cooking or handicrafts, or the voice or snore of a hiding companion. Without the insulation necessary, those in attics could not enact their sensory presence in a place and establish an island of their own presence in contrast to a world perceived to be outside. If the criteria for what constitutes "surrogate homes" are thus hard to define in spatial terms, the ability to create one's own sound-world thus provides a useful and important metric. On the extreme end of this were those hiding sites that did not afford sound production. At best, they allowed alienating reminders of the social life of others to fill the space; at worst, they engendered painful experiences of atomization without even a sense of shared inhabitation of the hideout.

81 Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave*, 241.
82 Duffy and Waitt, "Home Sounds," 467.

Negotiating social dynamics

Hiding in rural attics not only affected subjective experiences such as a loss of agency and sustained feelings of alienation. The following section will point out several ways in which the mentions of sound in rural attic diaries also reflected social dynamics within the local community, and between hosts and hidden Jews.[83]

Hosts and rural community

Eastern European rural communities during the war were characterized by a strictly limited, tight circle of social interactions between few neighbors. These generally knew each other very well, in large part due to the mutual dependence of rural society. This engendered a rather close circuit of information in which no news would go undetected.[84] The simplicity and monotony of rural life meant that any event in any way diverging from the routine aroused comments and reactions down the chain of communication.[85] In such conditions, the consequences of attracting attention anywhere were potentially catastrophic. Cases of denunciation and even aggravated assaults against Jews, with people destroying their hideouts or taking their lives, occurred in Polish villages.[86] For Jews, this marked the harsh reality that, in the words of diarist Irena Chess, "in such a small place it is known who is still alive, and they are looked for."[87]

---

83 Omitted here are the social dynamics between Jews in hiding, as well as their contact with German authorities. For the former, see esp. Natalia Aleksiun, "Gender and the Daily Lives of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 27 (2014): 38–61; Aleksiun, "Daily Survival." Germans tend to appear rarely in these diaries. Those in hiding relate to local authorities, in Poland the *sołtys* [village council chair] and local forces such as the Polish "blue police" installed by the Germans.

84 For Western Galicia, Tomasz Frydel notes a "'village security system' imposed by the German authorities, consisting of village heads, rotating village guards, a system of 'hostages' (*zakładnicy*), foresters, gamekeepers, messengers and the like." Tomasz Frydel, "The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated Microhistory of the Holocaust in East Central Europe," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, 4 (2018): 629. Cf. Tomasz Frydel, "Judenjagd: Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust," in *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Action, Motivations and Dynamics*, eds. Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), 190–191.

85 Cobel-Tokarska, *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave*, 93.

86 Engelking et al., *Zarys krajobrazu*; Engelking and Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc*; Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*; Koprowska, *Postronni?*; Leociak, *Ratowanie*.

87 Chess, undated, p. 4.

Villagers hiding Jews thus had to take extreme precautions. Diaries written by hidden Jews reflect how unusually large purchases or meal preparations by their hosts easily aroused the suspicions of neighbors.[88] Even noticing the neighbor fetching an additional pail of water,[89] or emptying a waste bucket,[90] presented potential fodder for a possible information leak about additional members in the household, i.e. hidden Jews. The same can be said of a host undertaking a regular trip to a neighboring town to collect or post mail.[91]

Unusual sounds, too, presented deviations from the simplicity and monotony of rural life. In a hi-fi environment, the distinct sounds of village life presented highly informative signals which could easily be interpreted by passing or visiting villagers. The social integration of the hosts into the community, and with it spatial factors such as the remoteness of a home and a low frequency of visits, was therefore a major factor in the range of activities available for hidden Jews. While some Jews hiding in rural areas were permanently confined or had to stay in their barn lofts or house attics for long stretches of time, others were even able at times to help around the farm while avoiding contact with visitors, neighbors and local authorities.[92]

The frequency and variety of sounds that the hidden Jews described in their diaries in turn give hints about the ties of the hosts to the local community and changes in their social status. A particularly illustrative example is the diary of Fela Fiszbein, who was hidden in the attic of the Dunajewski farmer family. In the first stretch of hiding, Fela rarely reported on the sounds of passers-by, and was able to leave her hiding place in calm moments.[93] This indicates that the Dunajewskis were quite isolated from village society, possibly a consequence of their financial standing, which afforded them a degree of independence (Fela writes of a servant and a farm hand). The sound depictions change when the landlord is burdened with local administrative duties and begins to have an increased flow of visitors to the house. The Fiszbein's temporary refuge of the attic turns into a permanent home: "This year [the Germans] appointed the landlord as a *sołtys* [village council chair], so even if they [the hosts] wanted to take us downstairs we

88 Rebecca Margolis and Edward Anders, "The Linkimer Diary: How 11 Jews Survived the Holocaust," in *Symposium of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia, Volume 14*, eds. Andris Caune et al. (Riga: Institute of Latvian Historians, 2008), 60.

89 Jan Grabowski, "Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland" (Ottawa: Ottawa Historical Association, 2014), section 00:37:18; Siekierka, June 22, 1944.

90 Fiszbein, September 24, 1942.

91 Zimmermann, January 12, 1944.

92 Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett," 381.

93 Fiszbein, October 20, 1943; October 24, 1943.

would not go; it is a great danger."[94] Immobilized in the attic, Fela quickly learns to distinguish friendly visitors from potential threats by their voices.[95]

Such shifts in the relationship between those who hid Jews and the wider rural society also directly related to the fact of hiding Jews. After Sosia Zimmerman's family was hidden in different attics just for a few days at a time by suspicious and often hostile peasants, she found a welcome and a more permanent refuge in the attic of a farmer called Vasil. Highly aware of surveillance regimes by locals, Vasil decided to take precautionary action:

> Our host has found some new tricks. [. . .] Sometimes, he stands in the open attic, working and singing at the top of his lungs, so that everyone in the village can hear him. When someone asks him why he is singing, he says: because the Gestapo came. [. . .] One of his best tricks is a speech he gives on the Jewish question. He tells everyone that this is high season for Jew-killing, and that they should make the most of it, by murdering and robbing all the Jews. He has gotten quite the reputation as a Jew-killer.[96]

With the arrival of Jews, Vasil's relationship with the surrounding local society thus entered a new phase. He re-fashioned his public persona towards a Jew-hating sympathiser of the Gestapo. He did so by providing his own high-information sounds (even just happy singing), a performance that told the surrounding rural society a lie about himself.

Reading the diaries with attention to such aural behaviors reaffirms how much the difficulty or ease of hiding Jews depended on the local social exposure and communal integration of the hosts. In turn, the presence of hidden Jews, even if not detected, had the potential to change the relationship of a host with his or her wider social environment. As Natalia Aleksiun notes, in the most extreme case, hiding Jews for some hosts led them to a "conscious disentangling of local networks."[97] In most cases, however, to protect themselves while sheltering Jews, hosts had to find new approaches, such as when Fela's host managed visitors to his house, or Vasil performatively re-cast his public persona in the neighborhood.

Hosts and hidden Jews

While the previous examples demonstrated relationships between hosts and their rural social environment, the same acoustic "perspective" can be applied to

94 Fiszbein, October 27, 1943.
95 Fiszbein, September 24, 1943.
96 Zimmerman, December 12, 1943.
97 Aleksiun, "Social Networks of Support," 285.

the relationship between hosts and the Jews they were hiding. If most attics were located at some distance from farm houses, some diarists report living directly above their hosts. In many cases, this meant that they were separated from them by just a wooden floor, which transmitted their movements and voices to those who were hiding them.

The behaviors that this close contact required paint the picture of an often uneasy relationship between hosts and sheltered Jews. During one particularly cold night, Fela Fiszbein's husband decided that, rather than sleeping in the attic part above the barn, he would move to the attic area above the house and use the warmth emanating from the hosts' living quarters. "I heard that my husband screamed in his sleep," noted Fela for that night. "I hardly managed to wake him up. This could have easily given us away, especially since the hiding place is exactly over the bed of the farm-host. My husband has now moved to the main attic."[98] Here, rules around making sound in different parts of the attic reflect a tension within the household of the hosts: the wife of the farm-host keeps the presence of the Fiszbein's secret from him. A similar dynamic unfolds with Irena Chess: she moves from a closet to the attic to avoid being heard by the head of the house, who is not happy with her presence.[99] In many households, only some among multiple hosts were willing to take on the risk and often the economic burden of caring for hidden Jews. Sometimes, host households compromised among themselves and only assented to hiding some Jews. This, too, is reflected in acoustic practices: in another attic, Irena Chess was supposed to hide alone, but kept her mother in the attic as well. "We could not turn, because [the host] could hear if someone would move, but we took care *not to move at the same time*."[100]

These implicit and explicit rules around sound-making highlight social dynamics that had to be navigated by hosts and those in hiding alike. Members of host families differed in their willingness to shelter all or some Jews, and at times even kept the presence of additional hidden persons secret from each other. Those in hiding, in turn, had to adapt their bodily practices and everyday acoustic and spatial behaviors to take such conflicts into account. Furthermore, the navigation of these already complicated relationships was often put to the test by the sounds of an approaching frontline or roaming gangs resounding through the landscape. As soldiers came and went by the attic space, Fela was initially unsure of the best step to take, while her husband was pushed close to the edge: "We

98 Fiszbein, November 27, 1943.
99 Chess, June 25, 1943.
100 Chess, undated, p. 63 (my emphasis, N. H.).

can hear shooting. My husband screams for us to step outside and flee. The hosts advise against it and tell us to wait some more."[101] When the village in which Baruch Milch was hiding filled with shots of German soldiers, "our protectors were very tense, but they reassured us, even though they told us to be dressed at all times. Other people would have kicked us out long ago."[102] Fela Fiszbein's host expresses this in characteristic directness: "I sheltered you as best as I could; now I am afraid."[103]

These examples are by no means exhaustive. What they highlight, however, is that the social dynamics of hiding played themselves out in spatial terms. For hosts, maintaining communal bonds while concealing the presence of Jews meant navigating the informational circuit of the community through spatio-acoustic strategies, from managing physical visits to their houses to even utilising the "common [. . .] field of the sensible"[104] in the quiet village through public sound. Closer attention to the way they engaged stressed the importance of their integration into the community. Interestingly, for hidden Jews, maintaining their relationship with their hosts *also* meant relying on spatio-acoustic strategies: in order not to strain their relationship with the rescuers, almost all diarists had to take care concerning who of them could make sounds, as well as when and where. Closer attention to these implicit rules as they appear in the diaries showed that relationships between hosts and Jews in these settings were not favorable with the entire host family or couple, as some common narratives may suggest. Instead, they were often individualized on both sides of rescuer and rescued. Tracking the way these relationships developed in response to sounds of approaching danger further brings attention to how not just conditional, but tenuous, unstable, and threatened these relationships were. This extends more recent insights on rescue, especially those emerging from micro-historical approaches, which stress the situative nature of help.[105]

101 Fiszbein, May 4, 1944.

102 Milch, p. 183.

103 Fiszbein, November 23, 1943.

104 Martin Daughtry, "Thanatosonics," *Social Text* 32, 2 (2014): 25.

105 Agnieszka Wierzcholska, "Helping, Denouncing, and Profiteering: A Process-Oriented Approach to Jewish–Gentile Relations in Occupied Poland from a Micro-Historical Perspective," *Holocaust Studies*, 23, 1 (2016): 34–58; Miranda Brethour, "Jewish–Gentile Relations in Hiding during the Holocaust in Sokołów County, Poland (1942–1944)," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 33, 4 (2019): 277–301.

Conclusion

This essay approached hiding in rural attics and barns with particular attention to sounds as they unfolded in space and were noted on the pages of the diaries. The specific sonic conditions of these sites brought to the fore the diarists' sense of loss of agency and belonging. The immobility imposed by the acoustically transparent architecture robbed them of important instruments for exerting psychological agency by taking action, moving, and shaping conditions in their hiding place. The inability to produce local sounds in these sites, and especially the lack of social talking, undercut a crucial relational place-making activity. This fed feelings of profound estrangement, homelessness, and social atomization. Rules and patterns surrounding the production of sound in and around different types of rural attics serve as an indicator of the role of hosts in the wider social network of the village, as well as the relationships of Jews in hiding with their hosts. Hosts had to develop new audio-spatial strategies to navigate and deceive their rural social environments. Notably, the same was true for Jews in relation to their hosts. Notes on care and rules around sound-making in attics highlight that, contrary to many post-hoc accounts, not everyone in the host family wanted to shelter Jews, not all of those sheltered were welcome at all times, and many such relationships were on the brink of collapse.

Approaching these diaries with particular attention to the interaction of sound and space paints a more precarious picture of rural attic and barn hiding in Eastern Europe than its associations of remoteness and spaciousness may suggest. In the particular sonic and communal ecologies of villages, attics imposed extreme strains on already precarious social relations. These hiding sites did not provide a protective shell isolating a group of people from a hostile or ambivalent social environment, whether threats or selective hosts. Instead, they engendered acoustic and social contact with them. In doing so, they inhibited social bonds inside the hiding place and isolated every single person in hiding from others in hiding.

Bibliography

Diaries: Archival

Yad Vashem, Jerusalem
Chess, O.3/2938
Guensberg, O.3/2535
Fiszbein, O.3/3785
Koper, O.33/334

Landsberg, O.33/1099
Neider, O.3/2076

Jewish Historical Institute, Krakow
Siekierka, 302/123

Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
Breitbart, 1996.A.0391
Engel, 1999.A.201

Diaries: Published

Kessler, Edmund. *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler: Lwow, Poland, 1942–1944*. Jews of Poland. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010.
Klonitski, Aryeh. *The Diary of Adam's Father*. Jerusalem: Beit Lohamei Haghetaot/Ghetto Fighters House, 1973.
Milch, Baruch. Testament. Warszawa: Karta, 2012.
Weissenberg, Melania. "Dziennik Melanii Weissenberg, 1942–1945 [The Diary of Melania Weissenberg]." In *Dobrze Jest Posiadać Dom Pod Ziemią*. Edited by Jan Grabowski, 16–52. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2016.
Wolgelernter, Chaim Yitzchok. *The Unfinished Diary: A Chronicle of Tears*. Lakewood, NJ: Israel Bookshop Publications, 2015.
Zapruder, Alexandra, ed. "Otto Wolf." In *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 122–59. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2015.
Zimmerman, Sosia Gottesfeld. *A Mother's Diary: Surviving the Holocaust in Ukraine 1941–1944*. Morgan Hill, CA: Bookstand Publishing, 2015.

Secondary sources

Agnew, John. "Space:Place." In *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*. Edited by Paul J. Cloke and R. J. Johnston, 81–96. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005.
Aldcroft, Derek Howard. "Characteristics of the European Periphery." In *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years*, 3–14. Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.
Aleksiun, Natalia. "Daily Survival: Social History of Jews in Family Bunkers in Eastern Galicia." In *Lessons & Legacies*. Edited by Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi, 12.304–331. New Directions in Holocaust Research and Education. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017.
Aleksiun, Natalia. "Gender and the Daily Lives of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 27 (2014): 38–61.
Aleksiun, Natalia. "Social Networks of Support: Trajectories of Escape, Rescue and Survival." In *A Companion to the Holocaust*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, 279–293. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020.

Aleksiun, Natalia, Hana Kubátová, Gaëlle Fisher, and Rachel O'Sullivan, eds. *Places, Spaces and Voids in the Holocaust*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021.
Bauer, Yehuda. *The Death of the Shtetl*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
Berger, Ronald J. *Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
Bernat, Sebastian, and Józef Hernik. "Polnische Klanglandschaft um die Jahrhundertwende." In *Transformation und Landschaft: die Folgen sozialer Wandlungsprozesse auf Landschaft*, eds. Olaf Kühne, Krzysztof Gawroński, and Józef Hernik, 247–268. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015.
Birdsall, Carolyn. *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933–1945*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.
Blesser, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter. *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.
Brethour, Miranda. "Jewish–Gentile Relations in Hiding during the Holocaust in Sokołów County, Poland (1942–1944)." *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 33, 4 (2019): 277–301.
Carey, Maddy. *Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction*. London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.
Cobel-Tokarska, Marta. *Desert Island, Burrow, Grave: Wartime Hiding Places of Jews in Occupied Poland*. Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2018.
Cole, Tim. "Geographies of the Holocaust." In *A Companion to the Holocaust*. Edited by Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, 331–347. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020.
Cole, Tim. *Holocaust Landscapes*. London et al.: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016.
Daughtry, Martin. "Thanatosonics." *Social Text* 32, 2 (2014): 25–51.
Duffy, Michelle, and Gordon Waitt. "Home Sounds: Experiential Practices and Performativities of Hearing and Listening." *Social & Cultural Geography* 14, 4 (2013): 466–481.
Engelking, Barbara. "'. . . Zupełnie Zdani Jesteśmy Na Nich . . .' : Codzienność ukrywania się i relacje z gospodarzami na podstawie dziennika Feli Fischbein. ['. . . We Completely Depend on Them . . .': Everyday Hiding and Relationships with Hosts Based on the Diary of Fela Fischbein]." *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008): 144–169.
Engelking, Barbara. *Such a Beautiful Sunny Day . . .: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2016.
Engelking, Barbara, and Jan Grabowski, eds. *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski [Night without End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Districts of Occupied Poland]*. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.
Engelking, Barbara, Jan Grabowski, Krzysztof Persak, eds. *Zarys krajobrazu: Wieś Polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945 [An Outline of the Landscape: The Polish Countryside in the Face of the Extermination of Jews 1942–1945]*. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011.
Finkel, Evgeny. *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017.
Frydel, Tomasz. "Judenjagd: Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust." In *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Action, Motivations and Dynamics*. Edited by Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, 187–203. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2018.
Frydel, Tomasz. "The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated Microhistory of the Holocaust in East Central Europe." *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, 4 (2018): 624–631.

Garbarini, Alexandra. *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
Gerlach, Christian. "Echoes of Persecution: Sounds in Early Post-Liberation Jewish Memories." *Holocaust Studies* 24, 1 (2017): 1–25.
Gigliotti, Simone. *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.
Głowiński, Michał. *The Black Seasons*. Translated by Marci Shore. Jewish Lives. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005.
Grabowski, Jan. *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.
Grabowski, Jan. "Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland." Ottawa: Ottawa Historical Association, January 2014, accessed January 10, 2022, http://activehistory.ca/2014/03/podcast-hunt-for-the-jews-betrayal-and-murder-in-german-occupied-poland-by-jan-grabowski.
Grzemska, Aleksandra. "Odmierzanie Pamięci [Measuring Memory]." *Autobiografia. Literatura. Kultura. Media* 2, 3 (2014): 151–164.
Ingold, Tim. "The Temporality of the Landscape." *World Archaeology* 25, 2 (1993): 152–174.
Jacobs, Annelies. "The Silence of Amsterdam before and during World War II: Ecology, Semiotics and Politics of Urban Sound." In *Sounds of Modern History. Auditory Cultures in 19th and 20th Century Europe*. Edited by Daniel Morat, 305–325. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014.
Janczewska, Marta. "Literatura Dokumentu Osobistego [The Literature of the Ego-Document]." In *Literatura Polska Wobec Zagłady*, edited by Alina Brodzka, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak, 92–153. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000.
Koprowska, Karolina. *Postronni?: Zagłada w relacjach chłopskich świadków [Bystanders?: The Holocaust in Peasant Witness Accounts]*. Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas Kraków, 2018.
Le Noc, Maël, and Eric Sarmiento. "'We Were Turned into Jews': Space, Subjectivation, and Resistance in Occupied Paris." *Social & Cultural Geography* (July 7, 2021): 1–17. doi:10.1080/14649365.2021.1950825.
Leociak, Jacek. *Ratowanie: Opowiesci Polakow i Żydow [Rescue: Accounts by Poles and Jews]*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010.
Leociak, Jacek. "Topografia i Chronologia Zapisów Zagłady [The Topography and Chronology of Accounts of the Holocaust]." In *Literatura Polska Wobec Zagłady*. Edited by Alina Brodzka, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak, 24–31. Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000.
Leociak, Jacek. "Wizerunek Polaków w zapisach Żydów z dystryktu warszawskiego [The image of Poles in the writings of Jews from the Warsaw district]." In *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie Warszawskim*. Edited by Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, 373–443. Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2007.
Margolis, Rebecca, and Edward Anders. "The Linkimer Diary: How 11 Jews Survived the Holocaust." In *Symposium of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia, Volume 14*. Edited by Andris Caune, Aivars Stranga, and Marģers Vestermanis, 48–68. Riga: Institute of Latvian Historians, 2008.
Massey, Doreen B. *Space, Place and Gender*. Repr. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
Melchior, Małgorzata. "Uciekinierzy z gett po „stronie aryjskiej" na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania [Ghetto fugitives on the 'Aryan side' in the provincial part of the Warsaw district – ways of survival]." In *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada*

Żydów w dystrykcie Warszawskim [Province Night: Life and Extermination of the Polish Jews in the Warsaw District]. Edited by Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, 312–372. Warsaw: Wydawn. IFiS PAN, 2007.

Miliszkiewicz, Grzegorz. "Elektryfikacja Lubelszczyzny [The electrification of Lublin region]." In *Założenia, projekty i materiały do ekspozycji zagadnienia elektryfikacji Lubelszczyzny oraz do zajęć edukacyjnych i działań parateatralnych w Muzeum Wsi Lubelskiej*. Lublin: Mps. w Archiwum MWL, 2005.

Miliszkiewicz, Grzegorz. "Klimat dźwiękowy miasteczka czasów II Rzeczypospolitej – Podstawy do muzealnej rekonstrukcji [Sound Climate of a Town During the Second Polish Republic – Materials for a Museum Reconstruction]." *Wieś Radomska* 8 (2007): 205–223.

Mills, Steve. *Auditory Archaeology: Understanding Sound and Hearing in the Past*. London; New York: Routledge, 2016.

Missfelder, Jan-Friedrich. "Der Klang der Geschichte: Begriffe, Traditionen und Methoden der Sound History." *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 66, 11/12 (2015): 633–649.

Missfelder, Jan-Friedrich. "Period Ear: Perspektiven einer Klanggeschichte der Neuzeit." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, 1 (2012): 21–47.

Müller, Jürgen. "The Sound of History and Acoustic Memory: Where Psychology and History Converge." *Culture & Psychology* 18, 4 (2012): 443–464.

Pijanowski, Bryan C., Luis J. Villanueva-Rivera, Sarah L. Dumyahn, Almo Farina, Bernie L. Krause, Brian M. Napoletano, Stuart H. Gage, and Nadia Pieretti. "Soundscape Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape." *BioScience* 61, 3 (2011): 203–216.

Pistrick, Eckehard, and Cyril Isnart. "Landscapes, Soundscapes, Mindscapes: Introduction." *Etnografica*, 17, 3 (2013): 503–513.

Poprzęcka, Maria. *Kuźnia: Mit, Alegoria, Symbol [The Forge: Myth, Allegory, Symbol]*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1972.

Riemann, Gerhard, and Fritz Schütze. "'Trajectory' as a basic theoretical concept for analyzing suffering and disorderly social processes." In *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*. Edited by David Maines, 333–357. New York: de Gruyter, 1991.

