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“Genetically Criminally Inclined” and Worse than the Gestapo?

Decoding the Holocaust-Distorting Narrative
on the (Jewish) Informer Stella Goldschlag

Abstract

This article addresses the teenage years spent in Nazi-era Berlin of the infamous Gestapo informer Stella Goldschlag (also named in some sources as Kübler, Isaaksohn, Kübler-Isaaksohn or Goldschlag-Isaaksohn). Previous research and recent commercial adaptations of her case have focused on her actions between 1943 and 1945. Caught in hiding as an “illegal” Jew, tortured, and blackmailed with the lives of her parents in July 1943, Goldschlag “agreed” to help the Gestapo to hunt escapees to the Berlin underground as a so-called Jewish *Greifer* (snatcher). The article complements the state of research on the case by focusing on her life before 1933 and her family background, her connection to swing culture, and the question of her religion. Confronting the little we know about her early life with some of the far-reaching assumptions that make the recent commercial adaptations of Goldschlag’s story so problematic, the article sheds light on how Nazi persecution impacted Goldschlag before 1943. Punishing her more severely than the Gestapo officers who had enforced her betrayal (if they were indicted at all), Soviet and West German authorities consecutively sentenced Goldschlag as a Nazi perpetrator in 1946 and 1957, explaining her actions by her pathological evilness. The article demonstrates how the Berlin police shaped the image of Goldschlag as a “Jewish perpetrator” immediately after the Shoah, using established antisemitic imagery. Placing the case in the context of how dealing with alleged Jewish collaboration led to a reversal of victim and perpetrator as a denial of guilt antisemitism in post-war Germany, the paper offers a starting point to decode core aspects of what could be regarded as the “Goldschlag narrative”.

Since its popularisation in the late 1990s, the internet has contained a tension between information and disinformation. I asked the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT “Who was Stella Goldschlag?” and it answered:

Stella Goldschlag was a Jewish woman [...] primarily known for her controversial role as a “catcher” or “Greiferin” for the Gestapo [...]. Stella Goldschlag was born on July 10, 1922, in Berlin, Germany. She came from a Jewish family [...]. In 1943, Stella and her parents were captured by the Gestapo during a raid. To secure their release, Stella agreed to work for the Gestapo as an informant, revealing the whereabouts of Jews in hiding. Stella’s task was to pose as a fugitive Jew herself and gain the trust of other Jews in hiding. Once she established their trust, she would betray them to the authorities, leading to their arrest and deportation to concentration camps. It is estimated that she betrayed between 600 and 3,000 Jews during her time as a catcher.

After the war, Stella Goldschlag faced public condemnation and accusations of collaboration with the Nazis. She was arrested by the Soviet military administration in 1945 but was released due to a lack of evidence. In 1950, she

emigrated to East Germany, where she lived under a new identity. [...] Her actions during the war remain highly controversial and have sparked ongoing debates about collaboration, coercion, and survival in the face of extreme circumstances.

In fact, Goldschlag informed on other Jews to save her parents and herself.¹ Very little else is true, though. She was never “released due to the lack of evidence” but rather spent ten years in gulags and East German prisons. What I call the “Goldschlag narrative” is part of the German post-war discourse on “Jewish collaboration” that I addressed in my dissertation.² Influencing the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (the process of coming to terms with the Nazi past) of the first post-war decade, this discourse retrospectively measured the actions of Jews against an antisemitic double standard. The anguish of survivors, morally over-charged assumptions, hearsay, and the flawed German legislation resulted in a reversal of victim and perpetrator in moral and legal terms. The Goldschlag case – brought to public attention twice in 1946 and 1957 – is paradigmatic for this reversal. A fateful mix led to a de-contextualised and scandalised representation of betrayal among victims instead of a sober analysis of the material reality: faced with an avalanche, most average human beings trample down each other rather than self-sacrifice. Jews during the Shoah were no different, notwithstanding the widespread and diverse resistance of Jews. The story of how Goldschlag became a Gestapo informer is quite regular when put in the larger context of Jewish collaboration and reactions to the Holocaust. A biased narrative on her case, however, has influenced commercial products of more recent nature: a 1993 book, a 2016 musical, a 2018 play, a 2019 novel and a 2023 movie re-applied the unbalanced 1950s moral assessment of the cases.³ There is no musical about the Berlin Gestapo.

This article does not challenge the fact that Goldschlag betrayed Jewish escapees. It does, however, brush the existing sources against the grain, deconstructing selected assumptions that formed an ahistorical narrative of the case. In this article, I employ a close critical reading of the sources, cross-checking them with previously inaccessible material, predominantly an interview with Goldschlag from the early 1990s. My article shows how a deeply implicated Berlin police officer framed Goldschlag as a “Jewish perpetrator”, using antisemitic imagery that has influenced the discourse up until today. First, I give an overview on Goldschlag’s activities during and after the Holocaust between 1943 and 1957. Then, I chronologically turn back to the years before 1941. Implementing a biographical approach, I address three previ-

- 1 Stella Goldschlag married several times, taking on the last names of her respective husbands Kübler, Isaaksohn, Schellenberg, and Gärtner, and temporarily using her middle name “Ingrid”. Unless stated otherwise, all information on Stella Goldschlag is taken from Doris Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat: Jüdische “Greifer” im Dienst der Gestapo 1943–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2006), 142–151. See also Christian Dirks, “Snatchers: The Berlin Gestapo’s Jewish Informers”, in *Jews in Nazi Berlin: From Kristallnacht to Liberation*, eds. Beate Meyer, Hermann Simon, and Chana Schütz, Studies in German-Jewish Cultural History and Literature (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Ferdinand Kroh, *Die Greiferin. Die Geschichte einer jüdischen Gestapo-Agentin* (SFB Documentary, 1995); and Laura Jockusch, “Verräterin und Femme Fatale? Anmerkungen zum Fall Stella Goldschlag”, in *Sex & Crime: Geschichten aus der jüdischen Unterwelt*, ed. Gisela Dachs (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag/Jüdischer Verlag, 2019).
- 2 Philipp Dinkelaker, “Worse than the Gestapo? Berlin Jews Accused of Collaboration during and after the Shoah” (PhD Dissertation, Technische Universität Berlin, 2022).
- 3 Takis Würger, *Stella* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2019); Neuköllner Oper, “Stella”, Neuköllner Oper, accessed 18 June 2020, <https://www.neukoellneroper.de/play/stella/>; Peter Wyden, *Stella*, with the assistance of Stella Goldschlag, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Steidl, 1993); Wolfgang Böhmer, composer, and Peter Lund, writer, *Stella: Das blonde Gespenst vom Kurfürstendamm* (Neuköllner Oper, 2016); Crew United, “Stella. Ein Leben”, Crew United, accessed 2 June 2023, https://www.crew-united.com/de/projekte/displayProjectdata.asp?IDPD=257536#!&tabctl_15249142_activeTab=2789375848.

ously disregarded aspects of Goldschlag's life, namely her childhood and youth, the relationship with her parents, and the question of her religious affiliation. The focus on these specific issues questions assumptions about Goldschlag's Jewish self-hate, her father's failed career, and her search for glory as alleged by facilitators of her betrayal.

