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Fredrik Lindström

Out of the Past

Simon Wiesenthal's 'Hunt' for Nazis as a Form of Collective Testimony

Abstract

The article examines Simon Wiesenthal's life-long preoccupation with the Holocaust, by using Paul Ricœur's discussion of the two modes of dealing with the past – those of 'memory' and 'history' respectively – as a point of departure. Nevertheless, the article aims to approach the varying forms and expressions of this preoccupation in an integrated fashion, analysing it as different means of achieving one and the same purpose: giving a public 'collective testimony' of the Holocaust. Departing from Wiesenthal's own experiences, as well as testimonies of how the events of the Holocaust affected his own larger family, and testimonies of events taking place in his original Heimat – the area of Eastern Galicia that he stemmed from – Wiesenthal's work in collecting testimonies of Nazi crimes gradually aggregated into a special form of 'collective testimony' of the Holocaust.

“Simon Wiesenthal ist eine Person, die aus der Vergangenheit kommt”, observed Anton Pelinka at the historian's conference organised by the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW) in Vienna to honour Simon Wiesenthal on his ninetyth birthday in 1998. Pelinka characterised Wiesenthal as “ein positiver Störfaktor” in Austrian politics and society and described him as a trailblazer of the belatedly developed field of Holocaust studies in Austria. Besides Pelinka, several prominent Austrian historians at the conference – such as Gerhard Botz and Winfried Garscha – expressed their views on the important and pioneering role played by Wiesenthal in working through the Nazi past in Austria.¹ This assessment by the historical profession of Wiesenthal's importance for the understanding of Austrian complicity in the crimes of Nazism and specifically the Holocaust encompassed a recognition of Wiesenthal's contribution to historiography. In this article, I will examine more closely the special quality of Wiesenthal's contribution to working through the past with the help of the interrelated concepts of 'history' and 'memory'.

Under the impression of the rise of 'memory' as a mode of relating to the past, Paul Ricœur let his late magnum opus *Memory, History, Forgetting* develop into a philosophical and historical inquiry into the competing forms of relating to the past constituted by 'history' and 'memory' respectively. To Ricœur, these two main, discernible forms of dealing with the past intertwine; they influence and shape one another more than the representatives of the respective traditions of 'memory' and 'history' would like to admit. Historians, or operators of the “historiographical process” (to use Ricœur's preferred term), view themselves as facilitating a corrective to unreli-

¹ Anton Pelinka, Simon Wiesenthal und die österreichische Innenpolitik. Referat im Rahmen der Tagung *Österreichs Umgang mit der NS-Täterschaft* anlässlich des 90. Geburtstages von Simon Wiesenthal, Wien, 2/3 Dezember 1998, available online: https://www.doew.at/cms/download/5kmjc/pelinka_wiesenthal.pdf (29 September 2019). See also the documentation and correspondence concerning the conference in Nachlass Wiesenthal, Simon Wiesenthal Archive (SWA), II.1 (A-VIII.32).

able memory, sifting and critically weighing testimonies and creating hard ‘documentary evidence’, which is then used to ‘explain/understand’ the past and to ‘represent’ it in narrative form. Representatives of the tradition of studying memory, on the other hand, tend to view the historiographical process as ‘perverting’ or even ‘poisoning’ the process of creating a collective memory. The latter is grounded in testimonies, which are accepted in social groups, developing over social memory in smaller groups and are, eventually, through commemorative practices, extended into a collective memory of a whole society.² However, the most important aspect of Ricœur’s philosophical deliberations for my present aims is that he firmly points out ‘testimony’ as the structural element linking ‘memory’ and ‘history’.³ Simon Wiesenthal basically spent his life collecting testimonies of the Holocaust and using them – in many different ways – to keep the memory of these events alive. In doing so, he developed modes of relating the past that can be fruitfully discussed through Ricœur’s reflections on ‘memory’ and ‘history’, but cannot be limited to one or the other.

Wiesenthal’s preoccupation with the Nazi period in Austria was originally and outwardly a quest to bring Nazi criminals to justice.⁴ His main endeavour was to document the crimes of Nazism and to support the judicial system in finding Nazi criminals and in the preparation of cases, mainly by locating witnesses and collecting testimonies – hence his public persona as a ‘Nazi hunter’. Wiesenthal’s public role in this capacity was firmly established by the Eichmann trial in 1961, when he published his first and timely major book, *Ich jagte Eichmann*, and presented it at a press conference in Jerusalem.⁵ The book detailed his almost manic obsession with finding Adolf Eichmann and reads like a blueprint for his wider project of tracing Nazi criminals. This career had begun already in the spring of 1945 after Wiesenthal’s liberation from the Mauthausen concentration camp near Linz, when he volunteered to help the American occupation authorities to track down war criminals. It then received a new urgency when he founded a Documentation Centre in Linz in 1947 together with other Holocaust survivors. In 1954, he closed this Centre, because he found the work futile during the most intensive early phase of the Cold War, when the former Allies were competing to integrate Germans and former Nazis into their respective camps and when most of the survivors had left Europe.⁶ However, in connection with the Eichmann trial, Wiesenthal judged that the winds were changing and that it would now again be possible to bring Nazi criminals to justice.⁷ Wiesenthal developed an almost unbelievable energy and momentum in his endeav-

2 Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago/London 2004. Ricœur’s book is an enquiry into two main ways of relating to the past and their interactions and points of conflict. When he approaches our own time, he especially addresses the interaction and fusion of these two approaches. In the last two decades, historians have increasingly engaged in memory studies, which has served to further intensify these interactions. See for instance the reflections on this in Aleida Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur. Eine Intervention*, Munich 2013.