Ripley, Colin, "Introduction." In *In the Place of Sound: Architecture, Music, Acoustics*. Edited by Colin Ripley, Marco Polo, Arthur Wrigglesworth, 1–11. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994.

Smith, Mark M. "Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History." *Journal of Social History* 40, 4 (2007): 841–858.

Smith, Mark M. *Sensory History*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 2007.

Steege, Paul, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healy, and Pamela E. Swett. "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter." *The Journal of Modern History* 80, 2 (2008): 358–378.

Tańczuk, Renata, and Sławomir Wieczorek, eds. *Sounds of War and Peace: Soundscapes of European Cities in 1945*. Berlin at al.: Peter Lang, 2018.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Place: An Experiential Perspective." *Geographical Review* 65, 2 (1975): 151–165.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective." In *Philosophy in Geography*. Edited by Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson, 387–427. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1979.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Waxman, Zoë. *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
Wierzcholska, Agnieszka. "Helping, Denouncing, and Profiteering: A Process-Oriented Approach to Jewish–Gentile Relations in Occupied Poland from a Micro-Historical Perspective." *Holocaust Studies*, 23, 1 (2016): 34–58.
Zapruder, Alexandra. *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2015.

Collective action

Janina Wurbs

Auditory quarrels, rage and collective action: A street singer and his audience within the web of the ghetto society

This chapter examines forms of collective action related to cultural practice under conditions of social fragmentation, caused by persecution and famine, in the Łódź ghetto. It is part of a larger project on sound history of the *khurbm*,[1] sounds heard and described by Jews living under the threat of persecution.[2]

As is well-known, in the grotesque situation of the Nazi ghetto in Łódź, musically well-educated violinists, pianists and opera singers were able to perform in the "House of Culture" and in workshops, with elite musicians drawing elite listeners. There existed two orchestras, a children's choir, recitals, poetry readings and other forms of artistic expression.[3] None of this is the focus of this chapter.

Instead, my case study is about a street singer, by profession a tailor, making his remarks on daily situations and everyday Jewish internal social dynamics in the ghetto: Jankiel Herszkowicz (in Polish), or Yankele, as he was known in Yiddish, was the most famous street singer in the Łódź ghetto. Instead of working in his trade as a tailor, he was able to scratch a living for three years by writing and performing songs.[4]

1 This is the Yiddish term for Holocaust/Shoa, literally "destruction," used as an ellipsis of "The Third khurbm," the destruction of the Jews of Europe, after the destruction (in Hebrew "*khurban*") of the First and Second Temples which have been and are regarded as calamities for the Jewish people, being commemorated once every year and at every Jewish wedding. – I am using the YIVO transcription of Yiddish into Latin letters in this paper.

2 "Sounds of anti-Jewish persecution," Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Project no. 172597.

3 Cf. for example Lucjan Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, 1941–1944* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 11, 16, 36, 83, 286; Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 334–340.

4 According to the entry on him in the Ghetto encyclopedia, "Herszkowicz, Jankel." See Adam Sitarek and Ewa Wiatr, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: The State Archive in Łódź. Dom Wydawnicy Księży Młyn, 2017), 94.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-010

The example of the singer Yankele Herszkowicz

Herszkowicz was born in 1910 in Opatów (Apt in Yiddish), then part of the Habsburg Empire, today southern Poland, about 200 kilometers southeast of Warsaw and Łódź. The shtetl had a considerable Jewish population. According to Rakhmiel Bryks, Herszkowicz' education consisted only of the *kheyder*, the traditional East European Jewish religious elementary school where mostly boys studied the Hebrew alphabet and basic praying as well as basic religious texts.[5] Herszkowicz did not know Polish, and wrote Yiddish incorrectly.[6] He became a tailor. In 1938, he went to Łódź in search for work. In the spring of 1940, all Jews living in other parts of Łódź had to move to an area that the German occupiers had selected for a ghetto to be built. It included the northern Old Town (Stare Miasto), the suburb of Marysin, with the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe before the war, and the Bałuty slum. Out of an area of only 4.13 square kilometers, 2.5 square kilometers were built up: there were about 31,000 dwellings, some of them in wooden houses, without water supply and sewerage. About 160,000 people – more than five people per apartment on average – had to live in this completely overcrowded ghetto, which was sealed off on April 30, 1940.

From the Łódź ghetto, Herszkowicz was deported to Auschwitz in August 1944, and from there to other camps; he was liberated in Braunschweig. He went back to Łódź, married and had two sons. In 1972 he committed suicide.[7]

In the ghetto, he lived with family: with his mother Ruchla Blum and his father Liber (both born in 1883) and his younger brother Abe Lajb (born in 1919). With them, he first resided at 6 and 13 Rybna Street (in the western part of the ghetto area, near the Old Jewish Cemetery); at the southern end of the street: "Bazarna," a public execution site;[8] from February 1942 at 1 Starosikawska Street and finally, at 20, Berka Joselewicza Street.[9]

5 See "Heder," YIVO Encyclopedia, accessed February 06, 2022, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/heder.

6 Rakhmiel Bryks, *Di papirene kroyn* (New York; Tel Aviv: Yerakhmiel Bryks Book Committee and the Yiddish P.E.N. Club, 1969), 35.

7 Krystyna Radziszewska, *‚Flaschenpost' aus der Hölle: Texte aus dem Lodzer Getto* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 94.

8 Oskar Rosenfeld, *Wozu noch Welt: Aufzeichnungen aus dem Getto Lodz* (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1994), 156, note 18 of Heft E = on p. 309.

9 Joanna Podolska and Adam Sitarek, *Jesteśmy Drzewami Wiecznymi: We Are Eternal Trees* (Łódź: The Marek Edelman Dialogue Center in Łódź, 2019), 127, 130.

What was special about Yankele Herszkowicz?

Yankele Herszkowicz did not simply sing well-known Yiddish songs from the 19th century or the interwar period, but wrote all the lyrics himself – although he was but a simple tailor. He had traveled with other tailors before the war and had heard many songs during his journeys.[10] Their lyrics were characterized by sarcasm and social criticism. However, he used already known melodies (he was not a composer per se), so he built contrafacts, which helped his songs spreading widely by word of mouth throughout the ghetto.

As is visible on the photograph above by Mendel Grossman, Herszkowicz gathered crowds (Figure 1). Although I have not yet been able to determine where exactly he was standing in this photograph, or the other places where Herszkowicz sang, this does not seem to be in a narrow, crowded street. He often performed close to the transit bridges,[11] on streets, squares and courtyards.[12]

Figure 1: Street singer Jankiel Herszkowicz with Karol Rozencwajg on fiddle, Lodz ghetto, ca 1941. Photo by Mendel Grossman. © Photo Archive/Ghetto Fighters' Museum/Israel GFH 2997.

In the photograph, we see people reacting to his performance, children smiling. He holds a paper in his hand, which might point to the fact that he would not only sing

10 Irena Kohn, "Overlooked and Underanalyzed Source Material on Jewish Life in the Ghettos and Camps: Yossi Wajsblat's 'Dos Gezang Fun Lodzher Geto/La Ballade Du Ghetto Du Lodz,'" *Journal of Jewish Identities* 1, 2 (2008): 115.
11 Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 334.
12 Bryks, *Di papirene kroyn*, 37.

lyrics by heart, but would also read texts out, apart from his improvising. It also reminds one of the tradition of *badkhones*, where the *badkhonim*, wedding jesters, would proceed according to written down traditional formulas (reading from small pieces of paper) as well as improvising. He can be seen in the tradition of the *Broder zinger* as well: In the 19th century, the Broder singers were among the first folk singers to perform publicly in Yiddish and to perform Yiddish songs outside of weddings and religious festivals; they traveled around (in Galicia, Romania, Russia), sang, danced, dressed up, and sometimes performed mini-theater plays (one-act plays). Some of them were comical (among them were the *badkhonim*[13] and the *meshoyrerim*[14]). They are often cited as precursors of (secular) Yiddish theater.[15]

Sometimes, the singer was standing on a stool,[16] to be heard better, and sometimes he was accompanied by Karol Rozencwajg, a Viennese former salesman,[17] here playing a fiddle (Figure 1). Judging by how Rozencwajg holds the violin, and based on Ashkenazi Jewish musical traditions, he was probably playing *sekund*, that is, as a second fiddle would have accompanied the first fiddle playing the melody, e.g. by playing chords, highlighting certain words.

The street singer saw "his task in putting the sufferings, current questions, worries and complaints of the ghetto into verse and singing them to the crowd."[18] He did not see himself necessarily as a genius or an important poet, but rather as a mouthpiece of ghetto society, and he was also called the "Voice of the Ghetto."[19] An entry in the ghetto encyclopedia was dedicated to him, noting that he had a specific connection to the Łódź ghetto.[20]

Also, Herszkowicz fulfilled the function of a newspaper, from relating the historical ballad to entertainment to political commentaries to positive emotions: "He was our singing newspaper, a singing daily chronicle that brought a smile to the distressed ghetto Jews."[21] As Amos Goldberg found for Warsaw, hearing replaced

13 Traditional Jewish wedding jesters.

14 Choir boys in synagogues.

15 See "Broder, Berl," YIVO Encyclopedia, accessed February 06, 2022, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Broder_Berl.

16 According to two survivors, Yaakov Rotenberg was born in 1926 in Łódź and Pinchas Shaar (Schwartz) was born in 1917 in Łódź; Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 24.

17 Cf. Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 92.

18 O[skar] R[osenfeld], "Herszkowicz Jankel," in *Die Enzyklopädie des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, eds. Dominika Bopp, Sascha Feuchert, Andrea Löw, Jörg Riecke, Markus Roth and Elisabeth Turvold (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020), 62.

19 Cf. Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto, 1940–45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 24.

20 Cf. footnote 4 of this chapter.

21 Wajsblat in Herszkowicz, *Der zinger*, quoted in Kohn, *Overlooked*, 115.

reading to a certain degree in the ghetto.[22] Aside from the official newspaper published by the chief of the Jewish administration, Chaim Rumkowski, no other newspapers were allowed in the Łódź ghetto. Several underground newspapers appeared,[23] but there was a need for other methods of communication, as we can deduce, for example, from the "rumor"-column in the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle.[24]

"Rumkowski Chaim"

32 songs (all in Yiddish) by Herszkowicz from the Łódź ghetto (and one more from Auschwitz) are known, although from some of them only the lyrics survived. Herszkowicz's public performances often referenced conflicts and grim war-time realities of life in the ghetto.

The song "Rumkowski Chaim" – *'the unofficial anthem of the ghetto'*–[25] was the most popular song in the ghetto; according to the researcher Gila Flam, every survivor remembered it, especially the refrain.[26] It had many stanzas and variants. The song plays with the different meanings of the word "Chaim" in Yiddish, both as a single word – as a man's name and as one of the words in Yiddish for "life" – and in connection with other words, which indicates, for example, the contrast between life and death, namely in "beys ha-khayim," literally "house of the living," a euphemism for "cemetery." The critique of Rumkowski in this song was the reason the Jewish ghetto police tried arrest Herszkowicz, as detailed below. The following two excerpts on the New Year's Card portrayed below reflect Herszkowicz's tone and wit or sarcasm (Figure 2). Under the photograph, the text says "The Łódź Ghetto Singer" (first line, in Yiddish) and "Singer of the Łódź Ghetto" (second line, in Polish). The line coming out of Herszkowicz's mouth (in

22 Amos Goldberg, "Rumor Culture among Warsaw Jews under Nazi Occupation: A World of Catastrophe Reenchanted," *Jewish Social Studies*, 21, 3 (2016): 91–125.

23 Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 218.

24 Sascha Feuchert and Erwin Leibfried, Jörg Ricke, eds., *Die Chronik des Gettos Lodz / Litzmannstadt 1941* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), e.g. entry December 13, 1941 "Gerüchte", 299; entry October 1–15, 1941 "Falsche Gerüchte!", 241.

25 "Jewish New Year's card from Jankiel Herszkowicz, showing the performer singing his famous parody about Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, chairman of the Lodz ghetto Jewish council." There, under "biography". Accessed February 17, 2022. https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1148188.

26 Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 42. On page 34, she writes "most of the survivors". I assume she is writing about those survivors she met, talked to and interviewed.

Figure 2: Jewish New Year's Card depicting Street singer Jankiel Herszkowicz, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joseph Wajsblat. USHMM Photograph Number: 59782. https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1148188 accessed 9. April 2020.

Yiddish) is the beginning of the well-known refrain of the street singer's hit song in the ghetto, a parody on the Eldest of the Jews, Chaim Rumkowski: "Chaim Rumkowski gives us bran . . ." The four lines to the left of the photograph say:

Rumkowski khayim git inz klayen,	Chaim Rumkowski gives us bran,
er git inz groypn, er git inz man.	He gives us barley, he gives us manna.
fartsaytns hobn yidn oykh gegesn man,	In former times, Jews also ate manna.
Haynt est yede froy ir man.	Now each woman eats her man (husband).

In the last words of the third and the fourth lines, Herszkowicz is playing with homophones, words sounding the same but with different spellings and meanings, which evoke the witty sarcasm: "manna" = "man," "husband" = "man." On the postcard, this is used (as the handwritten line on the left shows) as A New Year's greeting ("Leshone Toyve," "To a New Year") signed "Hershkovitsh" (second Yiddish handwritten line). It deals with the most important topic of the ghetto, and of many songs: food, hunger, and the distribution of resources in a German-imposed famine situation.

Two more stanzas of the many slightly varying versions of this song show its play on the word "khayim" and its harsh critique:[27]

Men hot undz, yidelekh, gebentsht mit khayim! leKhayim leoylem moves oy, Khayim fin beys ha-khayim: Rumkowski Chaim mitn groysn nes!	We Jews are blessed with Khayim (life) Life unto death Khayim from the House of Life Rumkowski Chaim with his great miracle!
(other stanzas)	. . .
Ober indzer Khayim, Rumkowski Chaim teylt dokh yeydn tug shirayim: Eynem a shtik broyt, dem tsveytn a shtik ferd, Me ligt dokh bay im tif in dr'erd!	But our Khayim, Rumkowski Khayim Distributes daily leftovers: One person gets a piece of bread, another a piece of horsemeat, He is sending the whole ghetto to hell!

So, the ghetto population has been blessed not with life (*khayim*), but with Khayim (Rumkowski) who performs the 'miracle' of turning Jews from being alive into being dead, which is, of course, the opposite of how a miracle should work. He daily distributes "shirayim" – this word comes from the religious sphere of life, when a Hasidic *rebe* (spiritual leader, which is not the same as a *rov*, a rabbi) distributes (the real) *shirayim* to his followers, usually at a "tish," a religious meeting around the Hasidic leader including *davening*, praying, singing, and sometimes a *droshe* (speech) by the *rebe*. These situations are perceived as holy by the Hasidim, and the *shirayim*, the food touched by the *rebe* and distributed, is believed to carry personal blessings for each person receiving it. So, Herszkowicz compares Chaim Rumkowski to a *rebe* and cleverly parodies the whole procedure of the distribution of the food in the ghetto. In another stanza, Herszkowicz wishes Rumkowski "zol er lebn gantse hindert yor" ("may he live for 100 years"), which would be an appropriate wish in Polish ("sto lat!"), but in Yiddish, and in this song, it is clearly a curse, wishing the leader of the ghetto death, as one usually wishes "biz 120!" ("[live] to 120"). Hunger and food was one of the most common themes in songs and in the criticism directed at Rumkowski by other street singers (Hersh Froshker, for example[28]).

27 A recording of one version of the song by a survivor in 1948, recorded by Ben Stonehill, can be found at: http://beta.nli.org.il/en/items/NNL_MUSIC_AL002784535/NLI, accessed February 17, 2022.

28 Yad Vashem. Music of the Holocaust. "Lodzer Geto (Lodz Ghetto)". Accessed February 17, 2022. https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/lodzer-geto.asp.

Collective action and social conflict

Gila Flam called singing such songs "spiritual resistance;"[29] I would argue that another type of category is needed for defining these activities. Taking up Holger Schulze's "Sonic Persona"[30] and considering humans as acoustic bodies in space, the position of the street singer as a "sound body" within the soundscape of the Łódź ghetto is important, and offers a different perspective than has been adopted so far.

The "aural presence" and performativity of the act of public singing was crucial. The aural presence of the singer acted as a disruptor of order in the ghetto, via the sensual; the singer created cracks in the social order desired by the Eldest of the Jews, and brought other social relations to the surface, that is, into the space of the audible (reactions of his audience). Herszkowicz thus created a specific social space in public, and, in the situation of singing (sometimes of singing together, in the case of "hits," or the audience spontaneously joining in for the refrain, because the melodies were known to all) and listening, a temporary "acoustic community" (Barry Truax) spontaneously emerged.[31]

Furthermore, Rancière's "distribution of the sensible"[32] and, building on this, Missfelder's 2019 "distribution of the audible"[33] can be applied, which means

29 Robert Moses Shapiro, ed., *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1999), 143.

30 Schulze, Holger, *The Sonic Persona: An Anthropology of Sound* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 164: "In each situation of our existence, we stand and move and act in an environment that resonates. We are in such an environment all the time. Any physical situation is a situation in resonance; we are bodies in sound." And further: "The corporeality of sound is not separated from our self-perception, our actions, our emotions, and our sensory setup. Being a body in sound means you are neither an object nor a subject of individual sound events; but you are – and I quote the previously mentioned definition – an elastic material, reacting and acting."

31 See Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, 2001), 66: "The acoustic community may be defined as any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants (no matter how the commonality of such people is understood). Therefore, the boundary of the community is arbitrary and may be as small as a room of people, a home or building, or as large as an urban community, a broadcast area, or any other system of electroacoustic communication. In short, it is any system within which acoustic information is exchanged." Barry Truax, "Imagining Acoustic Spaces through Listening and Acoustic Ecology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Imagination*, vol. 1, eds. Mark Grimshaw-Aagaard, Mads Walther-Hansen and Martin Knakkergaard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 660, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190460167.013.32.

32 Jacques Ranciére, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Continuum, 2006).

33 Jan-Friedrich Missfelder, "Sound Politics. Sonic Agency and Social Order in Early Modern Zurich," *Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient* 45, 2 (2019): 101.

asking the following questions: how is the sensible (Rancière) and the audible (Missfelder) distributed in public space? Who is allowed and able to be audible in which situation? What happens if someone crosses lines and changes these very situations? Herszkowicz challenged internal power relations within the ghetto by audibly occupying public space in unauthorized ways and making criticism of the social situation heard. In one situation, he was physically defended against an arrest by the ghetto police (on the orders of the Eldest of the Jews, because a song went too far in its criticism, according to Rumkowski's eyes and ears).[34]

Part and motor of these situations of auditory quarrel were emotions. Basically everybody was angry: Chaim Rumkowski because of the socially critical songs and the order disrupted by singing, shouting, gathering crowds in the street, and public criticism of him; the Jewish Council and the ghetto police also because of order being disrupted; the street singer and his audience because of the behavior and actions of Rumkowski and the ghetto elite, including the Jewish police, and their open lies.[35] The ghetto establishment, regarded as self-serving, was perceived as different from the broader social group it putatively represented. Here we have, speaking with Barbara Rosenwein, a temporary "emotional community."[36]

The term 'community' is not to say that everyone on the scene agreed. We do not know about the immediate reactions of every person present. Acoustic activity, sometimes including singing together, spontaneously created collectives that, in some cases, took action against others. Social conflict *and* collective action crystallized around Herszkowicz's singing. Also, the very existence of the postcard and the photograph printed in this chapter shows that Herszkowicz had supporters with technical and organizational means, besides spontaneous group support.

With Murray Schafer, I refer to Herszkowicz as a "soundmark:" "The term soundmark is derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community. Once a soundmark has been identified, it deserves to be protected, for soundmarks make the acoustic life of the community unique."[37]

---

34 As written in the underground newspaper *Min Hametsar* on July 8, 1941, quoted in Radziszewska, *‚Flaschenpost'*, 208. Also, Flam *Singing for Survival*, 25: "Once upon a time, a policeman wanted to arrest the poet because he insulted the Eldest [Rumkowski]. The crowd surrounded the poet and would not let the policeman get close enough to arrest him."

35 One man let out all his rage on a policeman, reportedly tearing off one of his thighs. Bryks, *Di papirene kroyn*, 140.

36 Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

37 Murray R. Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977), 10.

In the situation mentioned above, in which a crowd protected Herszkowicz from the police, this singer-soundmark is "protected" by the listeners: they use their bodies and simply do not let the policemen through to the singer.[38] According to another account, a policeman already had his hands at the singer's collar and was violently beaten up by the crowd so that the singer could escape.[39] These collective actions testify to Herszkowicz's symbolic position as "an emissary of our collective cry"[40] (Wajsblat) for the overlapping acoustic, emotional, and sociopolitical Jewish communities within the Łódź Ghetto.

Bibliography

Beinfeld, Solon, and Harry Bochner. *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Bopp, Dominika, Sascha Feuchert, Andrea Löw, Jörg Riecke, Markus Roth and Elisabeth Turvold, eds. *Die Enzyklopädie des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020.

Bryks, Rakhmiel. *Di papirene kroyn*. New York; Tel Aviv: Yerakhmiel Bryks Book Committee and the Yiddish P.E.N. Club, 1969.

Dobroszycki, Lucjan. *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, 1941–1944*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.

Feuchert, Sascha and Erwin Leibfried, Jörg Ricke, eds. *Die Chronik des Gettos Lodz / Litzmannstadt 1941*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007.

Flam, Gila. *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto, 1940–45*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Goldberg, Amos. "Rumor Culture among Warsaw Jews under Nazi Occupation: A World of Catastrophe Reenchanted." *Jewish Social Studies* 21, 3 (2016): 91–125.

Hershkovitsh, Yankl. *Der zinger fun Lodzher geto 1940–1944*. Edited by Yosl Vaysblat. Łódź, 1964.

Kohn, Irena. "Overlooked and Underanalyzed Source Material on Jewish Life in the Ghettos and Camps: Yossi Wajsblat's 'Dos Gezang Fun Lodzher Geto/La Ballade Du Ghetto Du Lodz.'" *Journal of Jewish Identities* 1, 2 (2008): 109–120.

Löw, Andrea. *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006.

38 According to the underground newspaper *Min Hametsar*, July 8, 1941, quoted in Radziszewska, *‚Flaschenpost'*, 208.

39 Bryks, *Di papirene kroyn*, 139–140.

40 Yankl Hershkovitsh, *Der zinger fun Lodzher geto 1940–1944*, edited by Yosl Vaysblat (Łódź, 1964), 8. Wajsblat ends his introduction to the song texts with these words (translation by Irena Kohn in Kohn, *Overlooked*, 116). Vaysblat uses the term "sheliekh-tsiber" in Yiddish, which is according to today's standard Yiddish dictionary a "community spokesman." Solon Beinfeld and Harry Bochner, *Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary (*Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 682.

Missfelder, Jan-Friedrich. "Sound Politics: Sonic Agency and Social Order in Early Modern Zurich." *Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient* 45, 2 (2019): 87–105.