Stella Goldschlag during the Shoah and the Issue of Jewish Collaboration in Post-war Berlin

Born in 1922 in Berlin to musicians, Stella Goldschlag's formative years were heavily influenced by Nazi persecution and forced labour under excruciating conditions. Defying the Nazis, Goldschlag and her parents "submerged" during a big raid in February and March 1943 that aimed to deport at once all remaining Jewish forced labourers. Goldschlag's husband Manfred Kübler was deported and murdered. Shortly after the raid, the mass deportations ended and the Gestapo increased the hunt for passport forgers and intermediaries who helped the approximately 6,500 "illegal" Jews in hiding in Berlin – often with the help of Jews caught in hiding and made to betray others.⁴ The Gestapo arrested Goldschlag in July 1943 while she was in a café to meet the "illegal" Jew Rolf Isaaksohn, who made a living by providing forged documents to Jews. A formerly submerged Jewish woman coerced into helping the Gestapo officers to find Isaaksohn pointed them towards him. The Gestapo tortured Goldschlag through severe beatings to make her give up names. Brought to a prison hospital, she fled, only to be caught again, this time with her parents. In her pockets, the Gestapo found forged papers and an address that was connected to a contact of the most-wanted Jewish passport forger.⁵ The Gestapo officer Gerhard Schwöbel tortured Goldschlag through beatings and sexualised threats, pointing his gun (which he called his "stopwatch") at her. Goldschlag could not deny knowing the contact. Eventually, Schwöbel forced her to draw out the man by proposing via postcard a meeting, which the Gestapo then busted. This was how she became one of the most "prominent" Jewish Gestapo informers or *Greifer* ("snatchers"), seen after the war as the embodiment of willing Jewish collaboration.

Goldschlag fled a second time in August 1943 during a bombing raid on the prison which she was kept in, but she turned herself in so that she could at least be deported with her parents. This sheds light on the limited room to manoeuvre that Jews in hiding had. The Gestapo blackmailed Goldschlag: she and her parents could "skip" being deported if she would help find the passport forger in the same way that she had been arrested earlier. When leads on the forger went cold, Goldschlag went after other "illegals". Teamed up with Isaaksohn, from September 1943 onwards the Gestapo sent her out of the Gestapo internment camp to check out the addresses of suspected illegals, and it later tasked her with more autonomous investigations and, where possible, the arrest of illegals. Due to his previous activities in selling forged

4 Richard Lutjens, *Submerged on the Surface: The Not-so-Hidden Jews of Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books 2019), 212–222.

5 This forger was Cioma Schönhaus, who was connected to a resistance group of Christians persecuted as Jews. See Cioma Schönhaus and Marion Neiss, eds., *Der Passfälscher: Die unglaubliche Geschichte eines jungen Grafikers, der im Untergrund gegen die Nazis kämpfte* (Frankfurt am Main: Scherz, 2004); Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, "Biographie Franz Kaufmann", Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, accessed 26 March 2022, <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/vertiefung/biografien/personenverzeichnis/biografie/view-bio/franz-kaufmann/>; Katrin Rudolph, *Hilfe beim Sprung ins Nichts: Franz Kaufmann und die Rettung von Juden und "nichtarischen" Christen*, Publikationen der Gedenkstätte Stille Helden 7 (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2017).

papers, Isaaksohn knew many hideouts. Goldschlag later claimed that he facilitated some of the spectacular arrests made by the couple, minimising her own role.⁶ In fact, many of the arrests ascribed to her and the hints about where to look for escapees were the results of regular German denunciators and previous police investigations. Even though the post-war courts clearly established this chain of command and order of events, these aspects later vanished from the picture. During the events, arrestees only perceived the Jews arresting them, conveying their anger about a young woman – consistently described as strikingly attractive – to the rumour communication within the camps and the underground. The Gestapo tactics of pitting victims against each other was successful.

The relationship between Goldschlag and Isaaksohn is dubious. They married in October 1944. According to Goldschlag, she had a “little crush” on Isaaksohn when they first met in the summer of 1943 but did not fully trust him, becoming intimate with him when they were imprisoned in the Gestapo camp in the late summer of 1943.⁷ She described him as bisexual, suggesting non-consensual sexual intercourse between them. Independent witnesses testified to this. Goldschlag claimed that the Gestapo forced her to marry him and that they had long stopped being engaged by then. The Goldschlag narrative uncritically conveyed the image of a married couple, happily hunting Jews together. On 23 February 1944, the Gestapo sent Goldschlag’s parents to Theresienstadt, telling her that she could keep them safe there if she brought others in. At first unbeknownst to Goldschlag, they were deported to Auschwitz on 1 October 1944. According to plausible reports, Goldschlag secretly stopped assisting Isaaksohn soon after and increased her support for other victims. Over the whole period of her “work” for the Gestapo, there is proof that she helped submerged Jews to hide, smuggling forged papers and messages, warning others, and hiding evidence from abandoned hideouts, objectively taking part in what is today considered as “rescue resistance”.⁸

Isaaksohn continued investigating illegals, possibly keeping Goldschlag’s increasing absence from investigations as a secret from the Gestapo. There is a possible explanation for the relationship between them. Isaaksohn’s sexual orientation was criminal in the eyes of the regime. Gays and lesbians sometimes obscured their sexual identity by entering marriage for the sake of keeping up appearances. Considering Goldschlag’s wish to save her parents and Isaaksohn’s precarious situation, we can possibly assume some form of reciprocal dependency and sexual barter between them, not excluding sexualised violence against her.⁹

Survivors did not see this ambiguity: during the Holocaust, a resistance group had already tried to assassinate Goldschlag. She gave birth in late 1945 to a child fathered by another camp prisoner who later denied responsibility.¹⁰ Pregnant, she could not flee Berlin while Isaaksohn successfully escaped before the arrival of the Red Army. Nearly lynched by angry survivors in Berlin in March 1946, the Communist authorities separated Goldschlag from her newborn child, and she spent ten

6 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Kriminal-Inspektion Fahndung zbV and Kriminal-Kommissar Blome, Polizeiliche Vernehmung von Stella Isaaksohn, 8 March 1946, C Rep. 375-01-07 Nr. 1, Bl. 3-16, LAB.

7 Ferdinand Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, undatiert, Nachlass Ferdinand Kroh, Privat-Archiv, 73 and 76.

8 See LAB B Rep. 058 No 2489, pages 130, 145 ff., 148 ff. and 214.

9 Anna Hájková, “Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 3 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1086/668607>; Katarzyna Person, “Sexual Violence During the Holocaust: The Case of Forced Prostitution in the Warsaw Ghetto”, *Shofar* 33, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.5703/shofar.33.2.103>.

10 Paul Meissl, Eidesstattliche Erklärung, 23 October 1949, B Rep. 058 Nr. 1855, Bl. 130, LAB.

years in Soviet and East German prisons. After her release in 1956, the West Berlin police arrested her and put her in pretrial detention, which was followed by a court trial based on the same charges which she faced in the East. In total, she endured twelve years of Nazi persecution that included two years in Gestapo camps and then spent close to eleven years in German post-war prisons in both East Germany and West Germany. She did more time than most Nazi perpetrators.

Neither German-Jewish nor Allied and German post-war state institutions automatically regarded survivors of antisemitic persecution as victims. The Goldschlag case is paradigmatic for this. When Berlin's post-war authorities punished Shoah survivors as alleged collaborators, they measured the accused individuals against the Goldschlag case.¹¹ It was the Berlin police who had provided the framework for an exaggerated black-and-white representation of her case as early as March 1946. Stopping a lynch mob of survivors (I will return to these events later), Berlin police officer Jean Blomé conducted the investigation against Goldschlag. Blomé had been a concentration camp prisoner. The remaining archival documentation of the police investigation might be incomplete, but it seems Blomé solely relied on the testimony by survivors and did not separate hearsay from first-hand reports. Apparently, he did not arrest or question the Nazi police officers whom Goldschlag had mentioned during interrogation, nor did he verify the actual power relations between Jewish *Greifer* and the Gestapo. Instead, he launched a large-scale manhunt on Isaaksohn but never caught him.¹² During interrogation, Blomé threatened Goldschlag with a beating, pointing out the gun lying on his table – unknowingly mirroring the Gestapo officers and certainly not adhering to constitutional standards.