3 Ricœur, *Memory*, 21, 160-166.

4 Wiesenthal always insisted on the term “Nazi criminals”, because the crimes were rooted in that ideology and movement. Wiesenthal deemed the term “war criminals” too unspecific (besides being a term that was restricted to crimes committed during the war years 1939–1945). See for instance: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us. The Simon Wiesenthal Memoirs*. Edited and with an introductory profile by Joseph Wechsberg, New York/Toronto/London/Sydney 1967, 6; and Maria Sporrer/Herbert Steiner (ed.), *Simon Wiesenthal. Ein unbequemer Zeitgenosse*, Vienna/Munich/Zurich 1992, 145.

5 Simon Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann. Tatsachenbericht*, Gütersloh 1961. The press conference took place on 2 February 1961, during the buildup of public attention before the beginning of the trial on 11 April. See also: Hella Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal. A Life in Search of Justice*, London 1996, 148-149.

6 See: Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, in: Karl B. Schnelting (ed.), *Jüdische Lebenswege. Nahum Goldmann, Simon Wiesenthal, H. G. Adler*, Frankfurt am Main 1987, 71-153, here 84.

7 See: Simon Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache. Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin 1988, 206.

ours during the 1960s. He opened a new Documentation Centre in Vienna in 1961,⁸ which soon achieved international recognition, not least by the concerned authorities in several countries who viewed it as a valuable institution in the work to apprehend and bring Nazi criminals to justice.

'History'. "Eine Dissertation in SS-Wissenschaften"

Importantly, already at the start of his career, when he founded the Documentation Centre in Linz in 1947, Wiesenthal prominently mentioned as one aim of his centre "the general documentation of the events [of the Holocaust]".⁹ This remained a central aim and appeared again in the founding documents of his second Documentation Centre in Vienna in 1961, where one of the three main purposes of the centre was presented as the "collection of documentation for the later writing of history".¹⁰ Furthermore, when Wiesenthal closed his first Documentation Centre in 1954, he sent its archive to the research and educational facility Yad Vashem in Israel to further this same aim – according to Wiesenthal, "more than a tonne of documents" was deposited there.¹¹ When the Simon Wiesenthal Center was founded in Los Angeles in 1977, Wiesenthal was hoping that this would turn into an important Holocaust research centre, and subsequently he made plans – which were never realised – to house at least parts of the archive of his new Documentation Centre there.¹² As he was approaching the end of his life and gradually ceasing to operate his Documentation Centre in Vienna, Wiesenthal used his remaining years to further his idea of creating a research institute in his hometown, where his archive could be housed and used as the basis for research on issues such as racism, antisemitism, Nazism, the Holocaust, and related subjects. In 2009, four years after Wiesenthal's death, the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies was founded.¹³ During my own recent fellowship at this institute, I could observe first-hand how historians worked with Wiesenthal's archive on different types of projects – focussing on the subjects that Wiesenthal himself pursued (such as Nazism and the Holocaust) as well as dealing with Wiesenthal himself and his role in the aftermath of these events. Wiesenthal was thus able to realize the part of his undertaking that was historiographically oriented.

However, late in his life, when Wiesenthal was asked whether his engagement in furthering historical research went beyond documentation and whether he viewed himself as a historian, his answer was: "Ich bin ein Rechercheur – ich finde Tatsachen – nichts anderes!"¹⁴ Earlier in his career, he had been more confident when he wrote in 1961 that the documentation he had collected and the knowledge he had acquired

8 At first, it operated as a branch of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), the Jewish community organization in Vienna, but in 1963 a ferociously independent-minded Wiesenthal severed the connection with the IKG and founded his own archive as a branch of his political grouping in the IKG, the Bund jüdischer Verfolgter des Naziregimes (BjVN). The centre's formal name was hereafter Dokumentationszentrum des Bundes jüdischer Verfolgter des Naziregimes. See the documentation in SWA, I.1., File "IKG".

9 Sporrer/Steiner, Simon Wiesenthal, 88. See also: Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann*, 58.

10 SWA, I.5., Bericht über die Tätigkeit des jüdischen Dokumentationszentrums für die Zeit 1. Oktober 1961 – 31. März 1962, 1.

11 Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, 92. The holdings of the archive of the Linz Documentation Centre are now publicly available on the homepage of the Yad Vashem Archive under collection signature M.9 (Yad Vashem Archive [YVA]/Simon Wiesenthal Collection [SWC]/Jewish Historical Documentation Center, Linz [JHDCL]), <http://www.yadvashem.org/> (29 September 2019).

12 Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, 146.

13 See: Institute Profile, <https://vwi.ac.at/index.php/en/institute/institute-profile> (29 September 2019).

14 See the interview in the documentary film *I Have Never Forgotten You. The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal* (directed by Richard Trank, 2007), Chapter 6, 89:00.

made him well equipped to write “eine Dissertation in SS-Wissenschaften”¹⁵ – and I believe the doyen of Austrian historiography of the Nazi period, Gerhard Botz, would agree, since, at the conference mentioned at the beginning of this article, Botz made the most far-reaching assessment of Wiesenthal’s importance as a historian.¹⁶ Botz argued for a belated recognition of Wiesenthal as “a historian of Austria’s Nazi past”, lamenting the disparaging attitude of Austrian contemporary historians towards Wiesenthal’s achievement. Botz admitted that Wiesenthal’s own writings were not just historical works, but always had a judicial dimension as well as being “vergangenheitspolitisch orientiert”. Nevertheless, Botz discerned the important contribution Wiesenthal had made on the level of developing new ideas and theories, concepts and perspectives, and, while drawing on established facts (which he partly through quite traditional archival work had dug out himself), he had proposed a novel conception of the history of Austrian National Socialism. However, this contribution was not presented in historiographical guise, but instead as a memorandum to the Chancellor of Austria (and at a press conference and as an article in his own journal, *Der Ausweg*) in 1966, which highlighted the high percentage of Austrian Nazis among those who perpetrated the Holocaust. Botz acknowledged the hybrid quality of the memorandum, known as *Das Österreich-Memorandum*, or by its full title *Schuld und Sühne der NS-Täter aus Österreich*.¹⁷ The *Austrian Memorandum* succinctly but with plenty of detail delineated the substantial Austrian complicity in the Holocaust – especially the many Austrian Nazis in leading functions – at the same time as it, in part two, criticised the Austrian state’s deplorable record of bringing these Austrian criminals to justice and recommending a rectification of this record. Botz found a preliminary version of the memorandum in Wiesenthal’s own archive,¹⁸ which he dated to the early 1950s. This early version contains so many of the qualities of the later published version that Botz extended his argument even farther, observing that Wiesenthal at this early point in time already must be seen as a real pioneer in the study of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust, his sketch predating even the path-breaking study of Raul Hilberg by several years.