The National Library of Israel. "Rumkovski Khaim (er) git undz klayen." Recorded by Ben Stonehill. Accessed February 17, 2022. http://beta.nli.org.il/en/items/NNL_MUSIC_AL002784535/NLI.

Podolska, Joanna, and Adam Sitarek. *Jesteśmy Drzewami Wiecznymi: We Are Eternal Trees*. Łódź: The Marek Edelman Dialogue Center in Łódź, 2019.

Radziszewska, Krystyna. *‚Flaschenpost' aus der Hölle: Texte aus dem Lodzer Getto*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011.

Ranciére, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. London: Continuum, 2006.

Rosenfeld, Oskar. *Wozu noch Welt: Aufzeichnungen aus dem Getto Lodz*. Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1994.

Rosenwein, Barbara H. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Schafer, Murray R. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977.

Schulze, Holger. *The Sonic Persona: An Anthropology of Sound*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Shapiro, Robert Moses, ed. *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1999.

Sitarek, Adam, and Ewa Wiatr, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists*. Łódź: The State Archive in Łódź. Dom Wydawnicy Księży Młyn, 2017.

Truax, Barry. *Acoustic Communication*. Westport, Conn.: Ablex Publishing, Second Edition 2001.

Truax, Barry. "Imagining Acoustic Spaces through Listening and Acoustic Ecology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Imagination*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 653–668. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190460167.013.32.

Trunk, Isaiah. *Łódź Ghetto. A History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006.

USHMM. "Jewish New Year's card from Jankiel Herszkowicz, showing the performer singing his famous parody about Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, chairman of the Lodz ghetto Jewish council." Accessed February 17, 2022. https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1148188.

Yad Vashem. Music of the Holocaust. "Lodzer Geto (Lodz Ghetto)". Accessed February 17, 2022. https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/lodzer-geto.asp.

YIVO Encyclopedia. "Broder, Berl." Accessed February 06, 2022. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Broder_Berl.

YIVO Encyclopedia. "Heder." Accessed February 06, 2022. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/heder.

Anna Shternshis

People Fell Like Flies: How Yiddish songs document history and collective action during the Holocaust in the Soviet Union

On July 29, 1945, ethnomusicologist Moisei Beregovsky (1892–1961) arrived in Bratslav, a small town in the Vinnytsia region of southwestern Ukraine. He and his team from the folklore section of the Department for Study of Jewish Culture at the Ukrainian Academy of Science in Kiev were seeking survivors of the German and Romanian occupation. The goal of Beregovsky's series of folkloric expeditions was to collect and publish Yiddish-language songs, stories, jokes, and folklore that circulated during the war. In Bratslav, they met a twenty-year-old woman named Polye Monastyrsky who sang a tune she learned in Pechera, a nearby former Romanian-run concentration camp:

The Song of Pechera Camp
Oy, I will sing for you, people, oy, oy, oy, this song,
oy, the song of the Jewish people, oy, oy, oy, themselves.
Oy, I will sing you a new song, people,
of what happened to the Jews in Pechera Camp.

How they drove us from our homes,
oy, drove us how they used to drive cattle, oy, oy, oy, cattle.
Rounded up all the Jews
on the grounds of the old sanatorium.

Oy, with nothing to eat or drink they tortured us,
door and gate were blocked for us, oy, oy, oy, blocked.
People fell like flies,
fell both by day and by night.

As soon as they let us approach the gate,
Smetanski [a guard] came out with a big rifle, oy, oy, oy, rifle,
approached two innocent Jews,
and shot them for no reason at all.

Oy, in Stalin's land the Jews lived happily
and they knew of no evil.
Hitler the slaughterer came in
and he laid waste, oy, to our lives.[1]

1 Vernadsky Ukrainian National Library, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 16. English Translation: Eli Jany.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-011

The simple lyrics manage both to capture the horrors of living in Pechera and to document its most notorious villains. In September 1941, the Romanian authorities converted a sanatorium for Red Army officers, the former summer estate of the aristocratic Potocki family at Pechera, into a "death camp" (lagărul morţii) for Jews.[2] Its purpose was to kill Jews through starvation. Prisoners called it "The dead loop." Romanian and Ukrainian guards patrolled the fence on three sides, while German soldiers watched the camp's rear from across the Southern Bug River. Inside the camp were two large three-story residential buildings, a cellar, a family tomb, stables, a greenhouse, and large statues. Most of the buildings were damaged during the war. The rooms lacked doors, the windows lacked glass, and prisoners slept on the ground or straw. The first floor of the larger building housed the camp's Jewish leaders and a makeshift soup kitchen. The noncontagious sick occupied the second floor, and women lived on the third floor. The second building housed inmates with communicable diseases, mostly typhus.[3] In addition, there were a few stables and barracks where prisoners of both sexes and various ages were crammed together.[4] Essentially, they were housed like cattle and, as the song says, they were also deported like cattle. Many survivors describe their ordeals using the same language. Mikhail Berman (born in 1933 in Mohyliv-Podilskyi), for example, wrote about his deportation to Pechera in the following words:

> In the evening, a train came, and we all were forced to go into cattle cars, like cattle, 50 or more people in each car. During the entire journey we stood, people were suffocating from the lack of space. [. . .] Upon arrival, there had already been dozens of victims, most of them elderly people. They were loaded into carts and taken away.[5]

Two large waves of expulsion are documented, in addition to smaller roundups of escapees and transfers from Bratslav, Trostineţ, Rogozna, and other places. In the first wave, 3,005 Jews were marched from the Tulchyn ghetto to the Pechera camp in November and December 1941.[6] The chief inspector of Transnistria's gendarmerie, General Mihail Iliescu, ordered the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto's poorest

2 Ovidiu Creangă, "Pecioara", in: Geoffrey P. Megargee, Martin Dean, and Christopher R. Browning, eds, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009,) 3.742.

3 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

4 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

5 Mikhail Berman, "Poslednie svideteli holokosta", *My hoteli zhit'.Svidetelstva i dokumenty*, ed. Boris Zabarko (Kiev: Dukh I Litera, 2013), 67.

6 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

3,000 Jews to be deported to the Pechera camp. The order acknowledged that those sent to Pechera were doomed. After a delay, the order was reissued in June 1942.[7] Between September and November 1942, the 3,000 Jews (600 Ukrainian Jews and the rest from Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Moldavia) were transported from the Mohyliv ghetto to the Pechera camp. After two or three days of travel by train without food or water, during which time the very sick died, groups of 400 to 500 Jews from Mohyliv disembarked at Israilovca and marched the 14 kilometers (8.6 miles) to Pechera under the beatings and curses of gendarmes.[8] Between 1941 and 1943, over 6,500 Jews were deported to Pechera; 4,000 of them perished there. Some others managed to escape.[9] On March 17, 1944, the Red Army liberated the camp's remaining 350 Jews.[10]

No photos of Pechera's wartime period have survived. The Visual History Archive at USC Shoah Foundation Institute, however, holds 505 testimonies in seven languages that refer to the site.[11] Almost all speak of the horrors of daily life: begging, attempts to escape, witnessing or engaging in cannibalism, trying not to get killed or raped by the guards. Except for the soup kitchen that was established in February 1943, which served 1,600 prisoners daily, there was no public life in Pechera: no amateur concerts, no libraries, no theaters, no gatherings of any kind. Yet, six survivors in 1945, and countless others who spoke in the 1990s or wrote memoirs in the 2000s, remembered some version of this specific song.

Monastyrsky told Beregovsky that she first learned the song in 1942. Similarly, six other people encountered by the team in Zhabokrych, Chernivtsi, Kiiv and Bratslav, all survivors of Pechera, both sang and dated the piece to about this time. The song was probably created in the immediate aftermath of a documented episode when a Ukrainian guard of Pechera named Lukyan Smetansky murdered two inmates caught buying a bucket of cherries at the fence.[12] In addition to the murders, the lyrics give us a broad sense of Pechera's living conditions and the hardships that prisoners experienced: starvation, disease, the general brutality of the guards, and the lack of justice. The song is structured as a folk ballad, a form typically beginning with a description of a historical event, usually a violent

7 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

8 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

9 3,591 (Romanian and Ukrainian) Jews in April 1, 1942; 1,200 in March 1943; and 535 in November 1943. At the end of February 1944 there were 550 Jews in the camp, those from the Old Kingdom and the orphans having already been repatriated. Creangă, "Pecioara", 743.

10 Creangă, "Pecioara", 743.

11 Creangă, "Pecioara", 743.

12 Creangă, "Pecioara", 742.

one, such as a pogrom.[13] The fact that the Pechera ballad was known by several people suggests that it circulated and functioned in the same centuries-old way, preserving important historical information about concentration camp existence.

This chapter proposes to examine texts of popular songs like "The Song of Pechera Camp" and discusses how we can use this material to study collective practices and elements of public life in Pechera and other camps and ghettos in Transnistria. The popularity of a piece is determined by seeing how many versions of the song were recorded by Beregovsky in 1944–1946, and its presence in later interviews and written narratives. This kind of comparative analysis can provide insight into Jewish life in various ghettos and camps in Transnistria, located in close physical proximity to each other, yet separated by the policies that governed the occupation. This analysis can bring us to a closer understanding of what mattered to Jewish ghetto prisoners in Transnistria and how they expressed it. Above all, it is another step toward involving victims' direct voices in the study of the Holocaust in this region.

Beregovsky's expeditions

Beregovsky became head of the folklore section at the Institute for Study of Jewish Culture at the Ukrainian Academy since 1936. A graduate of both the Kiev and Petrograd Conservatories, he obtained his doctorate in music in 1944 from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory. His dissertation was the first in the world fully devoted to Jewish instrumental folk music. His colleagues included linguist Ruvim Lerner (1912–1972), folklorists Hina Shargorodskaya and Ida Shaykes, and poet Sholem Kupershmidt (1881–1968). As part of their expeditions, the team members traveled to Pechera, Bershad, Shargorod, Bratslav, Tulchyn, Zhabokrych, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi and several other towns in Ukraine. They interviewed hundreds of survivors, collected 263 original songs[14] and produced pages of ethnographic notes stating the name and age of each informant, and where he or she had survived the war. At least one third of all interviewees were children and teenagers younger than eighteen in 1945. Sometimes the collectors asked them to write down all the words of a song, creating handwritten documents that also form part of the collection. The audio recordings, professional

13 Saul M. Ginsburg, P. S. Marek, and Dov Noy, *Yiddish folksongs in Russia* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991).

14 Based on manual counting of original pieces in Fond 190, file 147 (96), 157 (52), 132 (42), and 148 (73), Vernadsky National Library, Manuscript Department.

transcripts and hand-written materials amount to an extremely rare archive representing the direct voices of Holocaust survivors, including children and teenagers in Transnistria.

Until 1990, Beregovsky's project was believed lost. The materials were confiscated following Beregovky's arrest in 1950 and were never returned to him or to the Ukrainian Academy of Science.[15] They were stored initially at the KGB archive, and then quietly transferred to the restricted access section of the Ukrainian National Library. Librarians found the archive in 1990, when all Yiddish-language restricted collections, stored in the basement of the library, were transferred to the newly created Institute for the Study of the Orient, soon renamed as the Judaica Department.[16] Dr. Lyudmila Sholokhova published the first partial catalogue in 2001.[17]

The Beregovsky collection is the only large corpus of notes and records of grassroots folk poetry and music documenting Jewish experiences in the Soviet Union during World War II. All the songs discussed in this article were documented in August 1945.[18] Sources of similar magnitude exist in the context of the Warsaw ghetto, thanks to the work of Emanuel Ringelblum,[19] Shmerke Katcherginsky on Wilno and Kaunas ghettos, and Nachman Blumental on Łódź.[20] With the exception of my forthcoming piece on songs of the Bershad ghetto, Beregovsky's collection has not yet been discussed in the context of the history of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. This article is the first attempt to introduce Beregovsky's materials as a crucial historical source for understanding the role of music in collective actions during the Holocaust in Transnistria.[21]

---

15 Bret Werb, "Fourteen Shoah Songbooks," *Musica Judaica* 20 (2013): 39–116, at 96.

16 Irina Sergeeva, "Fonarkhiv evreiskoi narodnoi muzyki; istoria, soderzhanie fondov i perspektivii razvitiia," in *Rukopisna ta knizhova spashchina Ukrainy* 12, 2007: 80–92, 88.

17 Lyudmila Sholokhova, *Fonarkhiv evreiskogo muzykalnogo naselenia. Kollektsia fonograficheskikh zapisei evreiskogo folklora iz fondov instituta rukopisii: annotirovanii katalog fono-tsilindrov, notnikh i tekstovikh rasshchirovok* (Kiev: Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, 2001).

18 Evgenia Khazdan, "Velikaya otochestvennaya voyna v evreiskom folklore (po materialami iz sobrania M Y Beregovskogo)," *Vremenik Zubobskogo instytuta* 6 (2011): 96–105, at 101.

19 Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

20 Victim-produced documents on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union that were created both during the war and immediately after it were the testimonies collected in the Black Book: Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017).

21 For more on ghettos in Transnistri,a see Ana Bărbulescu, "The Underlife of Transnistria's Ghettos: Recategorizing and Reframing Social Interaction," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35, 3 (2021): 196–213; Dalia Ofer, "The ghettos in Transnistria and ghettos under German occupation in eastern Europe," in *Im Ghetto 1939-1945*, eds. Christoph Dieckmann and Babette Quinkert,

A lullaby that keeps one awake

In November 1944, months after the members of the Folklore section of the Kiev Institute for Study of Jewish Culture returned to Kiev from Ufa, Beregovsky and his colleagues set out on their first expedition: to Chernivtsi, a city now in Western Ukraine. The destination was not accidental. Liberated on March 29, 1944, Chernivtsi became a destination for former deportees from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. Because of the influxes, the population of 14,750 local Jewish survivors soon grew to almost 40,000 people, mostly those who had lived in Transnistrian ghettos and camps: Mohyliv-Podilskyi, Bershad, Pechera, Obodivka and many others. The city housed 24 synagogues, a State Jewish Theater, and two Jewish schools, one for boys and another one for girls, as well as an orphanage for Jewish children.

Beregovsky started by visiting the schools. On November 14, 1944, the researchers met Rut Upleger, a grade 5 student of school number 6 (a Jewish school). According to the folklorist's notes, Rut survived the war in the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto. She sang a piece that she called "Bug Lid" (The Song of Bug). First, she sang it, then wrote down the words in a notebook that she gave to Beregovsky. The tune was that of a famous Yiddish folk lullaby, but the lyrics were completely new:

Bug Lid (The Song of [the River] Bug)
The engine is humming, rushing
The train whistles and chugs
With us, the hunted, taken
To the River Bug

From afar the Dniester glimmers
As if it's sending me good cheer
from my sister and mother
Who are already here

But we arrive and all we see
is famine and despair
Now in this picturesque Ukraine
It's death that greets us there

Typhoid, loneliness and cold
No one here is spared
they now slaughter young and old

Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus 25 (2009): 30–53. See also Anna Shternshis, "Standing by Mothers' Graves: Voices of Soviet Jewish Children Documenting World War II," *Polin* 36 (2024): forthcoming.

and murder without care

Here no tombstones, markers, graves
identify those who died
Instead in poisoned pits we're tossed
piled high from side to side

The storm can't last forever though
This bitter war must end
Then we'll be bathed in sunshine and
make victory our friend

And then the freed among us
our old homes we will live to see
The dead will keep each other warm
but we'll once more be free.[22]

The lullaby does not soothe. Instead, it documents the story of the deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Transnistria. (In 1941–1942, the total number of deportees from Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dorohoi and the Regat was between 154,449 and 170,737).[23] During these marches and deportations, many people died from exhaustion, cold, beatings and diseases. Especially vulnerable were the elderly, small children, and pregnant women. Every person who endured the deportations lost family members. Alexander Gelman's (born in 1933) family, for example, consisted of seventeen people when they were forced to leave their native Dundushany and walk to Bershad in 1941. Only twelve made it there and only two survived the war.[24]

The song mentions the transition from the Bug to Dniester Rivers, because the most frequently used crossing point into Transnistria was the bridge over the Dniester River from Atachi to Mohyliv-Podilskyi. Ovidiu Creangă estimated that in September 1942 56,000 Romanian Jews from Bukovina and northern Bessarabia crossed the Dniester at Mohyliv-Podilskyi, making it the most important entry point into Transnistria.[25] Semeyon and Piotr Brodsky, for example, two broth-

22 Vernadsky Ukrainian National Library, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 96. Translation: Hindy Abelson.

23 Final Report/International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania; president of the commission: Elie Wiesel; ed. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, and Mihail E. Ionescu (Iasi: Polirom, 2004), 178.

24 Interview with Alexander Gelman (Moscow, 1996), https://sfi.usc.edu/content/alexander-gelman-portal-clip (last accessed February 23, 2022).

25 Ovidiu Creangă, "Moghilev-Podolsk," in Geoffrey P. Megargee, Martin Dean, and Christopher R. Browning, eds, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 715.

ers from Mohyliv-Podilskyi, were sent to Pechera a few months after their town was occupied. After their grandmother died and they were about to be shot, they managed to escape and return to Mohyliv-Podilskyi.[26] Similarly, the family of Mikhail Berman (born in 1933 in Mohyliv-Podilskyi) ended up in Pechera in 1942, but the group minus the grandparents managed to run away and ended up back in Mohyliv-Podilskyi.[27]

Despair, typhus, loneliness, and cold weather marked daily life in every ghetto of Transnistria. Ernestina Ayzinger (born in 1919 in Chernivtsi) recalled, in her short memoir, that within a year of her imprisonment in the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto, both of her parents died from starvation and disease. She survived "by a miracle she said, and by eating potato peels and other food scraps she found in the garbage."[28]

Due to overcrowding, malnutrition, and poor sanitation, typhoid epidemics erupted at the end of 1941. Everyone was afflicted by dysentery and exhaustion. The spring of 1942 saw the largest number of deaths resulting from these conditions. Mortality levels decreased over time, in part because of the measures taken by ghetto physicians, but illnesses were never fully eradicated because medical supplies were limited.[29] At least 1,254 people died from typhus during the winter of 1941.[30] In his post-war memoir, Siegfried Jägendorf, chairman of the Jewish committee in the Mohyliv ghetto, wrote this about typhus:

> Typhus broke out in December 1941. Hundreds of Jews died each day from this endemic lice-born disease. We had to double the number of grave diggers. Eight of our seventy doctors died attempting to heal the sick without medicine, disinfectant or soap. Entire families were wiped out.[31]

Every experience described in the Bug Lid song is relevant not just to Mohyliv or Pechera, but also to Bershad, Zhabokrych, Shargorod and other places in Transnistria. In so many ways, this song both reflected a collective experience and summarized historical events in a genre of music programmed to be remembered – by women who sang it to their children before bedtime and by the children who

26 Yacov Hel'mer, ed., *Kolokola pamyati. Vospominaniya byvshikh uznikov getto i kontslagerei, prozhivaiushchikh v gorode Ashdode (Israel)* (Ashdod: Amuta Zikaron, 2005), 220–221.
27 Zabarko, *My hoteli zhit*, 67–69.
28 Hel'mer (ed.), *Kolokola pamyati*, 216.
29 Creangă, "Moghilev-Podolsk," vol. III 716.
30 Zabarko, *My hoteli zhit'*, 499.
31 Siegfried Jagendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry: memoir of the Romanian Holocaust, 1941-1944* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 44.

listened. Moreover, had none of the survivors left any testimonies or eyewitness accounts of their lives in the ghetto, had Jägendorf not written his memoirs, but if only one of the surviving children would have remembered that lullaby, we would still have a historical record of the violent events that impacted Jews living and dying in Mohyliv ghetto in 1942. Astonishingly, not only does the account of the events rhyme, it is also remarkably concise and accurate. In that sense, we are embracing something that historians of the early modern period have known for a long time: songs of violence give an important insight into victims' perceptions of this violence.[32] But they use these songs because no others are available. When it comes to more recent history, being able to cross-examine songs against testimonies, memoirs, and even court records suggests that maybe we should trust them even more than we did before.

Music historians have established that music created and performed during the Holocaust served several functions. It provided relief, comfort, and entertainment. It helped people to grieve. It also created ways to remember appalling losses, including the deaths of loved ones who were killed.[33] For scholars, the songs also provide insight into what their audiences found entertaining and worthy of remembering and sharing with others. In other words, the songs give us a sense of what seemed relevant to people who shared them in 1942 and 1943. In this context, it is noteworthy that "Bug Lid" mentions the word "Ukraine," unusual for Yiddish music or literature created in Ukraine. There is here a suggestion both of a tourist gaze and of a disbelief that such a beautiful place has become home to terrifying violence and brutality.

Unlike poems or diary entries, songs are almost always written for an audience, with a listener in mind, and, in cases of rural or foraging societies, for communal singing.[34] By default, therefore, songs reflect on issues that resonate both with their author and their audience. If such pieces circulate, especially during a difficult historical moment, it means that they provide comfort, mobilize, or reflect on issues that matter to the audience most.

---

32 Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: on the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 209.

33 Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: confronting life in the Nazi ghettos and camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For the roles of music amongst musician survivors before, during, and after the Holocaust, see Amy Lynn Wlodarski, *Musical witness and Holocaust representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

34 This chapter focuses solely on songs that prisoners performed for or with other prisoners. This means that we leave aside a large body of music collected by Beregovsky that was used for begging, because this speaks of the context of Jewish interactions with Gentiles, which goes beyond the scope of this piece.

Historians, when they study these pieces, tend to pay more attention to depictions of historical events, whereas listeners of 1942/43 probably savored the message of hope and liberation that these songs provided. But the very act of singing, especially singing together in the conditions where everything seemed against it, lifted people's spirits. Metaphors of nature, such as sunshine after a storm, gave both singers and their audiences a rare sense of normalcy.

Beregovsky recorded the song at least nine times, including once as performed its author-poet Relly Bley (1913–2000), a thirty-two-year-old survivor of the Mohyliv-Podilskyiy ghetto. At the time, she worked as a teacher at a Chernivtsi Jewish school, where most of the teachers and children were survivors of ghettos in Transnistria. It is possible that so many children and adults knew the song because Bley taught it to them in the school choir, but there is significant evidence that they learned it while imprisoned. The song was recorded by survivors who were never in Chernivtsi after the war, but in Mohyliv-Podilskyi and Bratslav. Relly Bley's poems were set to music in Mohyliv and beyond, and seemed to have become a significant part of the soundscape of the Transnistrian ghettos.