According to a police statement released to the press a few days after the arrest, Goldschlag was not under pressure when she committed “depraved misdeeds”.¹³ Furthermore, the statement dismissed her alleged wish to save her parents as a protective claim, alleging that she betrayed 2,000 Jews as a Nazi perpetrator akin to the “Nuremberg criminals”. Furthermore, she should have rather let herself be deported. The police file, however, does not contain any data substantiating these numbers. The numbers are grotesque, as the regime had “only” deported a total of approximately 2,000 Jews from Berlin during Goldschlag’s “active” period. Most deportees were not illegals.¹⁴ The 1956 court charged Goldschlag with about two dozen cases of betrayal, the details of which, however, are quite debatable.

In the statement to the press, Blomé used Nazi language describing Goldschlag as “genetically criminally inclined” and “completely morally debased”, and the Berlin police framed her acts as “inexcusable” and not prompted by the Gestapo.¹⁵ Based on the police statement, the press scandalised Goldschlag as “Himmler’s Jewish agent”¹⁶, insinuating that Jews were responsible for their own fate. This victim blaming had been a core element of the propaganda that had accompanied the Holocaust.¹⁷ At the

11 Dinkelaker, “Worse than the Gestapo?”, 209 ff.

12 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Kriminal-Inspektion Fahndung zbV, Großfahndung nach dem flüchtigen Gestapo-Agenten Rolf Julius Isaaksohn, 19 March 1946, F Rep 260-02 Plakate Besetzung Berlin 1945–1949, Nr. C_1852, LAB.

13 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Pressestelle, Himmlers jüdische Agentin! 300 Juden der Gestapo verraten!, 12 March 1946, C Rep. 375-01-07 Nr. 1, Bl. 31, LAB. The file shows that the police first communicated the number of 2,000 arrested Jews to the press and then changed it to 300 later.

14 Akim Jah, *Die Deportation der Juden aus Berlin: Die nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik und das Sammellager Große Hamburger Straße* (Berlin, 2013), 472–474.

15 Werner Klein, Sendeprotokoll, 9 March 1946, C Rep. 375-01-07 Nr. 1, Bl. 18-23, LAB.

16 “Eine jüdische Agentin Himmlers”, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 10 March 1946, C Rep. 375-01-07 Nr. 1, Bl. 28.

17 See Bernward Dörner, *Die Deutschen und der Holocaust: Was niemand wissen wollte, aber jeder wissen konnte* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2007).

same time, denazification – predominantly of male former Nazis – started to become a de facto amnesty, with many Germans welcoming an apologetic narrative of Nazism as an excusable mistake. Despite some success, the Berlin authorities on both sides of the political divide let most local Nazi criminals slip away by not taking legal action in the following years.¹⁸ It was in this specific context that the police, in no way behaving according to due process, set the misogynist-antisemitic cornerstones of the Goldschlag narrative. Outdoing top Nazi criminals, a Jewess was the vilest Nazi perpetrator, her betrayal determined by her traitorous racial nature, proving to the audience once again that “the Jews” were the everlastingly guilty original sinners. This was a re-run of völkisch Nazi thinking – Jews cannot be excused for their acts because the Jews are compelled by their own blood enforces. We will get back to this shortly.

There is another aspect to the police framing. Shortly after he had transferred Goldschlag to the Soviet authorities, a criminal court sentenced Blomé – whose real name was Johannes Blome – to a four-year jail term in 1947 because he was found guilty of having been an informer working for the Buchenwald camp SS during his internment in the camp under the Nazi category of “professional criminal”.¹⁹ As a possibly traumatised survivor who, according to the court had worked to the detriment of his fellow inmates, Blomé-Blome was biased. The sources on Goldschlag produced on his behalf say more about his antisemitic views and the post-war climate among victims of the Nazis than about Goldschlag’s acts.

In the following years, there was a drastic quantitative mismatch between legal actions against alleged “Jewish collaborators” and those against the Berlin Gestapo.²⁰ The qualitative mismatch is exemplified by the trial in West Berlin against Goldschlag. Repeating the indignation and the reversal of victim and perpetrator of the 1946 media reports, the West Berlin press extensively covered the proceedings.²¹ In 1957, the court sentenced her to a ten-year jail term for accessory to murder. Proceedings of the appeal were put on hold due to her poor health until an appellate court passed the final verdict in 1972, largely confirming what the original court had established in 1957²²:

Among the grounds for exclusion of guilt there is neither [...] state of necessity (§ 54 StGB²³), nor state of coercion (§ 52 StGB). [...] It is true that she herself and her parents were imprisoned and that they – just like the other Jews – were constantly in danger of being deported. It can be left open whether this permanent situation of danger was so strong that it can be equated with a present danger within the meaning of § 54 StGB. For in no case were the searching and arresting activities carried out by the defendant the last means of averting such a danger. The defendant – just like most of the imprisoned Jews – was able to reject a request by the Gestapo to track down her *Rassegenossen* and to betray them to the Gestapo. [...] In addition,

18 Annette Weinke, “Amnestie für Schreibtischtäter: Das verhinderte Verfahren gegen die Bediensteten des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes”, in *Die Gestapo nach 1945: Karrieren, Konflikte, Konstruktionen*, ed. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Andrej Angrick (Darmstadt: WBG, 2009), 207–212.

19 Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat*, 148.

20 Jah, *Die Deportation der ...*, 580 ff.

21 [Anon.], *Durch Verrat das eigene Leben gerettet? “Greiferin der Gestapo”: Ich habe ein reines Gewissen. 14 Zeugen belasten sie schwer*, [no date], Clippings of articles related to the Goldschlag trial from undisclosed Berlin papers, 1957; B Rep. 058 No 1855, no pag., LAB.

22 Urteil gegen Stella-Ingrid Gaertner, geb. Goldschlag wegen Beihilfe zum Mord, XXXVII Rüter, C. F; De Mildt, M. W.: *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 447* (Das Schwurgericht bei dem Landgericht Berlin, 9 October 1972).

23 The StGB (*Strafgesetzbuch*) is the German penal code.

the defendant continued her activities – instead of going into hiding – even after her parents had been transported to Theresienstadt in February 1944 [...]. Rather, the defendant's desire for a more pleasant, freer life and a certain striving for power were the determining factors for her act.²⁴

Using the Nazi term *Rassegenossen* (race comrades), this verdict does not contain the terms torture and rape, letting the coercion and its proponents recede to the background. It seems that the court interpreted Goldschlag's "striving for power" for what would today be seen as sexualised violence or sexual barter. As in the 1946 investigation, the court denied her being under pressure, assuming personal gain as motivation. Again, we see the idea that helping her parents was an excuse. A psychological expert opinion decisively influenced this verdict, insinuating that she betrayed Jews because she was not rooted firmly in religious morals²⁵ – an addition to the narrative. Just as the 1946 police statements had already established, her alleged Jewishness worsened her crimes in the eyes of the court. Before 1945, the individual Jew was to be murdered as a member of the species, forced by the individual's blood into responsibility for the Jewish collective and the crimes the Nazis ascribed to it.²⁶ After 1945, German authorities recycled the *völkisch* idea of collective responsibility. Now, the individual Jew who betrayed a single other Jew also betrayed the collective as that individual Jew should have rather died in its name than survive individually.