Botz highlighted part one of the memorandum in particular, arguing that Wiesenthal was historiographically at least twenty years ahead of his time when it came to the knowledge and level of discussion of the historical profession. Wiesenthal

15 Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann*, 232. Wiesenthal here (in 1961) recalled a conversation he had in 1950, when he described his studies in the years 1945–1950 as enabling him to write a dissertation in “SS-Wissenschaften”. See further below for more detail.

16 Gerhard Botz’ presentation at the conference *Österreichs Umgang mit der NS-Täterschaft* (see note 1) was later published as *Simon Wiesenthals Beitrag zur Aufarbeitung der Geschichte des österreichischen Nationalsozialismus. Sein (fast) vergessenes “Memorandum” zur “Beitiligung von Österreichern an Nazi-Verbrechen” und die “österreichische Täter-These”*, in: *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes* (ed.), *Forschungen zum Nationalsozialismus und dessen Nachwirkungen in Österreich*. Festschrift für Brigitte Bailer, Vienna 2012, available online: https://www.doew.at/cms/download/0067/bb_botz.pdf (25 October 2019). The fact that this article was only published 14 years after the conference took place in 1998 has arguably delayed its effect on Austrian historiography. I believe the line of thought pursued by Botz here merits renewed consideration.

17 The memorandum and material in connection with it, such as documents regarding the press conference held on 2 November 1966 in Vienna as well as press reactions, are held in in SWA, I., File “Österreich 03” and is available online: https://www.doew.at/cms/download/bvfro/bb_memorandum.pdf (25 October 2019). It was also published in the periodical of the Documentation Centre of the BJVN, *Der Ausweg*, *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Aufklärung und Abwehr*, 4 (1966) 5, 1–8. See also the follow-up on the domestic and international public reactions to the memorandum in: *Der Ausweg* 4 (1966) 6, 1–7, and in following issues, e.g. *Der Ausweg* 5 (1967) 2, 1–2. See also: Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 164–165.

18 This document, entitled *Die Verantwortung d. Österreicher für den Judenmord in Europa*, lies in Wiesenthal’s documentation archive on Nazi crimes, see: SWA, I., File “Österreich 02”. I believe this document constitutes the sketch for what Wiesenthal in 1961 about ten years after writing it in passing labelled his “Dissertation in SS-Wissenschaften” (see footnote 15).

posed completely new questions of the historical record, which were in clear opposition to the conventional wisdom of Austria as the 'first victim' of Nazi Germany at the time. Wiesenthal attempted to structure and analyse Austrian Nazi history, implicitly presenting a 'research programme' that still remains valid today (as Botz maintained in 2012) and attempted to offer answers to many of the questions posed in this research programme, answers which in some cases are accepted knowledge today, and in other cases constitute strongly controversial issues in Austrian contemporary history. Following Ricœur, one could say that Wiesenthal's input to the historiographical process in the working out of Austria's Nazi past seems to lay primarily in the second phase of that process: in the creation of models and perspectives for explaining/understanding that past.

I would like to add that the characteristics of a historian were also present in Wiesenthal's project in the phases of documentation and representation, especially in the first of these. Wiesenthal was particularly adept at digging out new documents in archives and finding new witnesses and collecting their testimonies. He did this primarily for the purpose of judicial trials but, as mentioned above, he also had in mind the documentation of these events for future historians as an integrated part of his 'research programme', if we can call it that. 1947 seems to have been the starting point for Wiesenthal's historical schooling. At this time, he was invited to Nuremberg in connection with the War Crimes Tribunal going on there and was allowed to work in the archive of the Nuremberg Trials. This spell of archival work appears to me as a baptism of fire of the archival researcher/historian Wiesenthal. In his book *Ich jagte Eichmann*, he recounted the intensity with which he delved into the protocols, testimonies, and documentation of the ongoing trials against Nazi war criminals. He emphasises – and one can almost hear the hunger in his voice – how much he *learned* during those weeks in Nuremberg.¹⁹ He narrated this experience as part of the red-hot prose in which he recounted his obsession with Eichmann, but I believe this almost manic preoccupation with finding and compiling information on this specific Nazi criminal may be regarded as a template for how Wiesenthal worked on any case. Dipping into a number of the many hundred case files in Wiesenthal's archive gave me the sense that this kind of archival and documentary research was a normal part of his 'research process', always trying his utmost and going to extreme lengths to find the decisive document or witness in order to clinch the case at hand.