Songs as news and messages of hope

In his Hebrew-language interview with the Shoah Foundation, Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto survivor Meir Gil'ad (born in 1925), a refugee from a town named Czudyn in Bukovina, recalled how he encountered Bley in the ghetto. Bley was a young woman with a 2-year-old son who lived in the old casino where Gil'ad, known then as Glikshteyn, also lived. In the evenings, young people, including Gil'ad, gathered in her room. Bley read poems to her guests, who memorized them. According to Gil'ad, she never wrote any of the words down, as it was too dangerous to be caught with such a poem. Many people, including him, memorized her poems by heart, and others turned them into songs that continued to circulate until the ghetto was liberated in 1944.[35]

Interviewed in 1997, fifty-three years after the liberation, Gil'ad was able to recite two of the poems by heart. Visibly overcome with emotion, he insisted that the lyrics needed to be remembered, especially for people who came later. This was the only time during the three-and-a-half-hour interview that he spoke in Yiddish. Beregovsky recorded one of the songs in Chernivtsi from several children and from Relly Bley herself. Bley simply recited the poem, and told collectors

35 Meir Gil'ad, Interview 37938, Tape 5, 26:58-28:30. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 1997. Accessed 30th October, 2021. Thanks to Miriam Schwartz for finding this interview.

that she wrote it in November 1943. The children and teenagers sang it to the tune of "Three Tankers, Three Best Friends," a popular Soviet song written by the Pokrass brothers. Here is the full text, taken from Beregovsky's notes:

It was a beautiful summer day
The chief said: "March in!"
And just like barbarian hordes
They crossed the Soviet border.
Their tanks spat out fire
And destroyed villages, fields and cities.
To the Volga River they came
And remained by Stalingrad!

Stalingrad, you won't take it
Stalingrad will bring death to you
With your blood we will color the Volga River
Your blood will run everywhere, fiery-red!

To Moscow they approached
But no German will enter the Kremlin
Moscow will not bend under the enemy
Moscow does not tremble in the face of tyranny!

Through Finland they arrived
To Leningrad and were stopped.
You will never get into Leningrad
Leningrad will endure as a hero should.

Leningrad, you will not celebrate it
Leningrad stands tall through any battle
Leningrad is a city that is named
After the greatest person of our times.

And now on all fronts
The enemy runs away from our borders quickly.
In order to free its villages and fields,
Fights the Red Republic!

Marching are the Red Divisions
One for all, all for one ready to die
And for the great anniversary of the October [Revolution, A.S.]
They kicked the enemy out of Kiev!

They will liberate the beautiful Ukraine
Again the great cities will thrive
Now they are by Berezin
And tomorrow they will continue on.

And I see how the Red Army soldiers go
Carrying proudly their red flag.
Soon there will be red flags flowing
On the roofs of the city of Berlin![36]

Without knowing the context, the song seems like a Yiddish rendition of Soviet propaganda pieces that circulated among soldiers and civilians alike. It reads like a poetic summary of Soviet achievements at the front, a rather unsophisticated propaganda piece. But Gil'ad's testimony reveals a crucial context that changes the meaning of this piece radically. Gil'ad explained that Bley was connected to partisan units that operated close to Mohyliv-Podilskyi. Unlike ghetto prisoners, partisans had access to Soviet newspapers and even radio, and they told Bley about Soviet successes. Her poem was a way to inform her community about the situation outside the ghetto and her way of lifting people's spirits – by telling them that the liberation might happen. I think the song was probably inspired by the news that the Red Army launched an attack on Kiev between November 3 and 13 of 1943. It is also possible that some verses got added later, such as the one about Berezin. Gil'ad thought that Berezin was near Mohyliv-Podilskyi, but it is a town in Belarus, where a battle took place in 1944.

In any case, an analysis of the lyrics of the song, Gil'ad's explanation, and the fact that the words were put to a cheerful, upbeat, Soviet tune, give us insight into the role of the song in the public culture of ghetto life. The song played the role of newspaper and radio. It did not just cheer its listeners. It also informed them of the course of the war and helped them feel less isolated from the world. Such songs functioned the same way in Bershad, Shargorod, Zhabokrych, and elsewhere. The fact is not unusual – in many rural societies, or societies damaged by war, or living under siege, without access to press, music often becomes a medium for delivery and the dissemination of information. And it is noteworthy that the upbeat message of the Soviet press, often criticized for avoiding details on Jewish victims confined to Transnistrian ghettos, made it into these ghettos and lifted people's spirits. Even though the hope for liberation seemed distant, and somewhat realistic, it was better than no hope at all. They made it their mission to inform, and by doing so created a collective – a community of people who, by singing, asserted their hope and their belief in the future.

36 Vernadsky Ukrainian National Library, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 119. English translation: Eli Jany.

Orphans and collective responsibility

Some of Bley's popular songs are critical of the ghetto prisoners themselves. Specifically, they condemn the lack of collective responsibility and collective action in addressing the issue of orphans.

Typhus, other infectious diseases, and brutal working conditions led to a widespread crisis of thousands of orphans. With the help of the Romanian Jewish community, Jägendorf was able to establish orphanages. By the end of December 1942, three orphanages in Mohyliv housed 679 children. Almost one third were suffering from malnutrition. Many were sick with scabies. Some had to stay in bed all day because they had no clothes, and they had no sheets on their beds.[37] Still, orphanage life was better than life on the streets, where many children had to beg, steal, or scavenge for food. When typhus epidemics broke out, street orphans were blamed for spreading disease. Partly, orphanages were established to quarantine sick children, not just feed them.[38]

Beregovsky recorded several songs about orphans. Some were performed by orphans while begging. Others discussed the sadness and difficulties of losing parents at such a young age. One song, again authored by Bley and performed by a number of people, stood out for its significant degree of anger:

The orphans walk, dragged out by hunger
They ask for pity, a little piece of bread
The people, the cruel ones, close their eyes
They do not want to know how great the need is.

Days pass, months pass
The winter is cold and the hunger hurts
Frozen to death people fall in the streets
People walk by, do not look at them.

But kids still run, dragged out by hunger
They knock on doors, asking for a piece of bread
But people are still without hearts
They leave the kids to die.

So many people are dying from hunger
They used to be like everyone else
Today there is only hunger and tears left
But you are happy, joyful and rich.

37 Jagendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry*, 136–138.
38 Jagendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry*, 137.

You people, you evil ones, open your eyes
You have been blind long enough,
This is a child's face, abandoned and lost
They are your brothers, one of your children.[39]

Depicting the challenges of orphans in detail, the song also focuses on something that seemed almost as traumatic as losing parents – the indifference of the community. Moreover, the song does not discuss the invasion, the war, its perpetrators, or even the world in general. Instead, anger is directed at members of the Jewish community who turn their hearts away and shut their doors to dying orphans.

The narrator of the song expresses rage directed at people who refuse to help orphans, who are their "brothers, one of their children," thus Jews themselves, most likely ghetto prisoners. The implication of brotherhood makes the anger even more startling: it calls people who refuse to help "beyze" (evil, wild), blind, "frozen at heart," and cruel. In the context of what we know of ghetto life in Mohyliv-Podilskyi, or, indeed, anywhere in Transnistria, where many residents suffered from diseases, poverty, homelessness and, indeed, such lack of heat that many physically froze – not just their hearts, as the song implies – the fury is even more astounding. It is possible that the song reflects on difficult relationships between Romanian Jews and Ukrainian ones, both groups accusing the other of cold-heartedness, but this is not spelled out. In any case, the song is a call for action, both individual and collective.

A song by a typhus louse and Hitler getting married: Comic relief

Orphanages of the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto not only saved lives; they also became communal spaces, including prayer houses, small clubs and amateur theaters. Teachers believed that enlisting children in drama performances would help to raise their spirits and combat fears. In addition, such performances could offer a bit of normalcy and escapism for the audience, for children and adults alike. Typically, the repertoire would include many humorous songs, especially those that dealt with ghetto life. One such song, "Aria by a Typhus Louse," is mentioned in a memoir

39 Vernadsky Ukrainian National Library, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 112. English Translation: Eli Jany.

about the Mohyliv ghetto.[40] During his expedition of 1944, Beregovsky recorded its full text from a young woman named Lantsy Rozner Vinakur. A survivor of Pechera, Vinakur said that she learned the song from a friend imprisoned with her:

> Me, I am a typhus louse
> and I go from house to house
> tra-la-la-la-la
>
> As soon as I show up there,
> you have to go into quarantine
> tra-la-la-la-la-la
>
> After three years of visiting you,
> I'm feeling old and weak
> tra la la la la la
>
> But to tell you the truth
> I'm afraid of the (German/doctor)
> tra-la-la-la-la
>
> Of the Germans, oy, the murderers,
> and the Cossacks with their smell
> tra la la ---
>
> Suddenly, word comes
> that you're being sent home
> tra-la-la-la-la
>
> Well, safe travels on your journey;
> I'll turn my attention to the enemies
> tra-la. . .

Performed to a tune of a song called "Yosl Ber" by Polish composer David Bagelman, who died in Auschwitz in 1945, "Typhus Louse" is written from the point of view of a louse and expresses hope that typhus will affect not only ghetto prisoners, but also the creators of the ghettos. The song also praises doctors. The louse is afraid of them. One can see an interesting play on words here. The louse is equally afraid of a German enemy and of a doctor. In Yiddish, the word "daych," meaning "German," sometimes also referred to doctors, because of their foreign training. The lumping in of Germans and Cossacks as enemies was also quite common, both because of the influence of pre-war songs in which Cossacks were portrayed as villains responsible for pogroms and because of the high Cossack

40 Zlata Zaretskaya, Fenomen evreiskogo teatra v gody Katastrofy na territorii byvshego SSSR, http://amkob113.ru/zzar/zzar-2.html#2, retrieved on February 21, 2022.

contingent within the Vlasov Army that guarded camps in the Vinnytsia region.[41] The song's comic relief, especially in the form of a public performance, built a sense of shared collective experience, which seems to have been the most important part of performing and listening to this piece.

Slapstick comedy and mockery in songs seem to have been especially popular with children and their audiences. The humor is juvenile, with physical comedy exaggerating intentionally crude comparisons. Here is another song entitled "Di Naye Hasene" (The New Wedding) recorded separately by two children in Chernivtsi, both survivors of the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto. Here is the version sung by Klara Rosenberg, from school No. 18:

The street is boiling hot with excitement
The Germans are running away!
They run and lose their health
They run around crazily

Hitler screams: oy, oy, oy,
Dear in-laws,
Do not drive away my people so fast
They fall face down [in such a rush!]

Oy, oy, oy, the Reds are coming, the Reds, the Reds!
Oy, oy, the Reds are coming, the Reds are here!

One can see on the mountain
Red flags.
Jews are eager
To see the new bride.

She is coming from the mountain
Great like Noah's Ark
Jews rejoice and joke:
"Who is the maiden?"

This is a Katyusha, Katyusha, Katyusha
Katyushas, Katyushas are here!

Hitler sits in Berlin,
He mourns his troubles.
Whereto should his [Third] Reich Army run, whereto?
It is now good for nothing [toygt shoyn af kapore].

41 Peter Weber, "Eyewitness testimonies as source of a historical analysis of the deportations to Transnistria, 1941-1943," *Études balkaniques* 4 (2004): 28–43; Irina Rebrova, *Re-Constructing Grassroots Holocaust Memory* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020).

It seems to be that he almost
Wipes away his tears. . .
Goering stands by his side
And asks him:

"Hitler, oy, why are you crying, why are you crying?
Hitler, why are you crying and complaining?"
"Woe to me and woe to us
Where are my roses?"
Just look at this Reich's Army
It is shitting in their pants!

My young years are spoiled
By them forever,
It was a sweet dream
Tugs from my soul!

Because it was sweet, my dream, it was
Because it was sweet, my dream, so sweet!

Maybe God can still perform a miracle
Like it says in the Book. . .
-Hitler, oh, forget, forget
Look at these Red banners!

Look at Stalin,
Today he is unmatched,
Breaks the walls his power,
Angry, like thousands of [evil] spirits!

To bury the Reich Army, to bury, to bury!
To bury the Reich Army once and for all (for ale shvartse yor)

Our dear Jews are happy
And get even happier.
They play violins
Each one is like an angel!

Praise, for his heroism
The one who should live forever.
It was miserably hard,
But we survived!

Mazl tov, to all of us, all of us, all of us
Mazl tov to all of us – we are going home![42]

42 Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 87. English translation: Eli Jany.

The pre-war Yiddish *badhen* (wedding joker) song entitled "*Di Hasene*" makes fun of a clumsy groom, his mother-in-law, and other elements of a wedding gone wrong. This new version makes fun of Hitler and his army.[43] The profanity *raykh's armey bagrobn tsu ale shvartse yor* (to bury the Reich's Army in hell) adds to the comic effect.

The image of Hitler as fearful, stupid, and woman-like was common in Yiddish jokes of the time, probably representing a variation of compensatory humor. In fact, Soviet caricatures of the 1940s often depict both Hitler and German soldiers dressed as women, partly a comment on the use of scarves as hats by soldiers thereby seemingly dressing in women's garments, and partly signaling a weakness and unpreparedness for war. In "*Di Naye Hasene*" Hitler complains, moans, and cries. He takes as his bride a rocket with a female name, and chances are that the rocket will kill Hitler when it lands on the ceremony.

One can imagine that children performing the song were dressed in costumes: that of Hitler, or of Katyusha the Rocket. An opportunity to laugh together gave performers and audiences more than just a comic moment, but also an opportunity to bond. It is no wonder that so many people remember that these songs existed and circulated. Samuil Gil, a Red Army veteran who spent the 1990s collecting testimonies of survivors from Transnistria in New York, observed that many people who experienced the act of collective singing or watched children sing in the ghettos remember it as the only pleasant memories that they had of the time.[44] It is also not surprising that most forgot the words of these songs. After all the lyrics, especially humorous ones, were so specific to the time and the place, that they simply did not age well. But they did their job when people needed them living through the everyday horrors of the ghetto.

Bribes, preferential treatment and corruption: Silences and exposés

In his description of how the Jewish Council of the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto dealt with typhus epidemic, Jägendorf writes:

> The daily report delivered to my desk at 7:00 A.M. listed the names of persons who neglected the sanitary rules, carried lice, or contracted typhus. The first time a person was found to

43 *Di hasene* by Meir Khartiner (1880-1972), performed by Leibu Levin (1914-1983), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY53tM1nIjA, retrieved on July 7, 2018. See also Khazdan, "Velikaya," 99).
44 Samuil Gil', *Krov' ikh segodnya govorit* (New York: Prime Media Service, 1995), 198.

> be infested with lice, he received a written warning, the second time his food ration was cut, the third time he was expelled from the Turnatoria (foundry) community, resulting in the loss of his authorization and all that went with it – bread, a roof, soap, hot water, and medicine. Still, some people abused these privileges and paid dearly.[45]

Such a setup was prone to abuses of power and corruption, perceived or real, by the Jewish leaders of the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto, especially when it came to the treatment of non-Romanian Jews. Stories of such abuse frequently appear in later narratives. For example, here is how Iosif Govrin, who lived in the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto, described the tensions when it came to deportations:

> If we found out that an action was being prepared in the ghetto to fulfill the deportation quota, we would hide both during the day and at night. Romanian gendarmes and Jewish policemen went house to house and checked people's suitability for deportation. Those who had documents were safe, but many did not have documents, and then they just lived from one escape to another. . .[46]

Tensions existed at Mohyliv-Podilskyi, but Beregovsky's team recorded no song by the ghetto's survivors that complained about, or mocked, the Jewish leaders. Even the song about typhus blames lice, rather than ineffective leadership. In this sense, the Mohyliv-Podilskyi situation is unusual, because songs in other Transnistrian ghettos – especially popular ones – often focused on criticism of the ghetto leadership. Maybe it was that the leaders of the Mohyliv-Podilskyi ghetto were generally held in higher esteem than those elsewhere because of the industries they established. But it could also be the case that most songs that Beregovsky recorded from Mohyliv were written by Relly Bley and circulated among Bessarabian or Northern Bukovina refugees, rather than Ukrainian Jews. This makes more sense, because many people who ended up in Chernivtsi in 1944 were Romanian Jews who waited for permission to leave the Soviet Union and return home. Ukrainian Jews usually went back to their places of residence in Ukraine, or headed to Kiev.

When Beregovsky travelled to Tulchyn, Bershad, Zhabokrych and Shargorod in August 1945, he recorded songs from local survivors, rather than those from Bessarabia or Northern Bukovina. Although their songs shared many sentiments with pieces recorded in Chernivtsi (typhus, anger, cold weather, starvation, unbearable losses of parents and children, self-deprecation), they also possessed another feature: sharp ridicule and criticism of the ghetto leadership. Consider, for example, one of the most popular pieces, recorded from at least three survivors of Bershad ghetto, a song called "In the Cold Days:"

---

45 Jagendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry*, 44–45.

46 Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 301.

In the Cold Days
From the Dniester to the Bug
they drive Jews and they beat them.
Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay.

The community [obshchina] sits and thinks
about whom to take tonight.
Ay, ay, ay. . .

As soon as I heard they were coming for me,
I left through the back door.
Ay, ay, ay. . .

In the cold days
I was taken to Balta
I made my escape from there,
and found my way back home.

As soon as I got here,
the plutoner [*plutonier*] chief gendarme caught me.
I spun around this way and that,
and a gendarme caught me.

My tools were taken away
and I was sent to Savran.
I escaped from there anyway,
and was found back home.

I hear knocking at my door,
there are four police.
I sneak out of my bed in secret,
filled with fright.

Secretary Perlmuter
screams: 'People, bribe me!'
Vilnits is proud of himself,
He shares profits with the pretor [a person with judiciary
and administrative police functions]

Snub-nosed Perlmuter,
carries a bucket of water in Balta.
He took bribes
So he has come to Balta [as a punishment].
And the Balta colonel
is flaying Zinkuzan
Meyer Kovel with the fat belly
doesn't want thick broth anymore.

"In the Cold Days" was written by Boris Zitserman, born in 1926 and raised in Bershad. Recently, I spoke by phone with his son, Efim Alexandrov-Zitserman, and learned that the song was based on Zitserman's deportation from Bershad, his escape, and his return to Bershad, which by then had become a ghetto.[47] Zitserman often spoke about the difficult relationship between Romanian Jews, who were often in a position of power in the Bershad ghetto, and Ukrainian Jews. The song is a satirical piece exposing that reality.

The song mentions, for example, Grigori Baytlman from Bukovina, who was a member of the Jewish community leadership. Beregovsky's notes refer to Zinkuzan as the commandant of the Bershad ghetto and Meyer Kovel as a community member who traded currency. In the song, all three men are mercilessly ridiculed, probably to the complete delight of listeners who suffered from their abuses.

The song's audience would have recognized and likely laughed at the descriptions of the guards, the Romanian authorities, the ghetto leadership, and even the character's attempt to hide his tools (which otherwise would have gained him a less strenuous work assignment). Members of the Romanian police and other authorities are referred to by their titles "gendarme," "pretor," and "plutonier," whereas members of the Jewish leadership are identified by their last names. The song emphasizes the difficult relationship between the ghetto leadership and other Jews, for example by accusing Perlmutter of bribery and of shady dealings with the Romanian authorities, and wishing him ill. In fact, emotionally the strongest, funniest and most sarcastic parts of the song, including the wish for revenge, are not directed at the Romanian guards or gendarmes, but at Jews in positions of power. In her study of post-war trials against the Jewish leaders of the Transnistrian ghettos, Diana Dumitru uncovered that numerous Soviet trial testimonies declared that bribes were paid to avoid dangerous work assignments or deportations to the east.[48] It is betrayal by "their own" rather than by invaders that seemed to offend the most, and the song emphasizes that emotional proclivity.

Significantly, when the representatives of the extraordinary state commission came to Bershad to investigate crimes in late 1944, they identified Benjamin Korn as the leader of Bershad ghetto and the one ultimately responsible for sending more Jews to work than required by the Romanian authorities. Korn, a resident of Northern Bukovina, was incriminated for delivering partisans to the Romanians

47 The text of the "In the Cold Days" song is in Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Manuscript Department, fond 190, delo 147, p. 145. English translation: Eli Jany. Personal communication with Efim Alexandrov, November 11, 2021.

48 Diana Dumitru, "The Gordian Knot of Justice: Prosecuting Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Stalinist Courts for "Collaboration" with the Enemy," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, 4 (2021): 729–756, at 740.

and sending over 14 people to imminent death.[49] None of the names mentioned in the songs are found in the trials that I could find. Whether this means that they got away with the crimes, or that they were not guilty of what the songs accused them of, or that those crimes did not seem so big in 1945, remains to be seen. But it is also clear that during the time of ghetto imprisonment, whatever Perlmuter and others did may have seemed less severe and illegal after the war, but it was important enough to be commemorated in songs created in 1942.

Conclusions

When Beregovsky planned his expeditions in 1944 and 1945, his goal was to record new Yiddish songs that emerged during the war among people who survived or remembered those who did not make it. He could not know that the project would be shut down by 1947, and he himself would be arrested in 1950, never being able to return to his findings again and study them properly. But thanks to this project, we are now able to use these materials to examine both sentiments and practices that circulated in Transnistria under the occupation. Beregovsky was going to publish and analyze these songs in a collection that illustrated the resilience of Soviet people under the occupation and their contribution to the Soviet victory. My essay suggested looking at these materials differently. Today, studying these texts 70 years after they were in circulation, we have the luxury of comparing them and cross-examining them with other sources: eyewitness accounts, court records, memoirs and oral history interviews, with survivors and their children. Because of the possibility of putting Beregovsky's team's collection into this context, one can establish that these songs deliver more insights than the initial goal of the project suggested: de facto they documented the most important historical events that took place under the occupation, such as deportations, epidemics, labor exploitation, orphans' crises and death by starvation, and they did so from the point of view of prisoners, in their own voices. Moreover, because of the genre of the collection – music performed in or for the group – we get a sense of what was acceptable, entertaining and relevant to the people interned in these ghettos, thus gaining insight into collective practices and collective action, especially those that emphasized the spirit of resistance, resilience, and solidarity with other people in the Soviet Union and gratitude to the Red Army and the

49 Nasilstvo nad tsivilnym naselennyam. Vinnitskya oblast'. Documenty organiv derzhbezpeki. 1941-1944. Edited by Valeri Vasilyev, Sergij Gula, Pavlo Kravchenko, Roman Podkur, Wolfgang Shnaider (Kiev: Vidavets V. Zakharenko, 2020), 216.

Soviet government. He found many songs that praised the Red Army, but also those that documented atrocities, condemned Romanian, German, and Ukrainian guards, and cursed God and the world for remaining indifferent to their sufferings. Above all, because of these songs, he was able to give us, contemporary scholars, the opportunity to examine how each ghetto formed its own culture under similar circumstances, but in profound disconnection from one another.

The common themes come through: unbearable circumstances of living, daunting hard work, starvation, loss of family members, dealing with scarcity of rations and other resources, the impossibility of planning for the future, lack of information about what was going on in the world, and being at the complete mercy of factors outside of one's control – people sang about these things everywhere. Sharing these thoughts with each other either through performances or collective singing gave comfort, and sometimes songs made them laugh at other prisoners or feel better about the injustice of ghetto councils. Now that some of these have been digitized by the Ukrainian national library and posted on the website,[50] we can study in detail what was acceptable and resonant to people at that time, i.e. in 1942 or 1944.