The attribution of power and knowledge is striking in comparison to how former Gestapo officers were assessed. Less than a year earlier, the West Berlin court had acquitted formerly leading Berlin Gestapo officers Dr Kurt Venter and Max Grautstück, who were responsible for deportations from Berlin and, like Goldschlag, were charged with accessory to murder.²⁷ During the 1950s, German courts often considered Nazi officers as having operated under distress, producing tens of thousands of acquittals based on a lack of inner motivation of the defendants. The Berlin court, however, practically demanded from Goldschlag self-sacrifice and resistance, ascribing personal gain to her, and ignoring her actual resistance acts and escapes. The latter could have been counted in her favour, because the "inner" motivation is crucial in German criminal law. Clearly, Goldschlag tried to avoid her predicament. In several other cases, German post-war courts found guilty Jews who had been tortured or blackmailed by the Gestapo before they acted against other Jews.²⁸

Born to Fail? Early Life and Family Background

In his influential 1993 book, Goldschlag's former classmate Peter Wyden (who emigrated from Germany in 1938) depicted her father Gerhard Goldschlag as a "failed composer"²⁹ and suggested that Goldschlag eventually betrayed other Jews out of envy. Furthermore, Goldschlag is portrayed as some kind of Broadway star in

24 Das Schwurgericht bei dem Landgericht Berlin, Urteil gegen Stella Ingrid Isaaksohn, geschiedene Kübler, geb. Goldschlag wegen Beihilfe zum Mord, 29 June 1957, B Rep. 058 Nr. 1855, Bl. 84-107, LAB, 103-5.

25 [Anon.], "Abartig und nicht ausgereift". Psychiater im Kübler-Prozeß. Staatsanwaltschaft fordert 15 Jahre Zuchthaus., [no date], Clippings of articles related to the Goldschlag trial from undisclosed Berlin papers, 1957; B Rep. 058 No 1855, no pag., LAB.

26 Robert Ley, "[Untitled]", *Der Angriff*, 1 October 1941, 236, SBB StaBi Ztg 1577 MR.

27 Edith Raim, *Justiz zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie: Wiederaufbau und Ahndung von NS-Verbrechen in Westdeutschland 1945-1949*, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte 96 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 1127 ff.; Andreas Nachama, ed., *Reichssicherheitshauptamt und Nachkriegsjustiz: Das Bovensiepen-Verfahren und die Deportationen der Juden aus Berlin* (Berlin: Hentrich und Hentrich, 2015).

28 Dinkelaker, "Worse than the Gestapo?", 230-237.

29 Peter Wyden, *Stella. Eine wahre Geschichte* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1993), 309.

the making, insinuating that her anger at being Jewish made her seek fame by becoming a *Greifer*.³⁰ Such characterisations overinterpret the sources and ignore the totality of Nazi *Judenpolitik* (Jewish policy),³¹ whose impact on the Goldschlag family will now be discussed.

Stella Ingrid Goldschlag was born on 10 July 1922 in Berlin, to the composer, newsreel editor, (film) music producer, and bandleader Gerhard Adolf Moritz Goldschlag (1889–1944) and the opera singer and homemaker Antonia “Toni” Goldschlag, née Lermer (1891–1944). Their marriage and life before 1933 reflect the softening of post-imperial German class borders and the brief glimpse of German modernity brutally altered by the Nazis. Toni Goldschlag, orphaned at a young age, immigrated from then Austrian-ruled Krakow to Berlin before World War One. There, she met Gerhard Goldschlag while training to become a singer in 1916. Born to a successful Berlin lawyer, Gerhard Goldschlag was the recipient of a typical fin-de-siècle elite humanist education, finishing with the degree necessary to enter university. He fought in the imperial German army, ending service as a reserve sergeant.³²

His family’s considerable wealth stored in shares allowed him to study classical music and composition. Gerhard and Toni Goldschlag married for love in 1917 against the wishes of Gerhard’s family, to whom Toni was a “Pole” despite having a passport from the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Austrian Empire. Adding to the class difference, nationalism was on the rise, especially when Galicia became part of Poland during the interwar period. Gerhard Goldschlag – about whom we know more than about Toni – embodied a Germany in transition: he supported the republican Social Democratic Party and the monarchist Paul von Hindenburg, German Reich president from 1925 to 1934.

When Stella was born, Gerhard Goldschlag composed, but he also took on students at the *Königliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik Berlin* (Royal Music Academy) which was one of the most elite institutions for classical music in the late nineteenth and first third of the twentieth century.³³ Also, he worked as an orchestra conductor and music critic, interviewing composers like Puccini.³⁴ Bowing to her husband’s wishes, Toni Goldschlag cared for Stella full time, going ice-skating, swimming, or to one of the nearby parks. Of course, this was a patriarchal division of labour, but it contains an important hint: the family was able to live off the shares’ interest alone, not having to make a living from the unstable work conditions in the music industry. Later, the Goldschlags had a French-speaking maid and lived in an expensively furnished three-room apartment on *Brandenburgische Straße*, in which they displayed paintings by upcoming artists.³⁵ This was in the “rich West” and the glamorous area surrounding the *Ku’damm*,³⁶ embodying the nigh-mythical “roaring” 1920s. Rooted in classical music, the Goldschlags owned an expansive collection of scores of the classical canon which allowed Gerhard Goldschlag to follow

30 Neuköllner Oper, “[Anon.] [n. d.], Repertoire announcement Neuköllner ...”.

31 Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=316652>, 4 f.

32 Standesamt Charlottenburg, Abschrift Heiratsurkunde Nr. 516/1917 vom 04.10.1917, 3 May 1957, Entschädigungsakte Nr. 324.675 Gerhard Goldschlag, Bl. M18, LABO Berlin – Abt. I –.

33 Dietmar Schenk, *Die Hochschule für Musik zu Berlin: Preußens Konservatorium zwischen Romantischem Klassizismus und neuer Musik, 1869–1932/33* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004).

34 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 4–5 f.

35 Ibid., 3–6.

36 Short for *Kurfürstendamm*, a large shopping street.

performances. Embracing new technology, however, in 1925 he started to work for as a leading producer of weekly newsreels for international film companies like Gaumont.

The 1929 crisis hit the family hard as the accumulated savings imploded and wages sank. Gerhard Goldschlag's yearly job-related income ranged between 9,600 and 12,000 Reichsmark³⁷ – at least four times above average.³⁸ According to Wyden, Gaumont fired Gerhard Goldschlag in 1935. Two independent affidavits, however, claimed that he lost this job in 1933.³⁹ This date is far more likely because by 1933 the Nazis effectively banned Jews from the media and arts by making membership in the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture) mandatory, but excluding Jews and those who had Jewish grandparents – so long before the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws.⁴⁰ To sum up, the family had lost their accumulated wealth in 1929 when the forced unemployment hit not because of “unsuccessfulness” but because of anti-semitism. Gerhard Goldschlag was successful enough for Nazi “Jew scholars” to include him in a handbook of “Jews in Music”.⁴¹

1933 had a big impact in many regards. Stella Goldschlag had entered a regular Berlin elementary school in 1928 and just after the summer holidays in 1932 switched to an *Oberlyzeum* – a school for the higher education of girls covering grades five to ten. Children from well-off western Berlin families frequented the school, assimilated German Jews among them, whom Goldschlag distinguishes from the *Ostjuden* (eastern Jews) living mainly in poor areas in the east of Berlin.⁴² According to her, it was some of the teachers – state officials trained in Imperial Germany or the Weimar Republic – who acted against the Jewish children by constantly harassing them by giving them worse grades than the others and excluding them from class trips, while the non-Jewish students – the offspring of upper-middle-class and noble families – were less embracing or were even critical of Nazism.⁴³ This subjective experience should not be overinterpreted but it reflects two important aspects: the heterogeneous social and class composition of Jews in Berlin, and the asynchronous and uncentralised processes of exclusion, relying not only on the terror of Nazi militants but also on “ordinary Germans”.

Meanwhile, trained vocalist Toni Goldschlag first signed up with the choir of a Jewish-liberal cultural centre and then took up a position at a theatre run by the *Kulturbund* (Jewish Cultural Federation).⁴⁴ On one hand, the *Kulturbund* was a form of self-assertion. On the other hand, it furthered the forced segregation and cultural ghettoisation of Jews. Becoming more centralised over the years, it was the sole em-

37 Frieda Huege, Eidesstattliche Erklärung, 28 May 1959, Entschädigungsakte Nr. 324.675 Gerhard Moritz Adolf Goldschlag, Bl. M17, LABO Berlin – Abt. I –.