Furthermore, the hard school of the many Nazi trials he was involved in taught him the importance of documentation. The testimonies, both written and oral, needed to be precise in their information of times, places, and persons reliably identified.²⁰ Later in his career, he could appear hardnosed when dismissing testimonies, which he clearly believed were true, but that he recognised would be much too vague or unspecific to stand up to the critical scrutiny of seasoned defence lawyers.²¹ I think that this schooling is also visible in parts of Wiesenthal's writing that may not meet the demands of the historical profession as historical representation, but that are factually very precise and reliable in the details of the historical events recounted. Such

19 Wiesenthal was in Nuremberg twice in 1947 and apparently at least once in 1948. On his experience in Nuremberg, see primarily: Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann*, 67-70, but also Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, 91, and Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 116. On a similar experience in Dachau in 1947, see: Sporer/Steiner, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 65.

20 This learning process is highly visible in Wiesenthal's voluminous correspondence with different courts in Germany and Austria, in which the state attorneys and judges often stressed to Wiesenthal the importance of accuracy and reliability in testimonies, often in wording very similar as that Wiesenthal himself used when writing about this learning process later.

21 See for instance the anecdote relayed by Joseph Wechsberg in Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 7.

fragments of historical prose appear in many of Wiesenthal's writings. They appear in the descriptions of his own experience of the Holocaust as well as in the background sections of the case descriptions of individual Nazi criminals in his three main books about his life and career.²² Yet they also appear in the historical background, the construction of the plot, and the description of 'the setting' – for instance in the reconstruction of conversations of high ranking SS officers involved in 'Operation Reinhard' overheard by his protagonists – in his (ostensibly) fictional works (more of which below). Here Wiesenthal's schooling in the judicial processes evidently paid off handsomely in qualities also sought after in the practice of historiography; Wiesenthal's historical writings were based on high-quality "documentary evidence", as Ricœur termed it. Nevertheless, a reviewer of one of Wiesenthal's works of documentary fiction (a "Tatsachenroman", as he called it) lauded this quality in Wiesenthal's work as follows:

"hier [schreibt] ein Mann, der mit der Thematik verbunden und vertraut ist, wie kaum ein anderer. [...] Hier geht es dem Autor nicht nur darum, einen Roman vorzulegen, sondern hier findet der Leser ein Werk mit vielen Dimensionen. [...] Der Romancier Wiesenthal erzählt, der Historiker Wiesenthal ergänzt."²³

Indeed, in the focal point of Wiesenthal's documentary fiction, the intimate link between 'history' and 'memory' in his preoccupation with the past becomes discernible.

'Memory': Collecting Testimonies – Giving Collective Testimony?

According to Ricœur, 'testimony' is the structural link between 'memory' and 'history', constituting the starting point both for the historiographical process and the process of memory evolving into collective forms. Testimony builds on its capacity to assert the factual reality of the reported event as well as on the certification of authenticity based on the experience of the speaker/author, in the sense of: I was there, believe me. If you do not believe me, ask someone else (who was there).²⁴ However, as part of the historiographical process,

"testimony does not run its course with the constitution of archives; it reappears at the end of the epistemological inquiry at the level of representation of the past through narrative, rhetorical devices, and images. Moreover, in some contemporary forms of deposition arising from the mass atrocities of the twentieth century, it resists not only explication and representation, but even its being placed into some archival reserve, to the point of maintaining itself at the margins of historiography and of throwing doubt on its intention to be truthful."²⁵

This is one of the junctures that Ricœur identified, in which the historiographical process and the process of memory intersect and disturb one another at different points.

22 These being Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann*; Wiesenthal, *The Murders Among Us*; and Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*. On these books and their place in Wiesenthal's literary production, see more below.

23 Cited in Carmen Hofbauer, *Simon Wiesenthal als Publizist*, (Dissertation), Salzburg 2002, 177. Wiesenthal collected reviews and press material in connection with his books, see: SWA, II.1/A-II (in the respective files of his different publications).

24 Ricœur, *Memory*, 163-166.

25 *Ibid.*, 161.

A special quality of Wiesenthal's project was quite clearly that he had himself lived through the events he was later involved in researching and giving different forms of representation – he came out of that past, as Pelinka noted. Wiesenthal was overrun by the Nazi murder machinery in late June 1941. His home in Lwów (Lemberg; today Lviv) lay in the Soviet zone of occupied Poland in the years 1939–1941. Although Wiesenthal, as a member of the professional and intellectual classes, suffered from Soviet rule,²⁶ it was only with the arrival of Nazi German troops and their Ukrainian auxiliary units in Lwów in the days following 30 June 1941 that he was sucked into the events that later become known as the Holocaust. The story of his almost four-year traversal of Nazi-ruled Eastern Europe is an integrated part (in different ways) of his writings, reappearing in fragments in many of the case reports on Nazi criminals in his books, since Wiesenthal had personal knowledge of quite a few of those same Nazi criminals that he later sought to bring to justice.²⁷

When Wiesenthal made his original list of 91 Nazi criminals, which he gave to the American occupation authorities in the spring of 1945, he based it on his own recent experience in Nazi-occupied Europe. Wiesenthal maintained that he had observed and made lists of Nazi criminals during the whole period of the Holocaust, which were however lost in the escalating chaos of his life during these years. Nevertheless, after his liberation from the Mauthausen concentration camp, he reconstructed much of this information from memory. This original list, which launched Wiesenthal's career as a 'Nazi hunter', consisted exclusively of Nazi criminals whose crimes he had himself witnessed.²⁸ This important role of Wiesenthal's personal memory as the basis of his coming quest is visible in the focus given in his investigations of Nazi criminals – especially in the early phase, but also in the overall structure of his life project as it evolved over several decades.