Songs give us a better impression of what gave prisoners a sense of community then, during the war, than oral histories or memoirs written later. This is because songs needed to respond acutely to what was going on; they did not have perspective of time or distance, and in that they are extremely valuable. For example, as we saw in an example from the Bershad ghetto, when it comes to dealing with ghetto politics, songs name leaders of the council and accuse them of specific crimes, whereas in later memoirs these crimes or even these individuals are barely mentioned, because other issues – such as the condemnation of Nazi ideology and occupiers – become more important. Similarly, Relly Bley's condemnation of people's indifference when it came to orphans rarely appears in interviews recorded after the war. But this was one sentiment that came through at that time very clearly. No matter which ghetto people were imprisoned within, or what specific atrocity or violence they survived (or did not), they wanted the world to know about their experiences and to listen to their voices. I think the time has come for us to oblige.

50 https://audio.ipri.kiev.ua/CD12.html, retrieved on June 18, 2022.

Acknowledgement

The research for this article has been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

A special thanks to John Goddard for the editorial help, and to Eli Jany and Miriam Schwartz for research assistance.

Bibliography

Archives

Vernadsky Ukrainian National Library, Manuscript Department
Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation

Monographs and articles

Ard, Yitzhak. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.

Bărbulescu, Ana. "The Underlife of Transnistria's Ghettos: Recategorizing and Reframing Social Interaction." *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35, 3 (2021): 196–213.

Creangă, Ovidiu. "Moghilev-Podolsk." Megargee, Geoffrey P., Martin Dean, and Christopher R. Browning, eds. *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, *1933–1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, Volume III, 715–717. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Creangă, Ovidiu. "Pecioara." Megargee, Geoffrey P., Martin Dean, and Christopher R. Browning, eds. *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, *1933–1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, Volume III, 742–743. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Dumitru, Diana. "The Gordian knot of Justice: Prosecuting Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Stalinist Courts for "Collaboration" with the Enemy." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, 4 (2021): 729–756.

Ehrenburg, Ilya, and Vasily Grossman. *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry*. Translated and edited by David Patterson. London: Taylor and Francis, 2017.

Gil', Samuil. *Krov' ikh I segodnya govorit*. New York: Prime Media Service, 1995.

Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.

Ginsburg, Saul M., P. S. Marek, and Dov Noy. *Yiddish folksongs in Russia*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991.

Hel'mer, Yakov, ed. *Kolokola pamyati. Vospominaniya byvshikh uznikov getto i kontslagerei, prozhivaiushchikh v gorode Ashdode (Israel)* (Ashdod: Amuta "Zikaron", 2005).

Jagendorf, Siegfried. *Jagendorf's foundry: memoir of the Romanian Holocaust, 1941–1944*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Kassow, Samuel D. *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Khazdan, Evgenia. "Velikaya otochestvennaya voyna v evreiskom folklore (po materialami iz sobrania M Y Beregovskogo)." *Vremenik Zubobskogo instytuta* 6 (2011): 96–105.

Nasilstvo nad tsivilnym naselennyam. Vinnitskya oblast'. Documenty organiv derzhbezpeki. 1941–1944. Edited by Valeri Vasilyev, Sergij Gula, Pavlo Kravchenko, Roman Podkur, Wolfgang Shnaider. Kiev: Vidavets V. Zakharenko, 2020.

Ofer, Dalia. "The Ghettos in Transnistria and Ghettos under German Occupation in Eastern Europe." In *Im Ghetto 1939-1945*. Edited by Christoph Dieckmann and Babette Quinkert. *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* 25 (2009): 30–53.

Rebrova, Irina. *Re-Constructing Grassroots Holocaust Memory: The Case of the North Caucasus*. Munich and Vienna: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.

Sergeeva, Irina. "Fonarkhiv evreiskoi narodnoi muzyki; istoria, soderzhanie fondov i perspektivii razvitiya." *Rukopisna ta knizhova spashchina Ukrainy* XII, 80–92. Kiev: Vernadsky National Library, 2007.

Sholokhova, Lyudmila, Fonarkhiv evreiskogo muzykalnogo naselenia. Kollektsia fonograficheskikh zapisei evreiskogo folklore iz fondov instituta rukopisii: annotirovanii katalog fono-tsilindrov, notnikh i tekstovikh rasshchirovok. Kiev: Vernadsky National Library, 2001.

Weber, Peter. "Eyewitness testimonies as source of a historical analysis of the deportations to Transnistria, 1941-1943." *Études balkaniques* 4 (2004): 28–43.

Werb, Bret. "Fourteen Shoah Songbooks." *Musica Judaica* 20 (2013): 39–116.

Wlodarski, Amy Lynn. *Musical Witness and Holocaust Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Zabarko, Boris, ed. *My hoteli zhit'.Svidetelstva i dokumenty*. Kiev: Dukh I Litera, 2013.

Mass violence as a social process

Jason Tingler

A local history of the Sobibór death camp and Nazi occupation

During World War II, the small and historically unremarkable village of Sobibór in eastern Poland became notorious as an execution center for the Nazi genocide of the Jews. At least 170,000 people were murdered in the Sobibór death camp between May 1942 and October 1943, coming to represent one of the largest gravesites of Jewish victims throughout all of Europe.[1] While the Sobibór camp was initially designed as part of the planned extermination of two million Polish Jews within the General Government (Operation Reinhard), it developed more of an international character than the other Reinhard camps, Bełżec and Treblinka. Jewish victims from other countries began to arrive within the first weeks of the camp's operation, as nearly half of Sobibór's total victims were non-Polish citizens – a substantially higher proportion than any other extermination camp except Auschwitz-Birkenau. No matter their origin, nearly all of those who arrived in the camp were stripped, shaven, and sent directly to the gas chambers; only a small workforce was retained for the camp and surrounding amelioration camps. Sobibór was finally closed and dismantled after a successful revolt by the camp's Jewish labor force in October 1943, one of three major uprisings launched by Jewish prisoners in the Nazi extermination camps. While it was operational, only a few dozen Jews ever made it out of the camp alive.

The basic history of the Sobibór death camp was first established after its liberation, with more comprehensive studies appearing since the 1980s, most notably by Miriam Novitch, Richard Rashke, Yitzhak Arad, Jules Schelvis, and Marek Bem.[2] Although some questions remain, such as the precise number of victims, the existing literature has reconstructed the camp's layout, operation, prisoner life, and uprising in great detail. And though not transforming our knowledge of the camp, new discoveries have further enriched our understanding of Sobibór's history,

1 Robert Kuwałek, "Nowe ustalenia dotyczące liczby ofiar niemieckiego obozu zagłady w Sobiborze," *Zeszyty Majdanka* XXVI (2014): 17–60.

2 Miriam Novitch, *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980); Richard Rashke, *Escape from Sobibor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, rev. 2018); Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor: A History of a Nazi Death Camp* (New York: Berg, 2008); Marek Bem, *Sobibór: obóz zagłady 1942–1943* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2014).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-012

including recent archaeological investigations of the campgrounds and the publication of Johann Niemann's photo collection.[3]

While the horrors inside Sobibór have become increasingly clear, less is known about the conditions immediately outside the camp, a lacuna that has been underscored by two trends in Holocaust scholarship. On the one hand, following the pioneering work of Jan Tomasz Gross, a new school of research in Poland has moved beyond a German-centric understanding of perpetrators by studying the role of non-Jewish neighbors – traditionally labeled "bystanders" – in the persecution of Jews. Scholars working in this direction have argued that, while the Third Reich organized the Final Solution, the Nazi genocide against Poland's Jews would not have been as complete without the complicity and involvement of local non-Jewish (Christian) residents.[4] By contrast, another trend emerging within this historiography has emphasized the severity of occupational violence against multiple groups, situating the genocide of European Jews within a broader pattern of Nazi killing and terror.[5] Each perspective highlights a different part of the social context for the Holocaust in Poland, but few studies have considered both factors (local participation and widespread terror) in their analysis.[6]

---

3 Yoram Haimi and Wojciech Mazurek, "Uncovering the Remains of a Nazi Death Camp: Archaeological Research in Sobibór," *Yad Vashem Studies* 41, 2 (2013): 55–94; US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), "Sobibor Perpetrator Collection," available at: https://tinyurl.com/SobiborPerpetratorCollection.

4 Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc: losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, t. 1–2 (Warszawa Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018).

5 Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Alex Kay, *Empire of Destruction: A History of Mass Killing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

6 For more observations on the literature: Jochen Böhler and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland (1939–1945) – A Case for Differentiated Occupation Studies," *Journal of Modern European History,* 16, 2 (2018): 225–246; Daniel Blatman, "Beyond National Identities: New Challenges in Writing the History of the Holocaust in Poland and Israel," in *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands*, eds. Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek, and Andrzej Żbikowski (Boston: Academic Studies, 2018), 423–441. Among notable exceptions: Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), and Tomasz Frydel, "Judenjagd: Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust," in *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Actions, Motivations, and Dynamics*, eds. Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel (New York: Routledge, 2018), 187–203.

This chapter seeks to combine both approaches to illuminate the world immediately outside Sobibór. Even though the death camp operated as an island unto itself to some degree, its presence influenced and interacted with the broader social landscape in important ways. Nazi guards dined at local taverns, auxiliary police brought captured Jews to the camp gates, and non-Jewish residents often betrayed camp escapees and trafficked in the belongings of murdered Jews.[7] These encounters do not fundamentally alter our knowledge of the death camp, but they do connect Sobibór to the actions and experiences of nearby Poles and Ukrainians, who had been subjected to forced labor, population displacement, village reprisals, food requisitions, and other types of Nazi violence.

Drawing upon a wide array of German documents, Polish welfare records, and personal accounts, this article hopes to reveal the interrelationship between the Sobibór death camp and its immediate surroundings.[8] Jan Burzlaff's recent study of Bełżec highlights the ways that a Nazi death camp could become embedded within local society, radically altering social relations, and thereby stressing the importance of considering non-Jewish experiences in the social history of the Holocaust.[9] The present article supports that analysis and goes a step farther, showing how the corrosive effect of protracted German terror not only shaped non-Jewish interactions with Jewish escapees but with various other groups, too. In the face of extreme violence, self-preservation and material well-being largely overruled benevolence and prosocial bonds, a trend the Sobibór death camp exacerbated but did not ultimately cause. By examining the wider nexus of Sobibór, its Jewish victims, and local Christian residents under German rule, this chapter offers a new perspective of the Nazi death camp.[10]

7 Miranda Brethour, "Life and Death in the Shadow of Sobibór: Economic Dimensions of Jewish-Gentile Relations in the town of Włodawa, 1939–1944," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* (2021), 1–26.

8 This text stems from a larger project on the Chełm region during World War II. Jason Tingler, "Mosaic of Destruction: The Holocaust, Mass Violence, and Interethnic Relations in Chełm, Poland, 1939–1947" (PhD Dissertation, Clark University, 2019).

9 Jan Burzlaff, "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers: Social Dynamics and Everyday Life around the Killing Center at Bełżec (1941–1944)," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35, 3 (2021): 445–463.

10 "Christian" here denotes Polish and Ukrainian ethnicity more than any degree of religious fealty.

The Sobibór commune and Nazi occupation

Under the Second Polish Republic, the village of Sobibór in the Polish county of Włodawa originally served as the seat for a rural commune, *gmina Sobibór*.[11] Located along the western brim of the Bug River, a substantial part of the commune was comprised of forests and marshes, but there were significant pockets of settlement (villages, manors, etc.) where approximately 11,400 people lived. While ethnic and national identities could be fluid in this part of the Polish borderlands, particularly among Christian residents, Ukrainians generally represented the majority of the commune's ethnic makeup (7,464 residents – 65% of the commune), followed by Poles (3,434 – 30%) and a small number of Jews (521 – 5%).[12] The area's population was overwhelmingly poor and economically reliant on farming, with most families (82%) possessing less than five hectares of land (about 12 acres), while a few hundred farmers owned substantially more. Religious and economic antisemitism was prevalent among peasants, and there was little integration between ethnic groups, but violence was historically rare. These economic qualities and social disparities did not diverge considerably from other parts of the Lublin Voivodeship and stood in stark contrast to more nationalist areas of interwar Poland.[13]

With the joint invasion of Poland in September 1939, Sobibór was initially tossed between the German and Soviet zones of occupation but was eventually ceded to the Third Reich in accordance with the revised Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Once Nazi Germany gained permanent control in October 1939, the Sobibór commune was incorporated into Chełm County (Kreis Chelm) of the Lublin District in the General Government. Soon thereafter, two existing glassworks, perhaps the most substantial form of industry in the commune, were closed while all but one of the area's seven estates were confiscated by the Germans. This further impoverished the area and forced 120 Polish families to seek material assistance from the local branch of the Central Welfare Council, in addition to 100 children who received food from a soup kitchen.[14] Alongside economic deprivations, the German occupation immediately inaugurated a wave of terror

11 The size of the Sobibór commune was 24,765 hectares (approx. 61,200 acres).

12 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 739, January 1941 Report for Sobibór, 158. The Jewish Council in Włodawa reported in January 1941 that 305 Jews lived in the village of Włodawa, including 70 refugees. Jewish Historical Institute (AŻIH), 211/1109, letter to Jewish Social Self Help Headquarters, 15.

13 Jan Jachymek, *Oblicze społeczno-polityczne wsi lubelskiej, 1930–1939* (Lublin: Wydanictwo Lubelskie, 1975); Zbigniew Zaporowski, ""Miasteczko i sztet!" Polacy i Żydzi w województwie lubelskim w przededniu II wojny swiatowej," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, eds. Adam Sitarka, Michala Trebacza, and Edy Wiatr (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012), 175–202.

14 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 739, February 1941 report for Chełm County, 9.

and violence. At the end of October 1939 in the village of Wisznice, northwest of Włodawa, a former Polish soldier was publicly executed in front of 200 people after the Germans discovered an illegal collection of rifles.[15]

The extent of early Nazi violence around Sobibór was intensified by Chełm County's location along the border with Soviet occupied Poland. Once Poland had been defeated, the Third Reich and Soviet Union organized the exchange of captured soldiers who had originally lived in each other's occupied zone. From the west, the Germans sent thousands of POWs, including as many Jewish soldiers as possible (from eastern Poland or not), in unheated cattle cars to several border stations. Going days without food in frigid temperatures, many captives died en route, as did Polish POWs being sent westward by the Soviet Union.[16]

The conditions were not the only thing to be feared, however. Two separate transports of Jewish POWs were massacred by German police in Chełm County between December 1939 and January 1940. One transport was claimed to be a potential health threat because of sickness among the prisoners, while in the other case, a scheduled exchange of prisoners was cancelled after Polish POWs from the Soviet transport allegedly all perished during their journey west. Rather than accommodate the prisoners until a future exchange could be organized, the transport was sent along the Chełm-Włodawa rail line. Near the Sobibór rail station, the Jewish POWs were taken off the railway cars and machine gunned down by German police that had encircled them. A few prisoners were able to escape into the woods and reach the Jewish community in Włodawa, which also learned of the atrocity from Polish residents and railway workers that had to clear the corpses from the railway. The Włodawa Jewish Council later gained permission to bury the bodies in the Jewish cemetery. In total, some 800 Jewish POWs died between both transports.[17]

At the periphery of German controlled territory, the eastern Lublin District made an ideal dumping ground for racial "undesirables." Aiming to Germanize

15 Institute of National Remembrance – Lublin branch (IPN Lu), Sygn. 501/72, Reports of Nazi Crimes in Włodawa County, 74–75.

16 Shmuel Krakowski, "The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign," *Yad Vashem Studies* 12 (1977): 297–333; Andrzej Toczewski, "Cooperation Between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich in Exchanges of Polish Population and Prisoners of War in the Years 1939–1941," *The Polish Review* 37, 2 (1992): 209–215.

17 AŻIH, 302/271, Czeslaw Chybowski (undated); AŻIH, 301/1016, Adam Szprynger (November 16, 1945); AŻIH, 301/2202, Motel Rabinowicz (undated); AŻIH, 301/1484, Mojsze Zalcman (undated); USC Visual History Archive (VHA), Interview 9905: Robert Becker (December 10, 1995); German Federal Archive (BArch), B162/6242, interrogation of Ferdinand Hahnzog, 295 (January 17, 1963); BArch, B162/4437, statement of Jan Krzowski (February 28, 1966), 2589. Krakowski, "The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign," 315–316.

and ethnically purify its newly annexed territories in western Poland (especially in the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, or *Warthegau*), Nazi Germany forcibly relocated hundreds of thousands of Poles and Jews into the General Government, the non-annexed rump of German-occupied Poland, with many being sent to the Lublin District.[18] In Chełm County alone, more than 21,000 Polish "resettlers" arrived by December 1940.[19] They would be distributed to various points throughout the county, with 375 being sent to the village of Sobibór. Most of the Warthegau Poles arrived destitute, as they were hastily rushed out of their houses and could only bring a few of their belongings. It then became the responsibility of the local branch of the Central Welfare Council to provide the Warthegau Poles with accommodations and living supplies.

In the face of a major humanitarian crisis that reverberated throughout the Lublin District, the Polish welfare agencies counted on local Polish inhabitants to help care for the Warthegau deportees, and the early responses were very supportive. Stanislaw Niemirycz in Uhrusk, who owned the only local estate remaining in Polish hands, provided food, board, and a job for 16 families, while hundreds of other refugees were given rooms in Polish houses, often providing helpful hands to their hosts.[20] Although some native inhabitants were wary of the incoming Poles, even suspecting they might be criminals, relations between two groups were initially regarded as positive, with local Poles making major sacrifices on behalf of the Warthegau Poles.

The quality of relations between the local and refugee communities would decline over the coming months. In Sobibór, interactions were originally described as good, with locals displaying substantial generosity in terms of donations; by July 1942 those offerings had severely slowed, while the Polish relief agency noted that "the commune's attitude to its charges is one of complete indifference."[21] This degeneration, which matched observations elsewhere in Chełm County and the Lublin District as a whole, was interwoven with occupational hardships. A report from neighboring Biała Podlaska County noted:

18 Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007); Janina Kiełboń, *Migracje ludności w dystrykcie lubelskim w latach 1939–1944* (Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 1995); Götz Aly, *'Final Solution': Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

19 This was part of a population transfer operation known as the "Cholmer Aktion," which sent local Volksdeutsche to the Warthegau and returned ethnic Poles in their place.

20 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 739, January 1941 report for Sobibór, 161.

21 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 739, July 1942 report for Sobibór, 274.

> As the food supply situation of the village worsens, the fate of the displaced also worsens. The times when the rural population kindly rushed to help the displaced belong to the past. . . This year, it is difficult to find help from society. The pauperization of the rural population is advancing rapidly.[22]

Increasingly impoverished, some native Poles even grew envious of the welfare assistance received by refugees, while others felt insulted by the cultural superiority and entitlement displayed by Warthegau Poles.[23] One relief agent noted:

> Relations between the local and immigrant population are unfavorable, with both sides at fault . . . Things are negatively affected by the cultural superiority emphasized by the refugees, which offends the local population, demanding too many benefits combined with lack of service on their part, and occasional cases of dishonesty. Meanwhile, the local population must be accused of being too materialistic and not tolerating systematic selflessness, a tendency to evaluate everything that is foreign negatively. Finally, there is a hint of envy on benefits received by non-residents.[24]

Further inflaming the divide, Warthegau Poles were often recruited into the police and administrative apparatus of the General Government, including in Chełm County.

The decreased charity between 1941 and 1942 represented a byproduct of the escalation of Nazi terror. Certainly, even during the initial arrival of Polish deportees, many donors were fearful of having their names recorded on pledges.[25] However, the region would continue to witness ever greater horrors, including the genocide of Jews (discussed below) and the starvation of Soviet POWs. At least 3,000 Red Army captives died in the Orchówek branch of Stalag 319, an open-air camp on the north end of Włodawa that was visible to passersby; escapees from the complex were often spurned and betrayed by local society.[26] Moreover, the local population faced increased oppression in the way of forced labor, food requisitions, village pacifications, and targeted executions. For instance, during a May 1942 anti-partisan operation conducted by German police and Trawniki auxiliaries (Trawnikimänner), 94 Jews and 12 Poles were executed in Wereszczyn and nearly the entire village – some 150 residential and commercial buildings – was set ablaze.[27]

---

22 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 735, February 1942 report on Bohukal, 91.
23 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 462, July 1941 report for Chełm County, 65.
24 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 735, December 1942 report on Sidorki, 203.
25 USHMM, RG-15.550, Sygn. 462, April 1941 report for Chełm County, 40.
26 Tingler, "Mosaic of Destruction," 390–397.
27 IPN Lu, Sygn. 501/72, reports of Nazi Crimes in Włodawa County, 15.

The Wereszczyn case illustrates the distinct victimization of Poles and Jews; indirectly, it also reveals the general favoritism displayed to the Ukrainian population. Ukrainians would suffer various degrees of oppression within the General Government, but not to the extent of other groups. Following a "divide and conquer" strategy, the Third Reich leadership gave preference to Ukrainians in hopes of redirecting Polish resentment away from the foreign occupiers, and even relied upon their assistance to rule over Poland. As a result, Ukrainians were demographically overrepresented among the occupational administration in the Lublin District and came to enforce the German occupation by serving as village elders (*sołtys*), commune leaders (*wójt*), and town mayors (*burmistrz*).[28] Nearly two-thirds of wójts in Chełm County were Ukrainian, as was the mayor of Włodawa.[29] According to the SS-Polizeireiterabteilung III stationed in the region, this meant that "all of the onus is placed on the shoulders of the Polish population" in terms of German policies.[30] And indeed, Polish welfare agencies regularly complained about the lack of support for needy Poles (including Warthegau refugees) from Ukrainian administrators and welfare committees, as the contest for dwindling resources further inflamed interethnic tensions.[31]

The power disparity between Poles and Ukrainians was itself reflected in the village of Sobibór. The sołtys was Piotr Duda, an Orthodox Ukrainian farmer who had incidentally served in both the Red Army and Polish military after World War I. During the Nazi occupation, Duda helped enforce German demands, including by listing villagers (often a family's older son and/or daughter) to be conscripted for labor in the Reich and taking part in subsequent roundups. After the war, Duda was indicted based on complaints from Polish villagers, who testified that the sołtys would take bribes to excuse one's family member from labor duty, while those unable to afford anything had their child deported. Some Ukrainian villagers stuck up for Duda as only following German orders, but it is clear that he abused his power. An intoxicated Duda even shouted before a village meeting: "Hitler in Berlin and me in Sobibór, two people who can do anything!"[32]

Terrorized by the German occupation and provoked by its nationality policies, a part of the population engaged in armed resistance. Underground activ-

28 Czeslaw Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, t.I (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), 221–223.

29 Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Ukraińskie podziemie na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944* (Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2013), 134.

30 State Archive in Lublin (APL), 514/38, November 1943 report of Polizeireiterabteilung-III, 151.

31 See for example: APL, 616/90, report of Chełm County (December 20, 1940), 117; August 1941 report on Turka. RG-15.550, 60.