38 Bernhard Weidenbach and Statista, “Weimarer Republik: Durchschnittseinkommen bis 1933”, Statista, accessed 23 February 2022, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1100231/umfrage/durchschnittseinkommen-in-der-weimarer-republik/>.

39 Anna Zeise, Eidesstattliche Erklärung, [no date], Entschädigungsakte Nr. 324.675 Gerhard Moritz Adolf Goldschlag, Bl. M16, LABO Berlin – Abt. I –.

40 Lebendiges Museum Online, “Die Reichskulturkammer”, Deutsches Historisches Museum, accessed 4 June 2023, <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/kapitel/ns-regime/kunst-und-kultur/reichskulturkammer.html>.

41 Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit, “Eintrag: Gerhard Goldschlag”, *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*, accessed 20 May 2023, https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00001959.

42 Stella Goldschlag, Lebenslauf zum Antrag aufgrund des Bundesentschädigungsgesetzes, 12 April 1957, Entschädigungsakte Nr. 324.676 Stella-Ingrid Schellenberg, Bl. M4., LABO Berlin – Abt. I –.

43 Ferdinand Kroh, Schreiben an SWF mit Vorab-Drehbuch, 4 November 1993, Nachlass Ferdinand Kroh, Privat-Archiv, 4.

44 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 1.

ployer of banned Jewish artists, organising a segregated cultural life for Jews.⁴⁵ It was tightly controlled by Nazi institutions and forced to focus on “Jewish themes” until it was dissolved in parallel with the 1941 deportations. Gerhard Goldschlag had some of his compositions presented there. At least one of those performance received negative reviews in the remaining Jewish newspapers, which Peter Wyden overrates as a general rejection.⁴⁶ Others met with success, naming Gerhard Goldschlag “the new Schubert”.⁴⁷

In fact, his neo-romanticist songs were not what the *Kulturbund* and the Nazis in control of it envisioned. Some functionaries regarded the segregated Jewish cultural sphere as a means of pushing back secularism. The narrative of Gerhard’s lacking success, however, disregards Toni Goldschlag’s career. Considering the persecutory circumstances, she was extraordinarily successful: she was one of only 700 female artists out at least 5,000 Jewish musicians hired by the *Kulturbund*.⁴⁸ Thus, she became the family’s provider, turning the previous gendered constellation between her and her husband upside-down. Gerhard Goldschlag gave private piano lessons to contribute to the family’s income, but he went through phases in which he did not leave the house for weeks in a row, and did not even get dressed.⁴⁹ This reflects not only the persecution-related psychological consequences and the effect on gender roles, but also Toni Goldschlag’s capability to take matters into her own hands, a trait which her daughter inherited.

By 1935, the situation for Stella Goldschlag had become unbearable at the *Oberlyzeum* and her parents decided to send her to the *Private Jüdische Schule Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt*,⁵⁰ a private school training Jewish and “non-Aryan” children for emigration.⁵¹ Antisemitic persecution, however, did not end class divides. Stella Goldschlag could only attend because a wealthy relative paid the tuition, while other students came from wealthier families. The Goldschlags did not have enough financial means left, which demonstrated the economic impact of persecution.

The school offered classes in both the Jewish and Christian religions. According to Stella Goldschlag, she attended Protestant religious classes, which led to some of the mothers of her schoolmates taking a dislike to Goldschlag’s mother for not putting Stella in the Jewish classes.⁵² Those persecuted on antisemitic grounds were forced into a community and did not leave behind the prejudices and sociocultural and political affiliations that they had lived by before 1933. Obviously, there was no automatic solidarity among the persecutees. The social cohesion among them had eroded long before those caught in hiding betrayed the whereabouts of others.

During the 1930s, more and more people emigrated and the pressure against Jews increased. It seems that the Goldschlags – like many German Jews – made plans to leave the country, but they did not see the plans through until after the pogroms.

45 Gabriele Fritsch-Vivié, *Gegen alle Widerstände: Der Jüdische Kulturbund 1933–1941; Fakten, Daten, Analysen, biographische Notizen und Erinnerungen*, with the assistance of Jakob Hessing (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2013).

46 Wyden, *Stella*, 23.

47 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 4–5 f.

48 Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit, “Vorwort”, *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*, accessed 20 May 2023, https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmpeson_00001959; Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden: Verfolgung und Vernichtung 1933–1945* (Bonn, 2007), 79.

49 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 86.

50 *Ibid.*, 6 ff.

51 Gertrud Thompson, “Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule: 1935–1941”, *Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule 1935–1941*, accessed 23 November 2022, https://leonoregoldschmidt.com/list_of_contents.htm.

52 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 6.

Only 143,000 out of the total of 530,000 German Jews had emigrated from Germany by mid-1938.⁵³ There were serious hindrances: the family was already impoverished, and both parents were around fifty, lowering their chances of being accepted as immigrants anywhere. Also, for a long time, Gerhard Goldschlag seems to have opposed leaving as he believed his status as a war veteran would protect him.⁵⁴ Given the many exemptions made for Jewish veterans, this belief was not completely unjustified.

Unfortunately, we know very little about how the family experienced the November 1938 pogroms, except that Gerhard Goldschlag had to hide with friends.⁵⁵ Their flat at *Brandenburgische Straße* was close to burning synagogues and looted shops. It was the months after that brought drastic changes. The family made frantic attempts to emigrate, but as the persecution intensified, the world closed its borders. Reconnecting with some of his family members who had emigrated to the United States long ago, the Goldschlags received the necessary affidavit, but when they applied for a visa in early 1939, the wait for getting approved amounted to years.⁵⁶

After the beginning of the Second World War on 1 September 1939, the chances for getting out further dropped. Where there had once been over 500 students, 245 were left at Stella Goldschlag's school in mid-1939, and it eventually closed in September 1939.⁵⁷ She signed up briefly at a commercial school but left after she graduated with the *Mittlere Reife* (intermediate secondary school leaving certificate).⁵⁸ Taking matters into her own hands once again, Toni Goldschlag registered her daughter at the private Jewish *Feige-Strassburger* school at *Nürnberger Straße*, which offered practical professional training useful for emigration, like training to become a fashion designer (*Modezeichnerin*).⁵⁹ She chose this because she had earlier shown talent with drawings. Unlike most of her classmates, she was able to attend this school because her good grades entitled her to a stipend.⁶⁰ She finished the class but was then drafted as a forced laborer (as discussed above) in 1941.

During Goldschlag's studies as a fashion designer, the noose tightened. In their mounting desperation, Toni and Gerhard Goldschlag unsuccessfully tried to send their daughter away on her own, with the help of Jewish Zionist organisations that assisted teenagers to emigrate.⁶¹ These organisations, however, rejected her, hampered by their limited capacities. To Goldschlag, the rejection appeared as a spiteful act. Desperate, Toni and Gerhard Goldschlag fell for a scam and bought fraudulent tickets from other Jews. Later, she was imprisoned in a Gestapo camp with her parents, and Goldschlag would describe the terrible infighting among the inmates who tried to take advantage of each other, desperately competing for survival – a phenomenon vividly described by Primo Levi.⁶²

The recent depictions of Goldschlag as a held-back jazz singer⁶³ seem to read a lot into the little we know. In fact, before the outbreak of the war, Goldschlag her later

53 Wolfgang Benz and Volker Dahm, eds., *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933–1945: Leben unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996), 738.

54 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 1.

55 Ibid., 7.

56 Ibid., 7–9.

57 Thompson, "Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule", 59–66.

58 Goldschlag, Lebenslauf zum Antrag aufgrund des Bundesentschädigungsgesetzes.

59 Ibid.

60 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 11.