One salient aspect of Wiesenthal's investigations is that they at heart demonstrate a close link to his own personal past. In the cover letter appended to his original "Mauthausen list", one argument Wiesenthal gave to persuade the Americans to take him into their service was that his whole family and many close relatives had been murdered by the Nazis (at this time he did not yet know that his wife Cyla had survived). He felt that it was his duty to do what he could in helping with descriptions of the crimes and the identification of the criminals.²⁹ Just as the many witnesses interviewed in his Documentation Centre in Linz in the late 1940s related their own personal experiences when they gave testimony of Nazi crimes, Wiesenthal himself – in his overarching role supervising and directing this endeavour – was guided by his personal experiences. From early on, he engaged with crimes that had been committed in areas where he himself had lived, both in Lemberg (to use Wiesenthal's preferred name for this city) where he had been living and working when the Holocaust began, in his hometown

²⁶ Wiesenthal was a university-educated engineer and worked as an architect. He stemmed from a well-to-do middle-class family.

²⁷ For Wiesenthal's life story, see his three autobiographical books: Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann*; Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*; and Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*. See also his two main biographies: Tom Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal. The Life and Legends*, London 2010, and Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*.

²⁸ Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 85–86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

Buczacz (today Buchach), and in Galicia more broadly.³⁰ Although he did not personally experience the events of the Holocaust at all of these locations, his interest in them seems to have emerged from the fact that this was Wiesenthal's own life world, his original 'Heimat' – he knew these places and he knew many people who had come from them. Buczacz in particular, where many of his relatives were murdered in recurring systematic mass executions of the Jewish population of the town between 1941 and 1944³¹ or deported to nearby Belzec to be exterminated, held a special place in Wiesenthal's investigations.³² In the summer of 1945, he already began interviewing refugees from Buczacz who were passing through Linz, repeatedly hearing the name of one specific Nazi murderer when he asked what they could report about the fate of his family there.³³ Much later, he would write in letters connected to court cases that he felt a special commitment to the issue at hand because he was born in Buczacz and many of his relatives had been murdered there.³⁴ Wiesenthal also focussed his research on a number of SS men who had been active in Buczacz during the mass executions, working throughout the 1960s and early 1970s and more sporadically up to 1979 trying to trace the Nazi criminals who had taken part in these crimes and helping to gather information and evidence against them. In one letter from 1964, Wiesenthal emphasised that he had been searching for one specific Nazi criminal "for twenty years".³⁵ In other cases, he emphasised that the Nazi criminal in question had almost certainly murdered certain individual members of Wiesenthal's family.³⁶ In one letter, he stated that this same Nazi criminal "hat rein zufällig meine gesamte in Buczacz lebende Familie ermordet. Ich war zu dieser Zeit nicht dort, ansonsten wäre ich auch nicht mehr unter den Lebenden."³⁷ After their reunion in 1945, Simon and his wife Cyla together drew up a list of 89 relatives who had perished in the Holocaust.³⁸ It is difficult to imagine the Nazi mass murder coming much closer than this. Wiesenthal's biographer Tom Segev took such information as evidence that Wiesenthal's motives for his Nazi-hunting were personal. "Wiesenthal devoted a considerable amount of time to Nazis who had mistreated him personally, including those who had been active in Buczacz and Lvov", Segev wrote while considering Wiesenthal's interest in the SS man who had commanded his work gang in the Płaszów concentration camp, which I think is a much too narrow and individualized way of approaching the matter.³⁹

30 See: Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 269-283. This orientation is also visible in Wiesenthal's archive of Nazi crimes and criminals, where "Buczacz", "Lemberg", and "Galizien" constitute large files stemming from Wiesenthal's special interest in these areas. SWA, I.I. Wiesenthal also served as a witness in a number of trials of crimes committed in these locations. This mode of procedure was not uncommon among Holocaust survivors who worked on documenting Nazi crimes during the early post-war period. See for instance: Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, New York 2012, and Katharina Stengel, Hermann Langbein. *Ein Auschwitz-Überlebender in den Erinnerungspolitischen Konflikten der Nachkriegszeit*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2012.

31 On the fate of Buczacz during these years, see: Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide. The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, New York/London/Toronto/Sydney/New Dehli 2018.

32 See: SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz".

33 Wiesenthal was interviewed by the Israeli police about his knowledge of crimes in Buczacz, see: the protocol from 24 August 1965 in SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz". Wiesenthal's Linz archive also contains much material in connection with Nazi crimes committed in Buczacz (see: YVA/SWC/JHDCL/M.9).

34 See for instance: the letter to Landgericht Saarbrücken, Untersuchungsrichter Hasslocher, from 18 June 1960, who had contacted him about information concerning crimes committed in Galicia during the war. SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz".

35 See the letter of thanks to an informant from 21 July 1964 as well as the letter to State Attorney Sighting in Stuttgart from 26 August 1963, SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz".

36 See the protocol referenced in footnote 33, SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz".

37 See the letter to Kurt Feichtlbauer, the editor of the Austrian daily *Kurier*, from 11 September 1973, SWA, I.I., File "Buczacz".

38 See for instance: Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 73.

39 Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 108 (and similarly on 193).

This dimension of Wiesenthal's interest is also, to some extent, traceable through his traversal of the Nazi killing fields in Eastern and Central Europe. In a much later TV interview, Wiesenthal stood in his office with the map of the Nazi concentration camp 'universe' behind him – a map that he saw every day – and he traced with his finger his own traversal of that universe.⁴⁰ His experiences on this trip also made their mark on Wiesenthal's project. A strong focus on Nazi criminals active in the Płaszów concentration camp near Cracow, where he spent a period in the autumn of 1944 during the evacuation westwards of the remnants of the Eastern European concentration camp system, is for instance evident in his project.⁴¹ The Nazi criminals of his last station, Mauthausen, were also accorded special attention, especially during the early years.⁴²