32 IPN Lu, 315/102, trial of Piotr Duda.

ists appeared soon after the conquest of Poland, but this group was relatively small and primarily focused on cultural resistance (e.g., secret schools). Groups of guerrillas and marauders mostly started appearing in 1942 and 1943, resulting from the increasing desperation of the population, the changing fortunes of Germany's war effort, and a growing number of fugitive POWs in the region. Police and Wehrmacht patrols engaged a number of armed "bandits" in the region, while some groups attacked perceived Ukrainian collaborators.[33] Two Ukrainian administrators in the Sobibór commune were assassinated by partisans in May 1943, while Ukrainian national activists were specifically targeted in robberies.[34] Ethnic violence in the Lublin District continued to escalate between Poles and Ukrainians, surging after a flood of Polish refugees arrived fleeing UPA massacres in Volhynia; Polish relief agencies even established a camp in Sobibór for orphaned children.[35] Not all victims of the armed groups were Ukrainian, though, and while robberies were the most frequent form of attacks, more extreme crimes also occurred. A Polish villager was found decapitated near Sobibór in September 1943, and women across the eastern Lublin District frequently fell victim to sexual assault.[36] Such local violence, both inter and intra-ethnic, grew increasingly common for the remainder of the war.

The persecution and murder of Jews

The above developments coincided with the persecution and genocide of Jews, which formed a distinct component of Nazi policy.[37] Nearly 30,000 Jews lived in Chełm County, predominantly in the urban areas of Chełm, Włodawa, Rejowiec, and Siedliszcze. Between fall 1940 and spring 1942, most of the Jews in smaller villages were forced into larger cities as part of Nazi ghettoization policy. Jewish "residential districts" quickly became overcrowded, with inadequate supplies of food or heating materials, leading to outbreaks of severe illness and hunger. Among the dwindling number of healthy Jews, thousands were taken to the network of drainage camps in the region, working under harsh conditions and extensive abuse.

33 For instance, two armed "bandits" were shot in the forest west of Sobibór in July 1943. USHMM, RG-15.011M, 156/107, KdO Lublin telegram, 92–93 (July 4, 1943).

34 Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), M.52/301, July 1943 report of Włodawa Help Committee, 5.

35 APL, 498/171, Polish Central Welfare Committee Advisor to the Lublin District, 111 (October 11, 1943).

36 USHMM, RG-15.011M, Reel 8, File 107, KdO Lublin Telegram, 18 (September 21, 1943).

37 David Silberklang, *Gates of Tears: The Holocaust in the Lublin District* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013).

Moreover, the Germans also expropriated Jewish properties and businesses, giving some to local Volksdeutsche and the rest to Ukrainian officials, much to the consternation of the Polish relief committee.[38] In May 1942, with the opening of the Sobibór camp and the escalation of Operation Reinhard, the first series of deportation actions struck Chełm County, continuing intermittently throughout the summer and reaching a violent crescendo with the ghetto liquidations in November. By March 1943, fewer than 1,000 Jews officially remained in Chełm County, mainly specialized craftsmen and authorized workers, although an indeterminate number were in hiding.[39]

The murder of Jews throughout the General Government was widely known, with brutal deportations and numerous executions taking place in plain sight, but proximity to Sobibór gave residents a more visceral sense of its occurrence. There was initially some uncertainty about the camp's purpose during its construction, which entailed the displacement of some villagers and glimpses of the brutal treatment of Jewish laborers. Suspicions of something nefarious grew as dozens of transports were seen heading for the site, but then returned without their Jewish passengers. Groups of Jews around Chełm County were also marched to Sobibór on foot, never to be seen again.[40] Although the exact goings-on inside the camp remained unclear throughout the war, with rumors about mass electrocutions and the production of "Jewish soap," the killing of Jews quickly became evident. Already in June 1942, just a few weeks into the camp's operation, the Polish underground learned that nearby peasants were abandoning their farms "because of the stench of thinly covered corpses."[41] Later, as Sobibór's extermination activities were winding down, the fiery glow from mass cremations could be seen miles away.

The grim news weighed on the local Christian population, to say nothing of the Jews themselves. As has been widely established, moral outcry on behalf of Jews was largely absent from Polish or Ukrainian society during the Holocaust, yet even for the staunchest local antisemites, the unprecedented brutality of German measures was still deeply troubling.[42] One Polish woman recorded how people around Chełm "recognized from afar the alarming whistle of a train" as it headed for Sobibór, noting how it "aroused people in the night, and in the day

38 APL, 616/90, autumn 1941 Report on Chełm County, 536.

39 APL, 498/139, data on 1 March 1943 census in the General Government, 197ff.

40 Tingler, "Mosaic of Destruction," 206–209.

41 Polish Fortnightly News, Nr. 47 (July 1942), "Documents from Poland: German Attempts to Murder a Nation."

42 Archive of Modern Records (AAN), 1325/202/II-29, February 1943 underground report of events in the Lublin region, 60.

deprived people of all joys in their life."[43] Although the author was sympathetic to the Jewish plight, her observation touches on a broader concern, as while not everyone mourned the loss of the Jewish community, there was growing apprehension of suffering a similar fate. Indeed, panicked rumors about Polish children from Zamość being sent to Sobibór reflected this broader fear, as did the refusal of local Poles to be counted or recorded in the 1943 census.

Intimately familiar with the murder of Jews, Poles and Ukrainians played important roles in the genocidal process, particularly for those who (at least temporarily) had escaped from Nazi grasps. Their survival often depended upon the attitude and reactions of local villagers. Defying the threat of a German death penalty and potential denunciation by their neighbors, a few courageous individuals risked their lives to save Jews. After she fled from Sobibór in October 1943, Esther Turner Raab found refuge with the Marcyniuk family, whom Raab discovered had also been secretly hiding her brother. One of the wealthiest families in the region, the Marcyniuks had had a longstanding friendship with Raab's family before the war and were willing to provide the necessary help. They were later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem for their heroism.[44]

The Marcyniuks were highly exceptional. As in Bełżec, local Poles and Ukrainians here largely refused to aid Jews fleeing from the gas chambers; some even participated in the genocide.[45] In the village of Zamołodycze, Ukrainian villagers and auxiliary police conducted a manhunt that led to the capture and German execution of some 26 Jews – what one survivor aptly called a massacre – while a handful of escapees from the October 1943 camp uprising voluntarily returned to Sobibór because of the difficulties they faced in the countryside.[46] Antisemitism and material inability played an important role in local responses to endangered Jews, as did the imprint of Nazi violence, with a striking number of persecutors having themselves experienced German oppression. In October 1942, five Polish-speaking Jews escaped from a train to Sobibór and arrived in the village of Karolinów, located on the Chełm-Włodawa railway line. The Jews appeared at Stanisław Osękowski's residence one morning and asked to buy some food. Osękowski was a member of the local village guard, and while the Jews ate, he reported their presence to the village head, who instructed the head of the village guard, Jan Kaczmarek, to bring the Jews to the Polish Blue Police station in Ruda Huta (8 km away). Kaczmarek

43 AŻIH, 302/119, diary of Aurelia Jaworska (undated, wartime).

44 VHA, Interview 3029: account of Esther Turner Raab (1997).

45 Burzlaff, "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers," 453–454.

46 Harold Werner, *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 77–86; BArch, B162/6184, interrogation of Erich Wullbrandt (March 29, 1961), 93.

soon delivered the Jews with Osękowski and another guard. All three of the Poles were transplants, having been deported to Karolinów from the annexed regions of western Poland in 1940. After the war, Kaczmarek testified that as they headed for Ruda Huta, one of the Jews begged for their release, but Kaczmarek refused "because I was in fear of the German authorities."[47] Found guilty in a postwar trial, Kaczmarek's experiences reflect the acquiescence of local Poles in the shadow of Nazi terror.

Although triggered by the village administration, the case in Karolinów highlights the important role played by the Polish Blue Police in the annihilation of Jews in the General Government. In this regard, Blue Policemen who had been displaced from the Warthegau proved particularly dutiful in carrying out German demands.[48] In February 1943, two Jewish train jumpers, one of whom was a young, bloodied woman named Esta, were found by railway guards and reported to the same Blue Police post in Ruda Huta. The post was under the command of Jan Wielebski, originally deported from Poznan. Both Jews were executed after being taken to the police post. Esta was killed by Wielebski's 17-year-old son, who often drank with the unit's members and had asked his father's permission to shoot the woman.[49] Local Polish police from the Chełm region would even bring Jews directly to the death camp.[50] Likewise, Ukrainian police participated in local anti-Jewish violence, particularly in the city of Włodawa and the local amelioration camps, but they were outnumbered in Chełm County by the Blue Police.[51] In any case, whether submissive or solicitous, the cold and violent responses of the local population and auxiliary police helped ensure that successfully escaping the Nazi death camp was extremely difficult for Jewish prisoners.

Profiting from Sobibór

While some residents participated in the killing process, many non-Jews used the opportunity to profit off Jewish misery, as economic motivations drove a

47 USHMM, RG-15.175M, Reel 27, SAL 132, testimony of Jan Kaczmarek (March 16, 1949), 20.
48 Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 102.
49 USHMM, RG-15.224M, Reel 12, SOZ 100: trial of Stefan Wielebski; USHMM, RG-15.176M, Reel 16, SOL 22: trial of Jan Wielebski.
50 BArch, B162/3749, interrogation of Erich Bauer (January 16, 1963), 1366; BArch, B162/5591, interrogation of Georg Wendel (April 25, 1964), 114.
51 See also Gabriel Finder and Alexander Prusin, "Collaboration in Eastern Galicia: The Ukrainian police and the Holocaust," *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, 2 (2004): 95–118.

wide array of local responses outside the camp.[52] Some Poles and Ukrainians exploited the elimination of Jews by purchasing their property for cheap on the eve of deportation or robbing their abandoned possessions once the Jews had been removed. At other times, locals simply followed the murderous path of German police. When Ester Pechter and her two children were hiding in a forest avoiding a six-hour Nazi manhunt, they were discovered by three Polish youths robbing Jewish bodies. After Ester begged for her family's lives, the boys abandoned the Jews to their fate ("They won't even survive. Leave them alone.") and continued scavenging for valuables amongst the dead.[53] Joseph Richter depicted a similar scene in the forest outside Sobibór in a drawing he made while living on the "Aryan" side, wherein two Ukrainian children waited for a Jewish woman to die so they could rob her.[54]

While the extermination sites in Poland were subjected to postwar diggings and grave robberies by local residents, including in Sobibór, the public thirst for Jewish belongings was already evident during the war.[55] When trainloads of Jews approached the Sobibór station, particularly in the case of foreign transports with unknowing passengers who had been locked in railcars for days, a mix of Polish railway workers and local residents would sell them bottles of water they had filled from station hydrants.[56] Non-Jewish commuters along the region's routes also solicited "bygone Jewish goods" during their train ride, as goods taken from murdered Jews made their way into local hands. A Polish woman who frequently traveled by train wrote: "On the Chełm-Włodawa railway line, trade in gold, watches, and jewelry blossomed. The (railway-J.T.) escorts have four or five watches on each hand and sell them very cheaply." However, the woman added, at least on her transport: "People are not eager to buy these riches."[57] Nevertheless, on at least one occasion, when a transport was loaded with Jewish valuables from Sobibór and dispatched to the general sorting depot at an old airfield camp in Lublin, a Polish train conductor allowed a friend to ride along and toss out

52 Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżlzcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 35 (1993): 100–114; Brethour, "In the Shadow of Sobibór."

53 YVA, M.31.2/1971, account of Esther Pechter.

54 Ghetto Fighters House Archives, Catalog No. 2421, Joseph Richter, "The Dying Jewess," 1943. Available at: https://www.tinyurl.com/RichterTheDyingJewess

55 Jan Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28–38.

56 AŻIH, 302/119, account of Aurelia Jaworska (undated, wartime); BArch, B162/5259, interrogation of Werner Allendorf (January 18, 1962), 731.

57 AŻIH, 302/119, account of Aurelia Jaworska (undated, wartime).

some goods before jumping off himself. The voyager acquired 30 pairs of boots in this fashion.[58]

The "flourishing trade" in Jewish objects outside Sobibór quickly spread into the surrounding communities. The first merchants of this trade were German and Trawniki personnel, both of whom were swimming in riches from the camp.[59] Known to make social forays and pay local women for sex, Trawniki guards were often bedecked with jewelry and openly chatted about the fates of their former owners.[60] The Trawnikis' frequent drinking bouts, and their ability to pay lavish sums, led to an inflated market for alcohol; a bottle of vodka sold for 1,000–2,000 złotys around Sobibór, compared to its typical price of 100–200 złotys. Nazi camp staff also cashed in, as several SS men made acquaintances with a tavern owning Polish family in nearby Włodawa. This family served only Germans in their restaurant. While the husband delivered cases of beer to Sobibór, the wife – who was accused of denouncing hidden Jews – purportedly visited the camp, buying gold teeth from the SS men, which she dealt on her own.[61]

Hardly alone in seeking out newly available merchandise, a wartime report from a former inmate of the Krychów labor camp observed that "Poles from Chełm and the surrounding area went to Sobibór and bought valuables from the local population or directly from the Trawniki guards."[62] Indeed, the sołtys of Sobibór (Duda) traded with SS guards in Sobibór, taking meat that was illegally slaughtered in the village to the camp in exchange for clothes, gold, and other valuables.[63]

Conclusion

The enrichment of local Christians at the expense of murdered Jews reflects an important dimension in the social history of the death camp. Hardly limited to

58 YVA, O.33/8263, account of Leon Ginsburg (undated, circa 2010).

59 BArch, B162/3749, interrogation of Erich Bauer (January 16, 1963), 1368. Bauer places the responsibility for this trade on Ukrainian guards, but it is obvious the Germans participated as well.

60 AŻIH, 301/5374, account of Franciszek Petlak (October 31, 1945); USHMM, RG-50.4880183, interview with Stefan Ostapiuk (July 10, 2003).

61 USHMM, RG-15.207M, Reel 3, Case GK 418/138: testimony of Władysław Piwowan (May 29, 1947), 1; testimony of Froim Fiszman (May 22, 1947), 2; testimony of Szymon Lederman (May 30, 1947), 3; interrogation of Stanisław Korneluk (30.5.1947), 4; interrogation of Stanisław Korneluk (9.6.1947), 10.

62 YVA, O.33/425, report from Zygmunt Krawczuk (1943).

63 IPN Lu 315/102, testimony of Jozef Korłowski (April 10, 1945).

Sobibór, the robbery and takeover of Jewish property accompanied every step of the Nazi genocide throughout Europe, representing an intrinsic part of communal exclusion and mass killing.[64] Even as the German state expropriated the majority of the victims' belongings, material goods helped mobilize the surrounding non-Jewish population, affecting Jewish chances at survival. Jews could pay for their rescue, but the lure of social mobility (exacerbated by longstanding antisemitic motifs about Jewish wealth) also incentivized people to look the other way, betray Jews in hiding, or seize their possessions. Neither poverty nor antisemitism were new to the Sobibór region, though, and they are insufficient to explain local complicity and profiteering in the destruction of Jews, as new social dynamics contributed as well.[65] Under the extreme conditions of German rule, which pauperized the population and cast a shadow of fear and uncertainty over people's daily lives, materialism and greed grew more salient. Jews were the most vulnerable to this development, as they were at the mercy of others in the face of Nazi persecution, but it was similarly reflected within intracommunal life under occupation, as Polish and Ukrainian villagers grew more insular and focused on their own well-being.

Sobibór played a central role in the history of the Holocaust, but a microhistory of the surrounding area reveals how the Nazi genocide was also interwoven with other types of mass violence. The occupied Christian population did not have as much to fear as Jews, as they were not subject to total extermination, but nevertheless they were forced to live in hazardous circumstances, leading to a wide range of previously unfathomable actions, including the hunting of people and bartering for gold teeth. Such sordid realities comprised an interconnected social landscape, as the violent transformation and changing circumstances during World War II reshaped the nature of social relations among the indigenous population, leading to a decline in charity and helping to enable broad participation in mass cruelty. In this sense, the Jews who broke out of the Sobibór camp during the famous October 1943 uprising entered a world brutally refashioned by Nazi occupation.

64 Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews*: *The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds. *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacja niemiecka i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2014).

65 Anna Wylegała, "About 'Jewish Things': Jewish Property in Eastern Galicia During World War II," *Yad Vashem Studies* 44, 2 (2016): 118.

Bibliography

Archival collections

Archive of Modern Records (Warsaw, Poland)
RG 1325 – Government Delegation for Poland, 1940–1945

German Federal Archives-Ludwigsburg Branch (Ludwigsburg, Germany)
B 162 – Records of the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes

Ghetto Fighters House Archive (Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot, Western Galilee, Israel)
Joseph Richter Collection

Institute of National Remembrance – Lublin Branch (Lublin, Poland)
Sygn. 501 – Reports of Nazi Crimes in Włodawa County
Sygn. 315 – Special Penalty Court in Lublin

Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw, Poland)
RG 211 – Collection of the Jewish Social Mutual Assistance, 1940–1942
RG 301 – Holocaust Survivor Testimonies
RG 302 – Collection of Memoirs

State Archive in Lublin (Lublin, Poland)
RG 498 – Lublin District Governor's Office, 1940–1944
RG 514 – SS Mounted Police Battalion III in Cholm, 1942–1944
RG 616 – The Committee for Polish Aid in the Lublin District, 1940–1944

US Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC)
RG-15.011M – Records of the Commander of the Lublin Gendarmerie
RG-15.175M – Appeals Court in Lublin
RG-15.176M – District Court in Lublin
RG-15.207M – Records of the Prosecutor's Office for the Lublin District Court RG-15.224M – Records of the District Court in Zamość
RG-15.550 – Selected records of the Central Welfare Council
RG-50 – Oral History Interviews
Sobibor Perpetrator Collection

USC Shoah Foundation's Video History Archive (Los Angeles, CA)
Interviews with Holocaust Survivors

Yad Vashem (Jerusalem, Israel)
M.31.2 – Files from the Righteous Among the Nations Department
M.52 – Documentation from Regional Archives in the Ukraine
O.33 – Testimonies, Diaries, and Memoirs

Published sources

Aly, Götz. *"Final Solution": Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Arad, Yitzhak. *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, rev. 2018.

Bartov, Omer. *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Bem, Marek. *Sobibór: obóz zagłady 1942–1943*. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2014.

Blatman, Daniel. "Beyond National Identities: New Challenges in Writing the History of the Holocaust in Poland and Israel." In *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands*. Edited by Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek, and Andrzej Żbikowski, 423–441. Boston: Academic Studies, 2018.

Bloxham, Donald. *The Final Solution: A Genocide*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Böhler, Jochen, and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk. "Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland (1939–1945) – A Case for Differentiated Occupation Studies." *Journal of Modern European History* 16, 2 (2018): 225–246.

Brethour, Miranda. "Life and Death in the Shadow of Sobibór: Economic Dimensions of Jewish-Gentile Relations in the town of Włodawa, 1939–1944." *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* (2021).

Burzlaff, Jan. "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers: Social Dynamics and Everyday Life around the Killing Center at Bełżec (1941–1944)." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35, 3 (2021): 445–463.

Dean, Martin. *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Engelking, Barbara, and Jan Grabowski, eds. *Dalej jest noc: losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, t. 1–2. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.

Finder, Gabriel and Alexander Prusin. "Collaboration in Eastern Galicia: The Ukrainian police and the Holocaust." *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, 2 (2004): 95–118.

Frydel, Tomasz. "Judenjagd: Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust." In *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Actions, Motivations, and Dynamics*. Edited by Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, 187–203. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Gerlach, Christian. *The Extermination of the European Jews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Grabowski, Jan and Dariusz Libionka, eds. *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacja niemiecka i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950*. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2014.

Grabowski, Jan. *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Gross, Jan. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Haimi, Yoram, and Wojciech Mazurek. "Uncovering the Remains of a Nazi Death Camp: Archaeological Research in Sobibór." *Yad Vashem Studies* 41, 2 (2013): 55–94.

Jachymek, Jan. *Oblicze społeczno-polityczne wsi lubelskiej, 1930–1939*. Lublin: Wydanictwo Lubelskie, 1975.
Kay, Alex. *Empire of Destruction: A History of Mass Killing*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021.
Kiełboń, Janina. *Migracje ludności w dystrykcie lubelskim w latach 1939–1944*. Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 1995.
Krakowski, Shmuel. "The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign." *Yad Vashem Studies* 12 (1977): 297–333.
Kuwałek, Robert. "Nowe ustalenia dotyczące liczby ofiar niemieckiego obozu zagłady w Sobiborze." *Zeszyty Majdanka* XXVI (2014): 17–60.
Madajczyk, Czesław. *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, t.I. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970.
Novitch, Miriam. *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt*. New York: Holocaust Library, 1980.
Prekerowa, Teresa. "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżlzcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich." *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 35 (1993): 100–114.
Rashke, Richard. *Escape from Sobibor*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.
Rutherford, Phillip T. *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939–1941*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007.
Schelvis, Jules. *Sobibor: A History of a Nazi Death Camp*. New York: Berg, 2008.
Silberklang, David. *Gates of Tears: The Holocaust in the Lublin District*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013.
Tingler, Jason. "Mosaic of Destruction: The Holocaust, Mass Violence, and Interethnic Relations in Chełm, Poland, 1939–1947." PhD Dissertation, Clark University, 2019.
Toczewski, Andrzej. "Cooperation Between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich in Exchanges of Polish Population and Prisoners of War in the Years 1939–1941." *The Polish Review* 37, 2 (1992): 209–215.
Werner, Harold. *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
Wylegała, Anna. "About 'Jewish Things': Jewish Property in Eastern Galicia During World War II." *Yad Vashem Studies* 44, 2 (2016): 83–119.
Zajączkowski, Mariusz. *Ukraińskie podziemie na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944*. Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2013.
Zaporowski, Zbigniew. "Miasteczko i sztet!" Polacy i Żydzi w województwie lubelskim w przededniu II wojny swiatowej." In *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*. Edited by Adam Sitarka, Michala Trebacza, and Edy Wiatr, 175–202. Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012.

Society after violence

Anna Ohannessian-Charpin

Orphans building homes: Forgotten remnants of the Armenian deportations in South Jordan

This chapter describes the social life of Armenian women survivors of the genocide in an area of Jordan from 1918 to the 1990s, when I undertook anthropological research in that region. It is primarily based on interviews of descendants and participatory observation from 1986 to 1996.[1]

During the 1915 massacres, Armenians were deported to the outskirt deserts of the Ottoman Empire, mostly to the East but also to the southern areas of what was to be later the Kingdom of Transjordan. One of our main sources on these deportations are testimonies by survivors given years after their liberation. These narratives clearly show how the deportations' intent was to send Armenians to

1 I worked in Jordan from 1983 to 1993 for the preparation of my PhD thesis studying the Bedouin tribal system and social change accompanying the creation of the Kingdom. I started my fieldwork at the Nabatean site of Petra, studying the tribes in and around the archaeological site and then gradually moved to the south, to Guweira, the Hisma and the Wadi Araba. I spent one to three months each year in the south, working on Bedouin tribes. One year, I had just come from France, and was in a small café in Wadi Musa, near Petra. The café was new, and as I was eager to show that I was not an ordinary tourist, I turned to the owner, Abdallah Ghneymi, and told him that his café was new and was not there last year. He was interested and asked me how I knew that, and this gave me the opportunity to tell him that I was a French student, writing the history of the tribes in the south. So, he came and sat at my table and said "*oummi kanet armaniyyé*" (*my mother was Armenian*). Surprised and choked, I asked him to tell me a word in Armenian. He pointed the glass of water and said "*chour*" (water in Armenian), and from then on told me what he knew about his mother, how she had arrived in Wadi Musa and that his mother's best friend was named Anna (which is my name), and that I should go to Ma'an to find her. The next day, I went to Ma'an. It was not difficult to find the "Armenians," as a quarter in the town was named after them. All the Armenians had long passed away, but their children and grandchildren came to meet me, eager to tell me about their mothers. I spent more than two weeks in Ma'an and then came back again and again. This is how I first discovered that Armenian deportations had brought inhabitants of some Cilician villages to these remote areas. In this way, the core of my findings and analyses relies on the ways in which the descendants presented their Armenian ancestors and the ways in which the other inhabitants talked about the Armenians. This present article is part of ongoing work related to the Armenian deportations starting in 1915 and their presence across South Jordan.