61 Ibid., 7–9.

62 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 48. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus 2013 [1986]), 31 ff.

63 Böhmer, Wolfgang, and Lund, Peter, *Stella*.

husband Manfred Kübler joined a loose band formed by young Jews, painstakingly meeting up in private apartments because Jews had been banned from most public places and performances.⁶⁴ The group included non-Jewish musicians from foreign countries and played American music by white and Afro-American performers – a defiant act in Nazi Berlin, especially for Jewish youths. Some band members envisioned a career as musicians in emigration. Of course, we do not know whether Goldschlag would have chosen this had there been no Nazi laws hindering her. She did not mention such an intention, however, taking her job training quite seriously. Also, the band only met up once a month, which is very little in terms of professional development. Goldschlag claimed that she and Manfred Kübler left the group after a while because rehearsals turned into a “thieves’ den”,⁶⁵ meaning that the focus was more on drinking than on making music.

During her time at the fashion school, Goldschlag and Kübler had a circle of acquaintances which she calls a “clique”, possibly overlapping with the band.⁶⁶ Most came from educated middle-class families. They went boating and camping close to Berlin, had picnics, and played or listened to music together. They called the band “The Music Men” and created self-made, newspaper-style school magazines, and even recorded direct-to-disc shellac records as private copies just for the group. Generally, the social aspect of having a clique seems to have been more important to Goldschlag. She described how she and Manfred Kübler became a couple bonding over a shared interest in music. As the clique’s “jukebox”, it was Kübler who played the accordion while the others partied, seldomly leaving him and Goldschlag time to dance. It seems that she joined the band in part so that they could share the experience. This interpretation differs from the one that ascribes to Goldschlag a wish for stardom, that is, a negative association with “airs and graces”. In contrast, the jazz band and the group’s social activities should be understood as a collective Jewish teenage defiance and self-assertion in the face of ever smaller social spaces: the fascination with American swing and the social composition of the group marks them as loosely attached to the upper-middle-class sub-culture of “swing kids”.⁶⁷ According to Goldschlag, her parents were not fond of her social activities. So, it was a form of “emigration” from the enforced segregation, rejecting both the *völkisch* collectivism of the Nazis *and* the morals of the German(-Jewish) parental generation that had been socialised in conservative Imperial Germany and through traditional classical music.

The present-day adaptations of the Goldschlag case address sex, especially Peter Wyden’s book and Takis Würger’s novel, depicting Stella Goldschlag as the Goldschmidt school’s supposed unofficial sex educator,⁶⁸ or as a sexy jazz interpreter in a nefarious underground bar, hitting on men. Concerning sexuality, Goldschlag later recollected how gatherings of her music group turned into older members having sex with each other – a fact that alienated Kübler and Goldschlag, who both grew up sheltered.⁶⁹ According to Goldschlag, she was sexually completely inexperienced and had no sex education before she got formally engaged to Manfred Kübler – a stark contrast to her sexualised depiction by male authors.

64 Stella Goldschlag, Vernehmung, 16 August 1956, B Rep. 058 Nr. 2486, Bl. 47 f., LAB.

65 Ibid.

66 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 10, 12 ff.

67 Heinrich Muth, “Jugendopposition im Dritten Reich”, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 30, no. 3 (1982): 374, https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/heftarchiv/1982_3_1_muth.pdf.

68 Wyden, *Stella*, 25 f.

69 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 10–13.

Goldschlag's Relationship with her Parents and her Alleged Knowledge of the Holocaust

According to her own statements, Stella Goldschlag was close to her parents, especially her father who would ask her to comment on his compositions.⁷⁰ Relying on non-violent educational methods, both parents were affectionate. They regarded Stella as a "continuation of themselves";⁷¹ presenting her nicely dressed-up at events they attended to when she was a child.

According to Stella Goldschlag, although he worked a lot, her father lived "only for the family", even before 1933. Seeing him depressed after he lost his job affected her emotionally.⁷² They had had a vibrant social life and were now thrown back into a forced community. Their non-Jewish relatives kept their distance from them, and many (but not all) non-Jewish friends and former colleagues abandoned them. Having to rely on the core family strengthened the feeling of reciprocal dependence.

In sending Stella Goldschlag to the fashion school, her parents empowered her by providing the best possible education in the face of an insecure future. At that time, female employment was not atypical but it was still relatively modern among bourgeois circles. Most middle-class families raised their daughters to become housewives. Yet, when Goldschlag became more independent as a teenager, starting social activities with the "clique", her parents were anxious. When she revealed her wish to marry at the age of nineteen, they tried to talk her out of it. Both affection and protection were closely intertwined.

Faced with an existential threat when "going into the underground" in 1943, the roles changed. The law-abiding former German officer Gerhard Goldschlag was not suited for "illegal" life, and it was Stella Goldschlag who secured forged papers for the family.⁷³ Obviously, she felt obligated to care for her parents. After Goldschlag had been arrested in hiding for a second time in August 1943, during a bombing raid she managed to escape the prison that she was kept in. Knowing that her parents were in the Gestapo assembly camp awaiting deportation, Stella Goldschlag, who had several contacts with antifascists whom she could have asked for help to escape into hiding again, voluntarily turned herself in and asked to be deported with her parents – a frequent occurrence among Berlin Jews.

An important aspect of the Goldschlag narrative is that she allegedly continued her betrayal even after her parents had been deported to Theresienstadt in 1944. This accusation argues that she must have known that trying to save them was a lost cause. Historian Beate Kosmala maintains that the rumours of mass murder that reached the Berlin Jews from the summer of 1941 onwards turned from vague anticipation to a heightened understanding in late 1942 and early 1943.⁷⁴ This is reflected in Goldschlag's account: her family specifically fled into hiding because it had been warned by a friend who had escaped from a Polish ghetto in 1942, telling them about the murderous conditions.⁷⁵ They did not know, however, about the systematic mass murder.

70 Ibid., 4–5 f.

71 Ibid., 2.

72 Ibid., 86.

73 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Abteilung I, I 4 - Kl 1, Polizeiliches Vernehmungsprotokoll Stella Isaaksohn, geb. Goldschlag, 17 April 1956, B Rep 058 Nr. 2489, Bl. 23-35b, LAB.

74 Beate Kosmala, "Die Deportationen aus Berlin 1941 bis 1945: Flucht in den Untergrund und Hilfe beim Überleben, in *Flitzen – Verstecken – Überleben? Hilfe Für Jüdische Verfolgte 1941–1945*, eds. Christoph Hamann and Beate Kosmala (Berlin: Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien Berlin-Brandenburg, 2018), 13–17, 14.

75 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 84.

Theresienstadt played an important role in the deception of the victims. The Gestapo sent elderly Jews who were First World War veterans to the camp-ghetto hybrid Theresienstadt, deliberately deceiving their victims into believing that they were going to a retirement settlement. Deportations to “the East” were much more feared even though, in reality, Theresienstadt was a place from which people were either deported to Auschwitz or where they died from diseases or malnutrition.⁷⁶ Consequently, Goldschlag’s parents were relieved to be sent to the “better” camp. According to Goldschlag, she begged the Gestapo to be sent with her parents, but the officers refused, knowing they could continue to use the parents as leverage. Thus, after the deportation of her parents, Goldschlag was not “free” but was rather even more susceptible to blackmail, believing that her parents were in the “safer” camp. Her parents were further transported to Auschwitz in autumn 1944, news which reached Goldschlag only later. According to her testimony, she shortly after stopped investigating Jews altogether. So, she did not really “continue without a cause”. The court investigation and trial in 1956 and 1957 did not differentiate between Goldschlag’s state of knowledge about the mass murder of Jews in 1944 and during the last months of the war or even its aftermath. Arguing she had no “reason to continue” collaborating after February 1944 distorts the Holocaust. This argument retrospectively uses the perpetrator’s fraudulent deception of the victims against them.