I would argue that the moving image of Wiesenthal running his finger over the map of the Nazi concentration camp system constitutes a glimpse into Wiesenthal's own memory work, which he conducted practically throughout his life. He often repeated the story, with some relish, that his wife Cyla, probably with some desperation, once commented: "I am not married to a man. I am married to thousands, or maybe millions of dead."⁴³ Wiesenthal's archive may be viewed as an extension of his own memory of the Holocaust. The documentation he collected there began in his own experience and extended outwards through the many testimonies he collected, the many witnesses he heard or corresponded with over the decades, and the documentation gathered from the Nazi authorities, through which he viewed the same events from the other side, gradually extending into an aggregated memory. Discernible in his own writings, as well as in reports of people who met him or worked in his Documentation Centre for longer or shorter periods, is a picture of how Wiesenthal lived in a universe of memories documented in his archive. It shows how he spent days rummaging through old files, linking together old and new information, to divulge how sessions with witnesses/victims turned into crying parties, when the memories they both recalled merged in a common memory of unspeakable events that had irrevocably shaped their lives.⁴⁴ Just as was demonstrated through the memory feat of taking down a surprisingly reliable list of 91 Nazi criminals from memory in 1945, Wiesenthal seems to have kept a large amount of the information he gathered over the years in his memory, with the help of certain memory devices, foremost his archive, but also the map on his wall, which he could resort to when his memory could not handle the mass of information. Tom Segev viewed this as the tragedy of Wiesenthal's life: that he remained chained to the Holocaust for the

40 See: *I Have Never Forgotten You*, Chapter 2, 24:00.

41 For instance, there are files on the camp commander Amon Göth and the camp medical doctor Karl Babor in Wiesenthal's archive, SWA, I.1. Wiesenthal's original "Mauthausen list" had a strong focus on the Płaszów camp. Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 85. According to Wiesenthal, he had been examined by Dr. Babor in Płaszów and had first-hand experience of his crimes, which he made into one of his most penetrating published case files. See: Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 225-237; Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 85-86, and Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 108.

42 See for instance: Sporrer/Steiner, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 65. There is also a fairly large "Mauthausen" file in SWA, I.1., but most of Wiesenthal's material in connection with this early preoccupation with the crimes committed in the Mauthausen concentration camp lies in the Linz archive, YVA/SWC/JHDCL/M.9.

43 See for instance: Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 93, and *Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp*, 126.

44 See for instance: Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*, 38-39; Wiesenthal, *The Murderers are Among Us*, 6-7; *Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp*, 76; Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 3, 85; and Sporrer/Steiner, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 20, 65. See also the literary rendering of such a meeting of victims of the Holocaust in *Simon Wiesenthal, Max und Helen. Ein Tatsachenroman*, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin 1981 (particularly the long nighttime talk between "Wiesenthal" and "Max" about the events they experienced).

rest of his life.⁴⁵ I would suggest that it is possible to view the matter in a more positive light, although there clearly was a price to pay for using oneself as a ‘memory amplifier’, as Wiesenthal undoubtedly did.

The several trials on Nazi crimes perpetrated in Galicia and especially in Lemberg in which Wiesenthal was involved as a researcher or witness may be viewed as a focal point for discerning this quality of Wiesenthal’s endeavour. The trials of Nazi crimes committed in Lemberg, the place where Wiesenthal and his wife and mother experienced the onslaught of the Nazi murder machinery in the years 1941–1944, are especially interesting.⁴⁶ In the mid-1960s, during one of these trials, Wiesenthal was working on his second autobiographical book, *The Murderers Among Us*. Here, he expressed great expectations of this trial as a main opportunity to work through the Nazi crime complex that he had experienced first-hand. He even viewed it as an important follow-up to the Eichmann trial a few years before and hoped that this trial also would help to keep the events of the Holocaust alive in public memory. As in so many other cases, the outcome of the trial did not meet Wiesenthal’s expectations. However, the most interesting part is how Wiesenthal so close to the trial recounted his experience of acting as a witness at this specific trial. In his book, he related what he told the judges about the quality of his testimony:

“I couldn’t make a mistake about a major crime that I’ve seen with my own eyes [...]. When one sees a friend killed before his own eyes he doesn’t forget it. But I wouldn’t be so sure when minor details are concerned. In such cases I cannot always distinguish between what I’ve seen myself and what I’ve heard from others who were also there, and it is possible that their stories fuse with my own memories.”⁴⁷

In the mass of documents and testimonies lying in the archive of Wiesenthal’s early Documentation Centre in Linz, there are also a few testimonies labelled “collective testimony”.⁴⁸ They constitute written group testimonies about Nazi atrocities that occurred at a certain location and a certain point in time, and are co-signed by several witnesses. These testimonies give an ‘aggregated’ picture about a certain event or chain of events, a context within which individual testimonies can be assessed. Turning the other way, one can also see that such a collective testimony is a step on the way to aggregated forms of memory, the social memory of a group (for instance Holocaust survivors from Lemberg), and can eventually merge into the collective memory of a society. When Wiesenthal said that he may have “fused” other’s “stories” with his “own memory” while giving testimony, this seems to me to be a very good description of Wiesenthal’s larger project of collecting testimonies, integrating them in his own self, and making them known publicly through different

45 Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 404. Segev elaborated on this tragedy of Wiesenthal’s life in an interview in the Austrian daily *Der Standard*, 7 September 2010, 6, saying that Wiesenthal “war ein völliger Sklave der Vergangenheit”.

46 On Wiesenthal’s involvement in trials concerning Nazi crimes in Lemberg, see for instance: Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 257, 272–274; Sporrer/Steiner, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 36–38; and Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, 76–77. See also the files labelled “Lemberg” and “Galicia” in SWA, I.1. The “Lemberg” file is one of the single largest files in the entire archive, containing both material in connection with Nazi crime trials as well as material having to do with commemoration of the events that took place there (see Files: “Lemberg 01–15”). Wiesenthal’s mother was taken away on 23 August 1942 and most probably murdered at Belzec shortly afterwards. Cyla was able to leave Lemberg in 1943 and hide out in Warsaw but later ended up again in a Nazi forced labour camp until the end of the war. Wiesenthal himself remained in Lemberg and its vicinity until the summer of 1944, when he was ‘evacuated’ westwards together with the small remainder of prisoners in the Janowska camp.