Note: The title is inspired from the title of a novel by Philip Zakarian, *Որբը Տուն Շինեց* [*The Orphan Builds a Home*] (Beirut: Chirag, 1972).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-013

death, both during the march and during their stay in the desert. The deportees' caravans were composed of women, children, and the elderly, because all of the able-bodied men and youth had already been enrolled to serve in the army, killed or imprisoned before leaving their hometowns. Many died on the deportation route, but most of them perished from starvation, disease and thirst after their arrival. If their numbers at the departure from their hometowns in the summer of 1915 was in the thousands, at their liberation in 1918, they could hardly be counted in tens in the camps of Port Said.

For two-and-a-half years, the deportees lived in South Jordan, around Tafileh, Petra and Ma'an. The majority died while some young girls survived because they married local Arabs. The narratives seldom mention those who did not leave in 1918. The fate of those who stayed remain unknown and forgotten in these narratives. They did not form part of the Armenian communities spread mainly in Amman and Irbid in the north that emerged from the last round of deportations in 1921. The Armenian communities of Jordan are recognised as part of the Christian communities and exclude "Islamised" members.

My main underlying interest in all this work is to understand how a "culture"[2] is rebuilt following this "great breakdown" caused by the genocide, which intended to erase forever all Armenian remnants and heritage, uprooted, with return no more possible. How does transmission occur, what are the determinants and what is being transmitted in a completely different cultural and environmental setting, with no similar reference points to what existed "back home?" This rebuilt culture/s is/are what we, the Armenian diaspora, have inherited.

The South of Jordan and more specifically Ma'an offers the ethnographic field in which this question is examined by means of local Arabs who claim an Armenian descent. Understanding cultural reconstruction means first examining forms of social integration through knowledge of the local culture, which this article intends to do. Here the Bedouin – pastoral-nomadic – and tribal socio-cultural forms tailor the local setting where Armenian young women lived. The setting is also related to the history and social change of Jordan in the first half of the twentieth century where Bedouin tribes gradually opted for a more sedentary

2 I speak of culture in its wide anthropological understanding as a "complex whole;" E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. I, (London: John Murray, 1871), 1, and "civilisation," Marcel Mauss, in "Note sur la notion de civilisation," of 1913 in Marcel Mauss, *Œuvres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 451–455, and "comme un ensemble de systèmes symboliques . . .," Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'œuvre de M. Mauss," in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1966), 9, or "un ensemble des coutumes, des réalisations matérielles, spirituelles et des standardisations d'une collectivité," Dan Sperber, *La contagion des idées, Théories naturalistes de la culture* (Paris: Ed. Odile Jacob, 1996), 15.

life, where Ma'an, which was the main stop on the pilgrimage route to Mecca, became a southern town of the new Kingdom. On the one hand, the tribes were living amidst transition from "semi" nomadic to a more sedentary life, and on the other hand, these Armenian ladies had only lived sedentary in villages and towns. This setting offers the first level of analysis for seeking to understand what it is like for these women's descendants to claim an Armenian descent.

Between 1910 and 1914, the newly built Hijaz Railway transported faithful Muslim pilgrims from Damascus to Mecca for a few years following its completion. Then it served to move Armenian deportees from Damascus to South Jordan. The Memorandum on Relief Work[3] from 1918 mentions that about 25,000 Armenians were known to have passed through Aleppo in 1915 and to have been scattered at various points along the Hijaz Railway as far as Ma'an in the south.

Several villages and bigger urban areas in Cilicia were emptied and Armenians deported to Aleppo and from there dispatched eastward, southward and into the desert margins. Different deportation caravans started their walks in the spring and summer of 1915. Chomakhlou inhabitants were among one of these. After several days of walking, they took a train from Aleppo to Damascus and from there the Hijaz Railway took them to the southernmost areas of the Ottoman Empire. The village of Chomakhlou was in Cappadocia, in the vilayet of Gesarya,[4] part of Cilicia. "The town was one of the points of the triangle made up by Gesarya, Evereg and Chomakhlou"[5] with Mount Arkéos[6] as the leading emblem of the village on its south-eastern slopes. The village was composed of two main quarters, the upper and the lower quarters, with around 2,000 combined persons who lived mainly from farming and to some extent animal husbandry and trade. Each quarter had its school and there were three confessional worship places – the apostolic church, the mosque, and the Protestant temple – as, starting in 1860, missionaries from the USA had introduced Protestantism to the village.

This essay tries to follow the caravan of those who left Chomakhlou one morning and arrived more than a month later in these remote and arid areas. It follows the narratives and what they tell us about the living conditions and vicissitudes of life and then the liberation of the few survivors with the Great Arab

3 Turkish National Archives, Turkey Files N° 179377–185050, Memorandum on Relief Work That May Arise Out of an Armistice with Turkey. Political Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, October 30, 1918.

4 Current Kayseri, Caesaria in Greek.

5 Aris Kalfayan, *Chomaklou: The History of an Armenian Village*, trans. Krikor Asadourian (New York: Chomaklou Compatriotic Society, 1982), 3. The Armenian version is dated from 1930. Thanks to Beatrice Krikorian for offering me the English version.

6 Current Erciyes, in Greek Argaeus.

Revolt. Everyone from the village, together with other deportees from Cilician localities, walked to Aleppo, then took the railway from Damascus heading to the desert, the forgotten borders of the empire and southern localities of today's Jordan where very few survived the extremely harsh conditions of these arid lands. This region, almost forgotten and considered as the extreme margins of the *Bilad ash Sham*,[7] had regained its strategic importance by the very end of the 19th century, with the intensification of the Ikhwan movement in Central and Northern Arabia, where the Empire needed to assert its influence through a military presence and the construction of the railway.

Retheos Der Nersessian and Hagop Asadourian left testimonies recalling their deportation. Der Nersessian's resembles a diary[8] because he follows almost day by day the progress of the caravan from Chomakhlou and describes the deportation process until their arrival in South Jordan. The testimony of Hagop Asadourian[9] also talks about the deportation and the conditions of life and death in the southern village. The deportation caravan left the village on July 2, 1915, crossed the Taurus mountains by foot, passing by emptied Armenian villages, and on August 7 arrived in Qatma[10] in Syria, the concentration camp with "miles and miles, mountains and valleys covered with deportees, misery, dirt and death, corpses everywhere . . . and flies," as Der Nersessian notes.[11]

During this whole month, the Chomakhlou caravan maintained a certain unity and families stayed together although devoid of adult men or anyone to guide or take a leader's role and make decisions. From Qatma to Aleppo, the smallest

7 Literarily the country of Sham, designates the south of the Ottoman Empire. Sham also designates Damascus.

8 "Չոթախլուի Ելիցը", *Կր Արիս. Քհնյ. Գալֆեաեան, Գիրք Ելից Հայոց, Յիշատակ Ամշիրիմ Նահատակաց Հնոց և Նորից, Յայտից և Ամպատից,* (Տպ. Տօնիկեան, Պէյրութ, 1955) [Retheos Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomaklou", in *The Book of the Armenian Exodus, in Memorium of Olden and New, Known and Unknown Armenian Martyrs with no Tombs*, ed. Aris Kalfayan (Beirut: Donigian, 1955), 331–462].

9 Hagop Asadourian, *Յովակիմի Թոռներ*, (հրատարակութիւն Թէքէեան Միութեան, Ատլաս, 1965) [*The Grandchildren of Joachim* (Beirut: Tekeyan Publishers' Association, Atlas, 1965)]. I would like to thank Garo Derounian for sending me copies of the book. A video of Hagop Asadourian recalling his deportation and detailed descriptions of life conditions in South Jordan is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1rbudKMHEk, and facebook, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2568158026733473&id=100006179029494?sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=i, accessed on April 22, 2020.

10 Qatma, between current Afrin and Azaz, is often written Katma in Turkish transliteration and in Armenian Ghatma. In Arabic, the name starts with a "qaf" (ق) which is transliterated by a "q." For more testimonies on the concentration camp, see Hilmar Kaiser, "An Entrance to Hell: The Concentration Camp of Katma" in Hilmar Kaiser, *At the Crossroad of Der Zor, 1915–1917* (Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2002), 18–24.

11 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 350.

social unit of solidarity, which is the family, was broken. Family members were separated and found themselves in different wagons, driven in different directions. Once in Aleppo, Asadourian notes, "we discovered in the morning that the wagons with the entirety of the village inhabitants were split into three parts during the night and each was driven in another direction in the desert towards various Arab villages."[12] Those from Chomakhlou who took the train to Damascus had to leave all their belongings and what was left of their livestock and cattle.

The railway from Damascus headed to the south, crossing the Hauran desert, Dra'a and Amman, and stopped at Jurf el Darawish, which "became our first step towards the cemetery," says Der Nersessian, who counts 20 deaths in the caravan from Chomakhlou to Aleppo and 21 from Aleppo to Jurf el Darawish, out of 1,606 people.[13]

Arriving in South Jordan

In Jurf el Darawich (Jorf) the deportees were directed by local Arabs[14] towards the villages of Ayma and Busseyra in the district of Tafileh. Two other trains, separated in Aleppo, stopped at the next station, from where the deportees were distributed into the villages of the Ma'an district.

With two different caravans, Der Nersessian was taken to Ayma and Asadourian to Busseyra. In Busseyra the whole caravan gathered in an area outside the village where "five tents were waiting for us"[15] and where all the inhabitants of the village were grouped, waiting to watch the arrival of the caravan: "all were here, the aged and the children, the dogs and the goats, there was all of Busseyra with its customs and traditions, with the wide-lipped smiles and black charcoal eyes staring at us, and we, looking at them, stupidly. Busseyra was surprised to see us, why had we left our homes and lands to come here . . . only yesterday we were "humanely" humans, our history and maps of our mountains are different from yours. Alas, we could not understand each other's language," writes

12 Account by Asadourian, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1rbudKMHEk. Accessed on May 30, 2021.

13 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 340.

14 In all of the Armenians' narratives, the local inhabitants of South Jordan are called "Arabs," which has the double meaning of being of Arab identity and being a Bedouin, that is, a pastoral semi-nomad who lives mainly in tents and builds "houses" that are used essentially as granaries and to keep the cattle.

15 Asadourian, *Grandchildren*, 263.

Asadourian.[16] Five tents were the only shelter until autumn and then, upon the *mukhtar*'s[17] proposition, the whole deportee population was packed into three traditionally built houses on the borders of the village. Der Nersessian counts 150 persons from Chomakhlou (around 30 families).[18] Asadourian writes that soon after their arrival in Busseyra another group from Gurin (Gurun) joined and the number of deportees in the village soared to 331, "crammed into the three houses, hundred persons for each, hardly having a mattress as a living space."[19] Der Nersessian recounts 100 deaths of those from Chomakhlou in four months, ravaged by outbreaks of disease and famine. Asadourian remembered that out of 331 deportees, only 29 survived in this village.[20]

In Ayma, Der Nersessian counted 125 persons from Chomakhlou, another family from Kilis. There were also eight youngsters from Kéghi, all boys of ten to twelve years, whose elders had been killed during the deportation and who themselves died of hunger in the first months in Ayma.[21] In Wadi Musa, Theodor Weigand[22] witnessed that, on December 17, 1916, among the 270 Armenians only 24 were men. About two or three deportees died per day, mostly of dysentery or typhoid. Wadi Musa had become unbearable too, and some survivors escaped to Showbak, notes Der Nersessian.[23] 750 other people were driven to Showbak after staying for two weeks at Ma'an Station. The journey from Ma'an to Showbak took two days on camel-back and mules. In the same way as in the other villages, the deportees lived there in solid houses – qualified as barns or stables – after staying in the open air for a week. And, in the same way, more than one-third of them passed away because of epidemics within four to five months.[24]

16 Asadourian, *Grandchildren*, 245.

17 Mukhtar is the administrative chief of a village, a group, or a quarter.

18 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 363–364.

19 Asadourian on Busseyra: "name of village Boseira, 225 Armenians there, later on some additions came from Gürin, total becomes 331 people, crowded conditions, typhus spread, diarrhea, people cannot get out of the place in time, people kept dying . . ."; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1rbudKMHEk. Accessed on May 30, 2021.

20 See Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 363–364; Asadourian, *Grandchildren*, 254–261.

21 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 356.

22 Theodore Weigand was a German archeologist (1864–1936) who worked in Greece and participated to the archaeological expeditions of Ba'albeck in Lebanon; see Hilmar Kaiser, "The Armenian Deportees in the Hauran and Kerak Districts During the Armenian Genocide," in *Armenians of Jordan: Proceedings of the Conference (22–24 May, 2016)* (Beirut: Haygazian University Press, 2019), 39–106, at 52.

23 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 385.

24 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 382–388.

In Ma'an al Shami, the majority of the deportees, almost ninety percent, fell sick starting in the very first month after their arrival. Der Nersessian counts 125 persons from Chomakhlou in Ma'an within a bigger group of deportees from Cilician homeland such as Beylan, Kilis, Hromgla, Gesaray and other localities. Here too the able people did some petty jobs: they sold water, firewood, and some made bricks for construction, which was a new industry for that locality. Orphaned children begged for bread, and few survived in Ma'an.[25] The subdistrict of Ma'an had received a total of 8,120 Armenian deportees by September 1915.[26]

The testimonies recall that the local inhabitants of the different villages in South Jordan receiving Armenian deportees gave food for two weeks and then stopped. The testimonies talk about the conditions the Ottoman authorities imposed, the penalties they imposed, like cutting access to water, obliging Armenians to change places every time they somehow established themselves, following them to remote villages and forcing them to convert to Islam. It was a "death march," stated Stepan Dardouni[27] from Tafileh, describing how the deportations were intended to send Armenians to death in a premediated, organised way, with the close presence and follow-up of Ottoman representatives in these marginal areas of the empire. If their number at their arrival in the summer of 1915 was in the thousands – as mentioned in the Memorandum on Relief Work That May Arise Out of an Armistice with Turkey –,[28] at their departure or arrival to Port Said in 1918 they numbered sometimes in the hundreds, and often in tens.

During the Arab Revolt, starting from June 1916, the Sharifian army, headed by Emir Fayçal and Lawrence, moved from the Hijaz towards Damascus, following the Hijaz Railway line, rallying the Bedouin tribes on its way. In July 1917, Aqaba fell and the Arab army attacked Jurf el Darawish, thereby isolating Ma'an. Tafileh fell in January 1918 with its garrison of 100 soldiers, and Ma'an in the summer of 1918.

Armenians joined the Sharifian army. When the Sharifian forces came across the Ottoman army, T.E Lawrence described them as: "The Armenians, crouching behind us all day anxiously, now drew their knives and howled to one another in Turkish as they leaped forward."[29] Stepan Dardouni writes: "One morning,

25 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 388–393.

26 Kaiser, "Armenian Deportees," 52.

27 Stepan Dardouni, "Seminarian, Deportee and Legionnaire," in *The Cilician Armenian Ordeal*, ed. Paren Kazanjian (Boston: Hye Intentions Inc., 1989), 197.

28 Turkish National Archives, Turkey Files N° 179377–185050, Memorandum on Relief Work That May Arise Out of an Armistice with Turkey. Political Intelligence Department, (Foreign Office, Oct. 30, 1918).

29 T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: BCA, 1973), 491.

the local Turkish military garrison and the retaining community packed up and left Toofileh in a terrible hurry. A few days later, the British and Hussein's forces pulled into Toofileh. I no longer had to plan elaborately to escape and join them – they had come and joined me!"[30]

Rediscovering Armenians

The main information related to the presence of Armenians in these regions came from the British Intelligence Department of the War Office in Cairo and was addressed to the Central Council of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), in Cairo, in October 1917. It mentioned the presence of 35 to 40 Armenians in the caves of Petra and five other families in Wadi Musa who were in a state of extreme distress. Soon after, similar messages regarding the presence of Armenians in different localities in desert areas of Jordan poured into the AGBU office in Cairo.[31]

On April 25, 1918, the Intelligence Department forwarded a list of names of Armenians who were still being detained: six women and young girls of 10 to 23 years old in Wadi Musa and two children. In Showbak, there were three young women of 16 to 18 years old and, in Ma'an, five women with two children. A report addressed to Boghos Nubar Pasha in Paris in April 1918 stated that the AGBU Council had liberated 140 deportees from Wadi Musa, 900 from Tafileh, and that 1,570 Armenians were transported from Salt to Port Said or to Jerusalem. It also mentioned the massacre of hundreds of Armenians by the Turks between Salt and Amman.[32] After July 1918, no other Armenian presence is mentioned in the AGBU letters.

Comparing the figures given by Der Nersessian[33] and those in the letters of the AGBU Central Council in Cairo, we can say that in Wadi Musa there were five or six young women and two or three children left; in Showbak, three young women; and in Ma'an five women with two children (Table 1, column 4).

30 Dardouni, "Seminarian," 207.

31 Archives of Noubarian Library in Paris, Correspondence of the Central Council, Cairo (CCC), N° 8546–8831.

32 Archives of Noubarian Library in Paris, Correspondence of the Central Council, Cairo (CCC), letters of March 22 and June 8, 1918.

33 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 453.

Table 1: Figures on Deaths and Survivors.[34]

South Jordan	Families	Deaths	Number of survivors	Those who stayed in Transjordan
Tafileh and Ayma	18	125	33	
Busseyra	27	150	29	
Ma'an	19	125	27	5 women, 2 children
Wadi Musa	74	450	92	6 women, 2 children
Showbak	131	750	140	3 women

As Der Nersessian recalled, "We left behind not only corpses on the sand but also young girls and brides . . . there were also some who decided to stay."[35] The reason was that some young Armenian girls between 10 and 20 years old were married to local Arabs.

> When Fayçal went to Damascus, the Pope of the Armenians – *Baba Boulos* 4th – asked the government of Fayçal to facilitate the return of the Armenians from South Jordan to Damascus and help all those who wanted to go to Roma – their country – or all those who wanted to go to *Loubnan.* And let those who wished to stay with their husbands stay here.[36]

In 1917–1918, those who had children did not follow their relatives to Port Said and did not return to Cilicia but rather chose to remain in South-Jordan. A great majority of them settled in Ma'an. 13 women married to persons from different Arab families or tribes lived in Ma'an the rest of their lives surrounded by their children and grandchildren. After the turmoil of 1918, they lived an almost forgotten life in this forgotten town that caravans no longer cross and where the Hijaz Railway has stopped transporting pilgrims.

For centuries, Ma'an al Shami was an important stop for the pilgrims' caravans to Mecca. The caravans coming from Damascus and transporting pilgrims from the

34 The figures in the first three columns are given by Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 453. The last column represents those who stayed in Transjordan according to the Correspondence of the Central Council, Cairo (CCC), letters of March 22 and June 8, 1918, Archives of the Noubarian Library, Paris.

35 Der Nersessian, "Leaving Chomakhlou," 425.

36 Interview in Ma'an with Khalil, son of an Armenian mother (1990). Rather than Pope Paul VI (1963–1978), we recognize in this statement Boghos (Paul) Nubar Pasha, who is referred to as the Pope Paul and asked Sherif Hussein Ali for help to liberate the Armenians detained in Kerak. Also, the name "Loubnan," Lebanon in Arabic, refers to the important Armenian community of Beirut. We also recall Boghos Nubar Pasha's letter to Sherif Hussein Ali thanking him for his support (Arab Bulletin, 1916–1917 and 1917–1918, 2 vol., telegram sent on May 10, 1918, Turkish National Archive, Turkey Files, 36428–40423).

Middle East, Turkey and the West would meet in this town the Egyptian caravans that had crossed the Sinai with North African pilgrims. For two days, the caravans' presence transformed the little silent and forgotten oasis-town into a big market where peasants from the high plateau and Bedouins from the desert mingled with merchants from the West Bank and Damascus. Far away from the Sublime Porte, the security of these caravans was totally dependent on the Bedouin tribes whose territories they crossed. The Porte's presence was non-existent in these remote areas where the absence of any sedentary life was considered by the Ottoman administration as absence of life.

The construction of the Hijaz Railway reached Ma'an in 1904. The line was destroyed in 1916 by Lawrence and the Sherifian army. This same year, the Turkish garrison was estimated to have had more than 15,000 men posted along the railway.[37] Despite this, the Ottoman forces had to surrender the town of Ma'an to the Arab army in 1918.

Armenians who arrived in 1915 at Ma'an by the Hijaz Railway, which until then had transported faithful Muslim pilgrims, lived a few months in a calm and forgotten desert-town that quickly became an important battlefield. Later, the town was integrated into the Kingdom of Transjordan and went back to oblivion.

Figure 1: Photo of Diran Timaksian's hotel at the train station, photo by Anna Ohannessian-Charpin, 1990.

37 See Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 225.

In 1923, Diran Timaksian, an Armenian from Jerusalem, established himself in Ma'an as a photographer. Some years later, in 1928, he opened his hotel near the main building of the railway station, the train having begun to operate only on a section Dra'a-Amman-Ma'an. The hotel was built in 1905 by a German company in order to host high-ranked pilgrims, and later it hosted King Abdallah before he declared Amman his capital city (Figure 1).[38]

In the 1920s, Hotel Petra was the only hotel open all year round for western tourists who visited Petra and Aqaba. Before the construction of the Desert Highway in the 1960s, only an earthen path and the railway linked the south to the capital. Diran Timaksian's hotel and photography shop were central to tourists who came from Aqaba or Amman and visited Petra. They found there a convenient place to stay, horses to mount for travel to Petra and the possibility of being photographed in Bedouin dress in honor of Lawrence of Arabia. Diran Timaksian was also one of King Abdallah's photographers and travelled with him in the country.

Diran Timaksian's hotel became a focal point for the Armenian women survivors. They gathered there with their children especially at Christmas and at Easter. These celebrations, with coloured eggs and Christmas presents, are vital in the memories of the descendants today and constituted practices completely unknown to local Arabs in those days.

It was in the 1930s that the first health-care centre began to operate in Ma'an for children suffering from typhoid fever that was devastating the whole south. An Armenian woman, Anna, who was the only midwife in the town and in the whole region, was entrusted to manage the centre, and she did so with success.