Religious Affiliation, Competing Survivors and Antisemitism

On the one hand, the Goldschlag narrative pathologises her as a “self-hating Jew” or even an antisemite, and on the other hand, the courts treated her as a “Jewess”, insinuating that her betrayal was even more despicable, just like present-day sources do.⁷⁷ What exactly was she and do the allegations of antisemitism strike true? The idea of a “Jewish community” or even a “collective” which Goldschlag allegedly violated is very loaded. Apart from diverse (German-)Jewish institutions and theological strains of the pre-1933 era, was there really a “Jewish collective” other than that artificially created by the Nazis?

Nazi Race Laws relied on the grandpaternal religion to certify one’s racial status.⁷⁸ Conversions from Judaism to Christianity had been common in German duchies and Prussia since the 1800s. For many, they alleviated the social and legal disadvantages that German Jews were subjected to in an age when antisemitism was a “cultural code”.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Jewish emancipation and other factors led to interfaith marriages between Jews and Christians. Christians with such family histories became “non-Aryan Christians” in 1933 and, while some church officials tried to help them, the Gestapo mostly deported them later, too.⁸⁰ According to the Race Laws, the interfaith couples became *Mischehen* (mixed marriages), affecting the “racial status” of the

76 H. G. Adler, Jeremy D. Adler, and Amy Loewenhaar-Blauweiss, *Theresienstadt, 1941–1945: The Face of a Coerced Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017 [1955]), 52, 91.

77 Neuköllner Oper, “[Anon.] [n. d.], Repertoire announcement Neuköllner ...”; Kroh, *Kroh 1995, Die Greiferin ...*; Julika Bickel, “Das Sterntaler-Mädchen der Gestapo”, *taz*, 28 June 2016, <https://taz.de/Das-Sterntaler-Maedchen-der-Gestapo/!5313447/>; Wyden, Stella, 278 ff.

78 Magnus Brechtken et al., eds., *Die Nürnberger Gesetze – 80 Jahre danach: Vorgeschichte, Entstehung, Auswirkungen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).

79 Shulamit Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code: Zehn Essays* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000).

80 Hildegard Frisius et al., *Evangelisch getauft – als Juden verfolgt: Spurensuche Berliner Kirchengemeinden* (Berlin: Wichern, 2008).

offspring and leading to different categories of *Mischlinge* (“mixed race”).⁸¹ Whether a *Mischehe* child was raised in the Christian or Jewish faith could make the difference between life as a second-class citizen and deportation to Auschwitz after 1941.

The Goldschlag family reflected this complexity. According to Goldschlag’s statement, her father was a Protestant, did not understand himself as Jewish at all, and was not circumcised because he came from a family of converts.⁸² It is unclear, however, whether both his parents were or just his mother was baptised. According to their official marriage certificate from 1917, both Toni and Gerhard Goldschlag were registered as of the “mosaic faith”.⁸³ Obviously, Gerhard Goldschlag did not have his entry in the register changed. According to Stella Goldschlag, her mother had been born Protestant and was listed with her husband’s religion by the German officials just during the marriage procedure.⁸⁴ It is unclear whether Toni Goldschlag came from a converted family. Oriented towards modernity, the young couple might have wanted to avoid conflicts with their parents, or they simply did not feel the need to have the entry changed as a registered religion does not say anything about personal faith. Weimar Berlin was a centre of “dissidents” from religion (both Christian and Jewish), especially among leftists, leading to the installation of secular cemeteries at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ According to Goldschlag, her parents raised her in the Protestant faith. In fact, as mentioned earlier, she attended Protestant religion classes at the Goldschmidt school.⁸⁶ She did not, however, mention baptism and the confirmation classes that were mandatory in the Protestant congregation during the 1920s and 1930s. The former indicates that she was not properly baptised. Confirmation would only have started for her after that Nazis had already succeeded in excluding most “non-Aryans” within the churches.⁸⁷ The record sheet of her first police interrogation file from March 1946 lists her as “mosaic”.⁸⁸ This part of her multi-part interrogation is not signed by her, unlike later parts. Ten years later, arrested again in West Berlin weeks after her release from ten years of gulag and East German internment, she stated “dissident” as her religion.⁸⁹

The religion of one’s (grand-)parents is not a decision; being targeted as a “Jew” defined by Nazi regulations is not one either. One’s own religion is. Judaism is usually matrilinear. If Toni Goldschlag’s mother had been Protestant, Stella Goldschlag, according to the Halakhah, was not Jewish. For some branches of Judaism, the faith can be passed on patrilinearly, too, but Gerhard Goldschlag was not Jewish in this sense either. Stella Goldschlag was possibly not Jewish by religion, but she certainly was persecuted on antisemitic grounds. The Goldschlag family was definitely not religious but partly Christian by upbringing, and only “declared Jewish by Hitler”.⁹⁰

81 Maximilian Strnad, *Privileg Mischehe? Handlungsräume “jüdisch versippter” Familien 1933–1949*, *Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden* 54 (Hamburg, 2021); Beate Meyer, “Jüdische Mischlinge”: *Rassenpolitik und Verfolgungserfahrung 1933–1945*, *Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte* 6 (Munich: Dölling und Galitz, 2015).

82 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 2.

83 Standesamt Charlottenburg, Abschrift Heiratsurkunde Nr. 516/1917 vom 04.10.1917.

84 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 1.

85 Wikipedia, “Urnenfriedhof Gerichtstraße”, Wikipedia, 12 February 2022, https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Urnenfriedhof_Gerichtstraße&oldid=220137904.

86 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 6.

87 Manfred Gailus, *Im Bann des Nationalsozialismus: Das protestantische Berlin im Dritten Reich* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 2023), 147 ff.

88 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Kriminal-Inspektion Fahndung zBV and Kriminal-Kommissar Blome, Polizeiliche Vernehmung von Stella Isaaksohn.

89 Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Abteilung I, I 4 - Kl 1, Polizeiliches Vernehmungsprotokoll Stella Isaaksohn, geb. Goldschlag.

90 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 1.

The tension between such “Nuremberg Jews” and members of different Jewish and Christian congregations was drastic during and after the Shoah. Attempts to convince the Nazi authorities of one’s “non-Jewishness” was controversial.⁹¹ Religious dissidents without an official affiliation to Judaism, “non-Aryan Christians”, *Mischehe* partners, and *Mischlinge* aimed to convince the authorities that they were “Aryan”. People converted, divorced, and got baptised, in some case succeeding to evade some Nazi measures.⁹² Survivors perceived such forms of evasion as a betrayal of Judaism and regarded former mixed marriages with suspicion even though most survivors had survived because of them.⁹³ The distrust extended to *Mischlinge* and “non-Aryan” Christians (or those without a religion). Some were excluded from the Berlin Jewish Community’s welfare benefits in 1945.⁹⁴

These tensions are reflected in the Goldschlag case. The post-war attacks against her were reminiscent of the reckoning at war’s end with French women suspected of having had intercourse with German occupiers. During Goldschlag’s March 1946 arrest and interrogation, her baby was taken away from her and taken to a Jewish children’s home. A mob of angry survivors tried to lynch her, cursing her as a non-Jew and for being “still too beautiful”, cutting off her hair in the process.⁹⁵ Then, they exposed her to the camera, showing her bruised eye.⁹⁶ The police afterwards allowed a film team and a radio reporter to question the dishevelled Goldschlag live on record.