47 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 257. He told this story many times later, with some variation of emphasis. See also: Simon Wiesenthal im Gespräch mit Guido Knopp, 76–77.

48 See for instance: YVA/SWC/JHDCL/M.9-788.

media. When he said that he was in some cases influenced by what he heard from others who were also there, he seemed to already have been in the process of embedding his own testimony in a mass of testimonies, which together authenticate and give weight to the individual testimony in the way suggested by Ricœur (if you don't believe me, ask someone else who was also there). Indeed, I would like to suggest that Wiesenthal's endeavour, viewed from a certain angle, may be understood as giving collective testimony of the events of the Holocaust.

Wiesenthal's testimony was given in many different media, which placed different formal demands on the narrative form of the testimony. Wiesenthal recognised from an early stage that the immensity of the crimes of Nazism made real retribution impossible. Instead, he settled for a pragmatic programme: It was important to keep bringing Nazi criminals to justice for two reasons, he often repeated. First, in order to keep the memory of these events alive in the public and for coming generations, and second, in order to make the remaining free Nazi criminals feel that they would never be safe from ultimate retribution – and ultimately as a warning to future murderers.⁴⁹ For these reasons, Nazi criminal trials remained at the top of Wiesenthal's list of 'public work' for his cause of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.⁵⁰ Indeed, after the Eichmann trial, his main aim was to arrange a "second Eichmann trial", meaning another trial that would receive a lot of public attention and further his dual aim. The trial on Nazi crimes in Lemberg mentioned above was only one of several cases he worked on during the 1960s that he hoped would become a "second Eichmann trial".⁵¹

A second form of public work was the recurring press conferences Wiesenthal held, often with the intention of pushing judicial authorities or politicians into acting on a certain case, but, as often, with the wider aim of spreading knowledge of the crimes of Nazism and the Holocaust among the public. In this category of public work, one could also include the many 'campaigns' Wiesenthal orchestrated throughout his career, for instance sending out mass letters to followers asking them to put pressure on decision makers, while simultaneously publishing campaign brochures consisting of a selection of the letters, or himself sending mass letters directly to decision makers of a certain type. As Chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky became the target of the first sub-type in 1970 and 1975 respectively regarding the issue of the Nazi background of his ministers or designated coalition partners. Elected politicians both in Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany became targets of the second sub-type regarding the issue of lifting the statute of limitations for murder in 1964–1966, 1969, and 1979, in order to ensure that Nazi crimes could still be prosecuted after these dates. The presentation of the *Austrian Memorandum* in 1966

49 See: Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 110; Sporrer/Steiner, Simon Wiesenthal, 147-148; and Pick, Simon Wiesenthal, 8-9.

50 I have tentatively identified five forms of public work in Wiesenthal's project: 1) Nazi criminal trials 2) public campaigns and press conferences, 3) literary work, 4) films, and 5) public commemoration. I will address the first three here.

51 Wiesenthal himself highlighted the case of Hermann Höfle, SS-Gruppenführer Odilo Globocnik's chief of staff in the SS and Police District of Lublin, as his designated "second Eichmann trial". Höfle had a key role in the coordination of 'Operation Reinhard'. He committed suicide in his cell before the trial against him started. See: Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*, 336-342. The closest that Wiesenthal ever came to a "second Eichmann trial" was probably the extradition from Brazil and sentencing in Germany of Franz Stangl in 1967–1969. Stangl had been one of the main operatives in 'Operation Reinhard' as commander of the extermination camps at Sobibor and Treblinka. On Wiesenthal's work on this case, see: Pick, Simon Wiesenthal, 178-185. On Stangl, see also the classic work that can, indirectly, be viewed as part of the 'public effect' of Wiesenthal's search for Stangl, Gitta Sereny, *Into that Darkness. From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder*, London 1974.

to the Austrian chancellor was an important example of Wiesenthal's many actions of this general type.⁵²

Wiesenthal's enlistment of a large number of public intellectuals and statesmen in his *Sunflower* project, which in literary form raised the basic moral question of the possibility of forgiving crimes such as those committed by the Nazis, constitutes the bridge to the third form of public work:⁵³ the representation of his collective testimony in literary form. He wrote two types of books, which are however much more closely related than they may appear.⁵⁴ The first type consists of his three main autobiographical books, the main content of which is his own public life story and case stories from his work in finding Nazi criminals, namely *Ich jagte Eichmann* (1961), *The Murderers Among Us* (1967), and *Recht, nicht Rache* (1988). While the first of these was written by Wiesenthal himself and is a very illuminating document for understanding Wiesenthal's motivations and the origins of his work, the two latter books turn more in the direction of storytelling, recounting a number of the most important case files of his career inside a loose frame of his own life story. The latter are in both cases presented by the editor of the respective book, in the first case Joseph Wechsberg and in the second Peter Michael Lingens. In the foreword to *Recht, nicht Rache*, which is subtitled "Erinnerungen", Wiesenthal explicates how he wanted most of all to document all of the many hundred case files he had worked upon over the years. However, as this was impractical in book format, he had instead settled for a selection of "exemplary" cases.⁵⁵ It was surely very difficult for Wiesenthal to restrain himself and to choose a selection of memories out of the overflowing 'collective memory' he was carrying around within himself by this time. Nevertheless, his choice of exemplary cases may be understood as a distillation of a small number of symbolic narratives from the mass of testimonies to carry his collective testimony and to throw light upon different aspects of the crimes that he did not want the world to forget about.