It is important to note that these women living in Ma'an neither spoke the local language upon their arrival nor followed the same habits and practices. Some of them adopted the Bedouin dress, the *madraga*,[39] while others did not change their dressing habits. Some also adopted Islam and went to Mecca for pilgrimage, while others kept their Bibles. Most of them were buried in the Christian cemetery of Aqaba. They had found a kind of equilibrium between their own lifestyle and the new one, their religion and Islam. "Anna did not change her religion, she died Christian, while Hayganoush, she went twice to Mecca."[40]

38 Diran Timaksian had one son, Hagop Timaksian, who became a photographer and lived in Amman. The building of the hotel was transformed into King Abdullah's Museum. See Irene Maffi, "New Museographic trends in Jordan" in *Jordan in Transition*, ed. George Joffé (London: Hust and Company, 2002), 218.

39 The madraga is the black Bedouin dress.

40 Interviews with Gharibeh and Zohra, daughters of Armenian women. All these quotes were collected in Ma'an, Wadi Musa, Aqaba, and Amman, while I was preparing my PhD dissertation.

From Ma'an to the world

In this diachronic presentation we again come across Der Nersessian in 1958. Established in Athens, he set out for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at Easter. There he recalled his own deportation and desired to make another pilgrimage to Ma'an, to "visit the burial places of all the "*Aprilian Pilgrims*,"[41] who were deprived of prayers and even a wreath of thorns for 43 years."[42] Der Nersessian continues by saying that in Jerusalem, the love of these persons drew him like a magnet to the south. With his wife and a friend who had come from the United States, he took the train from Amman and, with great emotion, travelled to Ma'an. The journey was eight hours through the desert where there was no shrub, no vegetation, a few camels, and sand everywhere. "We arrived in Ma'an and there we found around 10 to 15 women, who were our close relatives or were from our hometown. How is it possible to describe their joy? We stayed for six days with them. They enquired about us and remembered after 43 years of silence."[43]

After living in isolation for so many years and being forgotten by their relatives, these women received a visit. During these six days, Der Nersessian with his wife and friend were received day and night by family members eager for news. Der Nersessian underlines that these women had been able to stay Armenian and keep their names. "The name Arman is constantly repeated by the local Arabs. You feel as if some centuries ago Armenians and Arabs descended from two brothers."[44] On his return, Der Nersessian published his travel account with photographs taken in Ma'an, giving the names of all the women he met, in *Arkéos* magazine, printed by the Chomakhlou Compatriotic Society in New York (Figure 2).[45]

Der Nersessian's first article, and then another, became a starting point. They enabled families from Chomakhlou scattered worldwide to find a missing relative, a sister, or a daughter. Until 1967, relatives came to Ma'an from the USA, Beirut, Damascus, Greece, France and even Argentina. Some of the women also travelled, to Beirut, to Damascus and even to New York.

A woman with the name of Araksi went to New York to see her two brothers. Despite their insistence, she did not stay and came back to Ma'an two months

41 Here April refers to April 24, which is the Memorial Day of the Armenian Genocide.

42 Ռեթէոս Տէր Ներսէսեան, Ապրիլեան Ուխտագնացութիւն Աթէնքէն Մասն, Արգէոս, թիւ 28, էջ 4–7, [Rethios Der Nersessian, "Aprilian Pilgrimage from Athens to Ma'an," *Arkéos* 28 (1958): 4–7].

43 Der Nersessian, "Aprilian Pilgrimage," 5.

44 Der Nersessian, "Aprilian Pilgrimage," 5.

45 Der Nersessian, "Aprilian Pilgrimage", 4–7.

Figure 2: Photo with Der Nersessian during his visit and another lady who has found a relative of hers, Der Nersessian, "Aprilian Pilgrimage," 5.

later. Her two grand-daughters recalled her departure: "We took our grandmother Araksi to the airport in Amman. She was dressed in the *madraga* – the black Bedouin dress. She was anxious, nervous, worried. Two months later, we went to the airport to meet her on her return, and what did we see . . . our grandmother dressed in white, with a short sleeveless dress and a beautiful hat on her head. She was our grand-mother!!"

The case of Nora – Nouri – shows the shock of discovering more than 40 years later a daughter or mother they thought they had lost forever. Informed by Der Nersessian's article in *Arkéos*, Takouhi invited her sister Nouri to come and see their mother, Baydzar, in Beirut. Baydzar had left Ma'an in 1918, leaving young Nouri married to a tribal sheikh. Takouhi's husband went to Ma'an and accompanied Nouri. Takouhi recalled: "For two months, mother and daughter stayed face to face, looked at each other, without saying a word. Nouri didn't speak Armenian anymore, and her mother did not know a word of Arabic." These reunions continued for some time. Some of the Armenian women started to receive newsletters from Beirut, Aleppo or New York, keeping them informed and even more, keeping them in contact with the "Armenian world."

Local perceptions and memories

Although these contacts and meetings stopped and were disrupted by the war in 1967 and the years of turmoil that followed, those years between 1958 and 1970 marked a turning point. Armenian women were no longer forgotten by their own group. This gave them another form of recognition within the local society. They were no longer perceived as abandoned orphans, foreigners coming from nowhere, not belonging to anyone and without any name. They were not those women who did not belong to a tribe, did not have the "mother's brother's tribe"[46] to look out for them and represent them. They were recognised as Armenians, with a history, family, and kinship ties from all over the world. Because their relatives came from different countries, however, "Armenian-ness" remained an obscure identity, very international, creating confusion about place of origin and homeland.

Homeland, as the Armenian women talked about it, was not the place from where family members came in these years, nor whither some of them went. It was not the place where the survivors returned in 1918. Der Nersessian came from Athens, Araksi went to New York and Nora to Beirut, while in 1918 the survivors went to Port Said or to Jerusalem and those who were in Ma'an were conducted to Damascus by the Ottoman army.

Until 1991 and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Armenia or what was left of the Armenian homeland, which was under Soviet rule, was an "unknown" geography for local Arabs or descendants in Ma'an and in surrounding localities like Wadi Musa (Petra). Among these descendants, there was also total confusion between Armenia and Chomakhlou, as childhoods was spent in the latter, but also between Armenia and Jerusalem, with its monastery and Armenian quarter, Beirut with its important Armenian community and even Rome, representing a universal reference of Christianity.

In the local narratives which I collected from and about the Armenians in South Jordan, stress was put first on differences of lifestyle, knowledge, habits, food, and clothing. For this reason, the Armenians were presented locally as having introduced to South Jordan new features like the use of certain vegetables and even their cultivation, new cooking systems, manual work and embroidery, health and hygiene: "The 23 children with typhoid fever in the new health centre have all been cured by Anna," Zohra told me in Ma'an.

In the 1980s, Armenians who were deported and lived for a few years in these villages were in general presented as having another knowledge and know-how. Other inhabitants of Ma'an and Wadi Musa insisted that Armenians "were

46 The tribe of the *khal*, mother's brother.

correct, had good contacts with the locals . . . they built houses with techniques unknown here."

The memories local Arabs had of Armenians included accounts of the massacres, the deportation of Armenians to the southern arid areas of Jordan and the living conditions in the first years. "Out of the 100 Armenians, there weren't even 15 left alive. What I have seen with my own eyes . . . I cannot explain . . . it was so . . . horrible . . ." said Abu Majed, shaking his head.[47]

To these local narratives, we need to add how the Armenian women talked about their homeland, and about their deportation, and what they said. Their childhood memories were shared with their children and descendants, memories of everyday life in Chomakhlou as their place of origin, unknown and imaginary and having nothing common with Ma'an.

I argue that through all the relations the survivors had with the outside world, and because they had a different culture, they were drivers of modernity in Ma'an, making their own distinctive contribution to the social and economic changes the town underwent. Despite their remote residence far away from Amman and from urban centres, these women became "international" and introduced Ma'an to the outside world.

The memories and perceptions the local Arabs had of the Armenian women being uncommonly strong and having exceptional courage are influenced or driven from the logic of survival: if they had survived, it was because they were exceptionally strong. Every member of the group of descendants of Armenians, but also local Arab inhabitants, know and repeat the narratives of the deportation of Armenians from Chomakhlou, and the two years spent in South Jordan, with additions and omissions that take on aspects of a mythical journey. "This Anna was exceptionally strong. She gave birth to Gharibeh on a horseback while riding back home," said Abu Majed. For survival under such conditions implies an outstanding robustness: these women were "*zei zlam*" (like men). Or, "an Armenian woman is worth 10 men: *fikr* (intelligence), *fihm* (understanding) *insaniyya* (humanity)," according to Atiye Zanba' Alaya of Wadi Musa. They showed the right way to be and deserved "*ihtiram*" (respect). These perceptions were also influenced by the fact that the deportees arrived in Ma'an in 1915 with the Hijaz Railway that until then had only transported faithful pilgrims to Mecca and ceased operation afterwards.[48] While the Armenians' destination was not the holy city of Mecca, the fact

47 Interview with Abu Majed, from Ayma, who was over 90 years old and blind when I met him in 1986 in Ma'an. Abu Majed was the only person I came to know who had lived in Ayma in his childhood and had seen and known the Armenians who arrived in this village in August 1915.

48 The Hijaz Railway stopped functioning during the great Arab Revolt. Sections of the railway from Amman to Ma'an were reopened only in the 1960s.

of being on this route and arriving with this railway lends to the whole deportation narrative and to the deportees that had survived an aura of differentiation from the common citizens, emphasizing their differences from the local inhabitants.

Moreover, the logic of survival implies a "before" and an "after," and when this "before" is lost forever, it is mythicised. Homeland is the place lost forever, where no return is possible. This place of origin is like a "lost paradise," an archetypal locality, mythologised as having existed but which can never exist again. Descendants repeat fairy tales, legends that include these women or family members, neighbours living "there" who become heroes, actors, and actions that took place in this mythical landscape called Chomakhlou or simply "Armenia."

In a logic of survival, even death has legendary aspects. Those who came by the hundreds and died by the hundreds in a short time span also left their marks in the memories of the local Arabs of these villages. Among the stories and memories, some recall the death of the Armenians: "In Wadi Musa, an Armenian dies of hunger. His Arab friend buries the corpse. Forty years later, someone digs the earth to build a house and discovers the corpse unchanged, as if he were buried the day before."[49] "In the sixties, two women come from the United States to Wadi Musa. They knew very well where their mother was buried. They rub the earth, find some hair, and take it back with them."[50]

Orphans building homes: Tribal structure and marriage

"Innal gharib lil gharib nassib" (the foreigner is to the foreigner a kin)[51]

Because of the importance of affiliation and genealogy in the Bedouin tribal system, it is often difficult for a stranger to integrate into a group only through marriage. Marriage is an exchange between two groups that are recognised as such and have a similar status. Within a tribal system, only minor groups or foreigners can accept to give a daughter to a stranger. This was the case of the Abu Drewish.[52]

Five Armenian women were married to members of the Abu Drewish, that is two brothers – sons of Khalil – who were the maternal uncles of three other broth-

49 Interview with Abu Gharib (son of Flor) in Wadi Musa (1990).

50 Interview with Khalil (son of Khanem) in Ma'an, in 1990.

51 Expression by Abu Gharib in Wadi Musa.

52 All the information and analyses in this section are part of my research and fieldwork in South Jordan.

ers, sons of 'Awadh. The latter were travelling traders between Ma'an, Busseyra and Ayma, while the former were also merchants, but their father had a shop in Ayma. These five unions took place in Ayma and Busseyra, where the Armenians were much less numerous than in Showbak or Tafileh. Between 1918 and 1923, these families settled down in Ma'an.

In the beginning of the century, when Armenians arrived in South Jordan, the Abu Drewish did not represent a real tribe composed of at least four generations of ascendants, which is the minimum number of generations needed for a tribe to be considered as such on its own. At the time of their marriage to the Armenian women, they were the third generation of the group, descendants of a pilgrim from Morocco, who, because of sickness, could not continue his journey to Mecca and stayed in South Jordan.

It is this context of the Abu Drewish being considered "foreigners" that made these exogamous unions possible. In Busseyra and Ayma there were no other unions with Armenians. In Wadi Musa there was only one marriage and in Ma'an some others, where the Armenian women were taken as a second, third, or in one case even the seventeenth wife. However, in most cases, the tribesmen who married Armenian girls were from small and new tribes that did not yet have their four generations of ancestors to form and be recognised as a proper tribe. Apart from the Abu Drewish, there were the Shommari, two of whom married two Armenian sisters, Nora and Mariam. The Shommari were known in Ma'an under the name of Abu Jrayyet, and it was only around 1990 that they took on the name of their bigger tribe in Saudi Arabia.

In Ma'an, thirteen Armenian women were married to local Arabs. The children of these "exogamous" marriages, who are adults and heads of families today, practiced in general the preferential Bedouin marriage between patrilateral-parallel cousins: the "*Ibn Amm*" or FBD (father's-brother's-daughter's) marriage, meaning that the children of these first couples or the first generation of descendants born in Jordan married their paternal cousins. In other words, their children, the second generation born in Jordan – have Armenian grandmothers from both sides.

For example, Hayganoush was married to a son of Awadh Abu Drewish. Araksi was married to a son of Khalil Abu Drewish. Two of Hayganoush's daughters are married to two sons of Araksi. The grandchildren then have Hayganoush and Araksi as grandmothers. We have the same situation with descendants of Khanem and Anna.

With these endogamous – FBD – marriages, the patrilateral-parallel cousins can also have the same grandmother from both sides. Nouri's grandchildren are married as cousins to each other. Today, eight families are descendants from Nouri, their common grandmother.

For the Abu Drewish, this situation of "exogamous" marriage with Armenian women favours the grouping of these five couples into a separate unit on the basis of the Armenian women who were considered "sisters" of the same descent and as belonging to the same (socio-cultural) group. Integration into another bigger group through marriage is a strategy for small groups, who can thereby acquire more security. The case is different with these five couples of Abu Drewish who come together based on maternal reference. In other words, the Armenian women and their children gather and stay together as a separate unit.

We observe the same phenomenon within the bigger tribe into which Nouri was married. Through the Bedouin preferential marriage, her grandchildren are married to one another, which favours their grouping into a separate unit. Within these groups, we find very often the surname Gharib or Gharibeh in remembrance of the Armenian grandmother. If it is quite common in Arab and Bedouin societies to bear the name of grandparents, here it is in a certain form, more "reconciled" and neutral, that these Armenian women are remembered. Their being different, foreign, "other," is emphasized by the name *gharib*, instead of their bearing the Armenian surnames or just being named Arman (Armenian). The name "Arman" is not used as a surname because it shows a distinct affiliation, used to designate the group of descendants, or one of them. Armenian women were hence perceived mainly as "foreign women" – *gharibeh* – and it is in this way that their memory is transmitted to their grandchildren.

In this way, we can observe that these groups, and mainly the Abu Drewish, originated from an "exogamous" marriage with Armenian women. At the second stage, or second generation after the first Armenian marriage, the groups are consolidated by the systematic practice of the endogamous FBD Bedouin preferential marriage and are distinguished by the Armenian grandmothers who represent these groups and their distinction from other groups. In this sense, they are easily considered as tribal epical ancestors from which a new tribe can come to exist on its own. Bedouin tribal genealogy starts with the epical ancestor, who is always an orphan without ancestors, as the tribe needs to start its genealogy from a "point zero" represented by this ancestor. The "otherness" of these women, their being "orphans" and the fact that they can be grouped under one identity, as if one person, allows them to play the role of the epical ancestor of a new tribe. The story of this orphan ancestor, his (or her) arrival after thwarting many obstacles that only a "hero" could overcome, becomes the founding narrative of the tribe. In this group, the narratives and memories are shared and represent the foundation narrative of the group. The stories of deportation, related to the Armenians who arrived in these remote areas, their living conditions and survival, and the stories the ladies told about their childhood have become the referential bases used to distinguish the group from others.

Territoriality and identity

Most of the Abu Drewish families live in Ma'an in a quarter called *Hay Abu Drewish* or *Hay al Arman* indistinctively, the Abu Drewish quarter or the Armenian quarter. It is on the outskirts of the town, and next to it there is barren land, fenced, where all the Armenian dead in Ma'an were buried between 1915 and 1918. It is the informal cemetery, recognised as a *waqf* (Figure 3).

Next to the kinship ties whose importance I explained above, we also have the territorial proximity or the group's territorial anchorage. This quarter provides for the Abu Drewish a spatial/territorial dimension to identity based on shared memory and social practice. At the same time, being next to the cemetery, although it is not an official one but a place where the "ancestors" are buried, secret and informal, is highly symbolic because it links the present to the past and gives historical legitimacy to the quarter and its inhabitants.

Figure 3: The fenced area near the quarter is the *waqf* where Armenians were buried between 1915 and 1918, photograph by Anna Ohannessian-Charpin, 1990.

The orphan foreigner

In Ma'an, being a descendent of an Armenian woman, having an Armenian grandmother, is not silenced as it is in Turkey. It is not a matter of discrimination and social exclusion for the third generation onwards. On the contrary, it is related to the "exceptional" situation created and lived out by these Armenian women in the context of Ma'an in those days. They were foreigners and different

from the locals, and this alterity, together with the relations and contacts they had worldwide, made them drivers of change and figures symbolising modernity in this southern Jordanian oasis town.

Here, the ambivalence of the foreigner is very strong. Extreme situations create a dichotomy between being a "reference" of social change and modernity, sometimes to the extent of carrying the image of founding hero, or of a peripheral minority, relegated to the margins of society, dependent and forgotten.

The ambivalence of the orphan is also very strong here in this tribal context. With an orphan, we have the absence of a genealogy and of a founding or epical ancestor, we have the absence of the *khal* – the maternal uncle – and of all that the "maternal" part represents. These absences create a zero level from which a new tribe, a new group or another tribal identity can emerge. Today in Ma'an, underlining this Armenian descent is to mark oneself with a distinction and a difference from the other tribes and the other inhabitants of Ma'an, while still sharing common memories and descent within the group.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Bedouin society of South Jordan was witnessing important transformations and experiencing a social change, while the area, geographically speaking, was no longer the forgotten margins of a distant empire, but was becoming politically recognised beyond the tribal territorial subdivisions. These changes implied transformations of the tribal identity, which split the tribes and the confederate system into separate units. They caused tribes to gradually take on a more sedentary lifestyle, in which belonging to a village or a town was added to the tribal identity. Building a national identity was to follow later.

It is important to understand how culture is rebuilt after a great breakdown, deterritorialization and in a context of survival. Such an analysis must take the geo-political context of South Jordan in this period into account. The Bedouin tribal system was then undergoing changes and adopting new tribal forms[53], which started to include the national identity.

In this process, the Armenian women are not only the drivers of change, but also represent this change through of their personal histories, their arrival and what they lived once through established in Ma'an. This study points out the importance of kinship systems in forming a new group with foreigners starting from the zero point of a collective genealogy. It shows the importance of territory related to memory with the presence of a burial place that links the past to the present and gives the new group its ancestors. Above all, this study shows the

53 National recognition of individual tribes gradually replaced the big tribal confederations that were present all through the nineteenth century.

importance of the image of the orphan and what it symbolically represents. It concerns the ambivalence of a person who brings novelty to the group, where the weight of "tradition" is replaced by that of innovation and the alterity of the other is blurred. The orphan is usually a young boy in the founding ancestor narratives among Bedouins. Girls without "brothers" are rare if not inexistent in all representations of tribal ancestors. In the case of the descendants of these Armenian women, these representations of women as ancestors are founded on real persons, where a "mother's brother" to represent the mother's group and ascendancy is non-existent. This is why every Armenian, like myself, is considered and named symbolically the "mother's brother," applied on a very wide spectrum of countries and visitors to Jordan, which relates the "local" to the "universal."

Bibliography

Asadourian, Hagop. *The Grandchildren of Joachim: Short stories in Armenian*. Beirut: Tekeyan Publishers' Association, Atlas, 1965 (Յակոբ Յ. Ասատուրեան, *Յովակիմի Թոռներ*, հրատարակութիւն Թէքէեան Միութեան, Ատլաս, 1965).

Bocco, Riccardo, and Anna Ohannessian-Charpin. "A propos du mythe de foundation de la tribu bédouine des Huwaytat." Mémoire de Soie, Costumes et parures de Palestine et de Jordanie. 72–81. Paris, Institut du Monde Arabe, 1988.

Dardouni, Stepan. "Seminarian, Deportee and Legionnaire." In *The Cilician Armenian Ordeal*. Edited by Paren Kazanjian, 195–210. Boston: Hye Intentions Inc., 1989.

Der Nersessian, Retheos. "Leaving Chomakhlou". In *The Book of the Armenian Exodus, in Memorium of Olden and New, Known and Unknown Armenian Martyrs with no Tombs*. Edited by Aris Kalfayan, 331–462. Beirut: Donigian, 1955. (*Չոթախլուի Ելիցը*,]¨ *Կր Ա. Քհնյ. Գալֆեան, Գիրք Ելից Հայոց, Յիշատակ Անշիրիմ Նահատակաց Հնոց և Նորից, Յայտից և Անյայտից*, Տպ. Տօնիկեան, Պէյրութ, 1955).

Der Nersessian, Rethios. "Aprilian Pilgrimage from Athens to Ma'an." *Arkéos* 28 (1958): 4–7 (Ռեթէոս Տէր Ներսէսեան, Ապրիլեան Ուխտագնացութիւն Աթէնքէն Մաան, Արգէոս, թիւ 28, Էջ 4–7).

Kaiser, Hilmar. *At the Crossroad of Der Zor, 1915–1917*. Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2002.

Kaiser, Hilmar. "The Armenian Deportees in the Hauran and Kerak Districts During the Armenian Genocide." In *Armenians of Jordan: Proceedings of the Conference (22–24 May, 2016)*, 39–106. Beirut: Haygazian University Press, 2019.

Kalfayan, Aris. *Chomaklou, The History of an Armenian Village*. Translated by Krikor Asadourian. New York: Chomaklou Compatriotic Society, 1982.

Lawrence, T.E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. London: BCA, 1973.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "Introduction à l'œuvre de M. Mauss." In Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 2–33. Paris: PUF, 1966.

Maffi, Irene. "New Museographic Trends in Jordan." In *Jordan in Transition*. Edited by George Joffé, 208–224. London: Hust and Company, 2002.

Mauss, Marcel. “Note sur la notion de civilisation.” In Marcel Mauss, *Œuvres*, vol. 2, 451–455. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969.
Rogan, Eugene. *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan 1850–1921*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
Sperber, Dan. *La contagion des idées, Théories naturalistes de la culture*. Paris: Edition Odile Jacob, 1996.
Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture*, vol. I. London: John Murray, 1871.
Zakarian, Philip. *The Orphan Builds a Home*. Beirut: Chirag, 1972 (*Որբը Տուն Շինեց*).

List of authors

Natalia Aleksiun, University of Florida, Gainesville

Masha Cerovic, EHESS, Paris

Tim Cole, University of Bristol

Christian Gerlach, University of Bern

Nikita Hock, University of Bern

Hilmar Kaiser, Yerevan State University

Dalia Ofer, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Anna Ohannessian-Charpin, independent researcher and consultant, Paris

Anna Shternshis, University of Toronto

Jason Tingler, Marion Technical College

Janina Wurbs, University of Bern

Andreas Zeman, University of Geneva

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-014

Index

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110789690-015