Some of the scenes from 1946 were repeated during Goldschlag’s trial in 1956 and 1957 in West Berlin: angry survivors threw ashtrays at her. According to Goldschlag, the mob even beat up a female resistance fighter who testified in Goldschlag’s favour because Goldschlag had supported Jews in hiding.⁹⁷ Survivors condemned Goldschlag as the worst imaginable traitor with more than a misogynist undertone. In a rage palpable in the sources, they called her a “monster”, a she-devil, describing her as the “Blonde Ghost” or the “Blonde Poison” – probably inspired by a movie.⁹⁸ These depictions painted her as a man-eating femme fatale, a mixture of Marilyn Monroe and the Gestapo.⁹⁹ Moreover, the lynching “excommunicated” her from the group of the victims, forming a collective *ex negativo*.

This depiction fulfilled a role in the internal Jewish struggle of rebuilding a community in Berlin after the war. Survivors had their own agenda in reporting on Goldschlag. Like the *Judenräte* (Jewish Councils),¹⁰⁰ the Gestapo-controlled Jewish pseudo-self-administration *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Reich Association of Jews in Germany, RV) assisted under coercion in the deportations from Nazi Germany. Under the wrong impression that they could shield the many by helping to deport the few, the RV provided Jewish auxiliaries to staff local Gestapo deportation camps. This led to post-war criminal trials against former RV represent-

91 Efroim Oshry, *Responsa from the Holocaust*, revised ed. (New York: Judaica Press, 2001), 66.

92 Strnad, *Privileg Mischehe?*, 142 ff.

93 Ulrike Offenber, “Die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin 1945–1953”, in *Leben im Land der Täter: Juden im Nachkriegsdeutschland 1945–1952*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps (Berlin: Jüdische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 140 f.

94 Offenber, “Offenberg 2001, Die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin 1945–1953”, 146.

95 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 48.

96 Photographer unknown, Criminal Commissar Jean Blome questions Stella Kubler (alias Issakson) about her wartime activities in Berlin denouncing Jews to the Gestapo, 16 March 1946, Source Record ID: 111-SC-231744 (Album 1414), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.

97 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 48.

98 Richard L. Bare, dir., *Blondes Gift [Flaxy Martin]* (Warner Bros., 1949).

99 Jockusch, “Verräterin und Femme Fatale?”

100 This administrative body was established by the Germans during the Second World War, and it purported to represent the Jewish community of a single ghetto or a whole country in German-occupied Europe in dealings with the Nazi authorities.

atives, understood as a Jewish “section of the Gestapo”.¹⁰¹ In Berlin, former RV clerks took office in the post-war Jewish Community’s *Ehrengericht* (Honour Court), which was from early 1946 on entrusted to handle approximately eighty-five collaboration cases with moral-ethical evaluations. The Jewish Honour Court defended the former RV’s strategy of cooperation with the Gestapo, shielding many of the defendants who had been *Mischehe* RV staff from accusations as traitors that had been fuelled by the belief that they had been “protected”.¹⁰² Implementing a questionable division between involuntary “regular” Jewish Gestapo camp auxiliaries and voluntary “irregular” *Greifer* that has been reproduced by scholars and only until recently challenged,¹⁰³ the Honour Court acquitted most RV clerks even if they took part in actions against “illegals”, blaming instead defendants unaligned with the RV. In comparison to the vilified representation of Goldschlag, the actions of former RV staff paled. Blaming her – in the same way that the liberated nations blamed women for (sexual) relationships with the German occupiers – excommunicated betrayal from both the community of Jewish survivors and its former self-administration. While openly regretting their choices after the war, former male RV representatives and subordinated clerks were not shorn in public.

Lasting decades, the hatred against Goldschlag was so strong that survivors became angry with Shoah survivor and book author Peter Wyden for not killing her when he allegedly had the chance for it during an interview in the 1990s. Goldschlag’s alleged antisemitism must be regarded in this context. Decades after the events, she blamed the *Kulturbund* for hindering her father and stated that verdicts against her were the result of a conspiracy of “the Jews” with the court’s justice.¹⁰⁴ In fact, a former persecutee was part of the legal authorities tasked with her case. Nonetheless, her implications are reminiscent of classic antisemitic perceptions: a sinister, centrally governed collective running things in secret. It is important to note that Stella Goldschlag made these statements during the trial against her in 1956 and 1957 and in the early 1990s. Her remarks mirror the hatred against her, clearly marking them as a post-war development. Author Peter Wyden and the 2023 movie¹⁰⁵ constitute a fallacy by explaining her betrayal of Jews in the 1940s by her antisemitic post-war remarks. There is no evidence that she “hated” Jews during the war. Even if this would have been the case, it would not un-make her a victim of Nazi antisemitism.

Conclusion

In the Goldschlag case, post-war expectations of Jewish self-sacrifice in the name of the collective clash with a much more tangible emotional need of self-sacrifice for the family. Such beliefs ignored pre- and post-1933 class divisions and heterogeneity among the victims in favour of a retrospectively constructed collective. Looking at

101 Beate Meyer, *Tödliche Gratwanderung: Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland zwischen Hoffnung, Zwang, Selbstbehauptung und Verstrickung (1939–1945)*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 38 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 367 f.

102 Philipp Dinkelaker, “Jewish Collaboration? Honor Court Cases Against Survivors of the Shoah in Postwar Germany”, *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 33, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/25785648.2019.1677099>.

103 Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat*, 90. The differentiation was a retrospective invention and did not exist in the way later communicated. Dinkelaker, “Worse than the Gestapo?”, 236 ff.

104 Kroh, Typoskript Interview mit Stella Goldschlag, 50 ff.

105 Kilian Riedhof, director, *Stella: Ein Leben* (Letterbox Filmproduktion, 2023). In one of the last scenes of the movie, during a fictional 1956 conversation with another survivor, the figure of Stella Goldschlag uses the term “the Jews” in such a manner.

the micro-level by using the example of the Goldschlag family, we see how Goldschlag's experiences of de-solidarisation – both concrete and imagined – before 1941 might have affected her later actions. Both her education to be an independent woman and her association with the decidedly anti-authoritarian and liberal swing subculture might have played into her readiness to “submerge”, as well as into her decision to further cooperate with the Gestapo as an individual seeking individual survival and the salvation of her immediate family. In an atmosphere of distrust among persecutes and feeling obliged to her parents, Goldschlag betrayed others. The forced collective simply was not as binding as the immediate bonds of blood. Retrospective overinterpretations of the sources pathologise this as narcissistic, explaining her betrayal with such psychological shortcomings rather than with the most obvious explanation of persecution-related circumstances.

Goldschlag had obviously displayed agency, and this was not expected of women in the 1950s, making her the perfect target for different strata of traumatised and angry survivors seeking retribution – confronted with exaggerated horror stories fabricated by a former non-Jewish concentration camp inmate anticipating accusations of betrayal against himself. The “guilt of survival” and the aftershock of the non-solidarity among persecutees could be channelled unto Goldschlag. Excommunicating her as a non-Jew created a “sanitised” past that served to replace the bitter reality that betrayal among caught illegals was the norm, not the exception. Former RV employees who had implemented the collective strategy of survival through cooperation with the Gestapo could admit the failure of their strategy because they could defend it as oriented towards the “greater good”, while at the same time pointing at “selfish” individuals like Goldschlag, presenting the dirt that overshadowed what Primo Levi called the “grey zone”.¹⁰⁶

This went beyond the small circle of survivors. The narrative of Goldschlag's “selfishness” perfectly suited German denial of guilt antisemitism and the legal requirement of an “inner motivation” to sentence a Jew with accessory to murder. Consequently, all references to her predicament and actual resistance had to be suppressed, and elements of her life story distorted. German police officers and courts reversed her self-sacrifice to save her parents into self-interest, and a woman with very limited room to manoeuvre into an evil villain matching the Nazi elite. Some media reports diabolised her biologically determined criminal nature – a familiar tune to former recipients of Goebbel's propaganda, which still haunts the debate and obscures the facts.

106 See footnote 62.

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