The second type of book Wiesenthal wrote within this form of public work consisted of his "Tatsachenromane". In these books, one can observe how the process of modulating personal experience and testimonies collected into symbolic narratives was quickened by literary freedom.⁵⁶ Not that Wiesenthal invented much in his stories. With a familiarity of Wiesenthal's writings and life story, one can easily see how much he drew from his own experience. These books are to differing degrees and in different ways fictive works about the experience of the Holocaust as seen from various perspec-

52 This is a huge subject. For some reflections, see: Pick, Simon Wiesenthal, 164-167, 207-211; Sporrer/Steiner, Simon Wiesenthal, 152-167; and Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 189-193. See also: SWA, I.I., Files "Verjährung 01-16", and Simon Wiesenthal (ed.), *Verjährung? 200 Persönlichkeiten des öffentlichen Lebens sagen Nein. Eine Dokumentation*, Frankfurt am Main 1965. Specifically on the Kreisky issue, see: Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 241-254, 272-291; Pick, Simon Wiesenthal, 246-272; Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*, 354-374; and Wiesenthal's campaign brochure: Wladyslaw Grabowski (ed.), *Angriff auf das Dokumentationszentrum des BJVN und die Reaktion aus aller Welt*, Vienna 1970. Material on this affair and the subsequent public conflict between Wiesenthal and Kreisky in 1975 can be found in SWA, I.I., Files "Kreisky 01-08" and "Peter 01-08", as well as in the Bruno Kreisky Archiv, Nachlass Bruno Kreisky, I.4 "Gerichtsakten", boxes 9-14 (previously labelled "Wiesenthal I-VI").

53 See: Simon Wiesenthal, *Die Sonnenblume. Von Schuld und Vergebung*, Hamburg 1970. The book was published in numerous languages and editions. See: Hofbauer, *Simon Wiesenthal als Publizist*, 156-163, and Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 76-80.

54 See: Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 217-228; Hofbauer, *Simon Wiesenthal als Publizist*, passim; Irene Etzersdorfer, *James Bond oder Don Quichotte. Simon Wiesenthals Kampf gegen Lüge und Verdrängung*, Vienna 1992, 143-163.

55 Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*, 7.

56 The most probing treatment of Wiesenthal's fictional works that I have come across is Etzersdorfer, *James Bond*, 143-163. See especially the reflections on 151-152. See also: Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 226-228.

tives and mixed with historic/didactic matter.⁵⁷ In *Kryzstyna oder die Tragödie des polnischen Widerstandes* (1986), Wiesenthal interlaced his fictive story about a Christian Polish woman working (and dying) for the Polish resistance with whole chapters of historical prose giving the factual background to the events depicted in the novel proper. However, the fictive story of the novel also turned out to have a real background in a testimony Wiesenthal received in connection with a trial he was involved in many years before he wrote the book. In *Max und Helen* (1981), in which the fictive and factual elements of the narrative are more integrated, one of the (fictive) characters is named “Wiesenthal” and is a famous “Nazi hunter”. This story, which has great moral depth, also appears to be drawn from a case file that Wiesenthal could never close due to the extremely delicate interlacing in the case between Jews and Nazis, who had been closely involved with one another inside the power hierarchies of the Nazi murder machinery and who survived and built up new lives in post-war Europe.

In many ways, it does not seem very fruitful to treat these two genres of books in Wiesenthal’s oeuvre separately, since both tell symbolic narratives about the Holocaust and make a case for including these narratives in the collective memory of post-war Europe. Wiesenthal had already contributed to giving collective testimony of the events of the Holocaust in the courts of Germany and Austria when he worked on his cases. Yet in these instances, the medium demanded sticking close to the facts of the cases. In his literary works, Wiesenthal was liberated from such constraints and could tell his symbolic stories in a more freehanded way – albeit with a gradual shift from his autobiographical works to his works of fiction. However, that Wiesenthal did not manage to keep his stories straight has been a recurring point of criticism. One of his biographers, Tom Segev, has grappled closely with the issue of the relative unreliability of Wiesenthal’s stories of his own life and actions. In his biography, Segev himself often questioned Wiesenthal’s own story of his life in a way that resembles critics who have tried to prove that Wiesenthal was a fake and a liar.⁵⁸ However, in several interviews that Segev gave following the publication of his biography in 2010, he professed to having worked through so many of the different narratives Wiesenthal gave of his life and of different case histories that he had come to the conclusion that Wiesenthal did not lie or consciously distort his life story.⁵⁹ Even if Segev found many factual mistakes and stories that were varied continuously, sometimes apparently adapted to the current forum of their delivery, he nevertheless concluded that Wiesenthal’s stories were essentially true. He moreover came to the very interesting conclusion that:

“The list of lies is long and is in the book [Segev’s biography]. But he is not a liar. A liar is someone who reaps benefits from his lies. Wiesenthal believed that what he said was true. He adopts events and stories and insists that they are his.”⁶⁰

57 Wiesenthal, *Max und Helen*. Ein Tatsachenroman, Berlin 1981, Simon Wiesenthal, *Kryzstyna oder die Tragödie des polnischen Widerstandes*, Munich 1986, and Simon Wiesenthal, *Flucht vor dem Schicksal*, Munich 1988. They were all published in several languages and in many different countries. See: Hofbauer, Simon Wiesenthal als Publizist, 151-155, 168-178.

58 There are several such works, one of the most prominent being Eli M. Rosenbaum (with William Hoffer), *Betrayal. The Untold Story of the Kurt Waldheim Investigation and Cover-Up*, New York 1993. Wiesenthal generated conflict and repeatedly garnered negative attention from people he had offended. Eli Rosenbaum wrote his book in anger over Wiesenthal’s failure to support the international campaign against Kurt Waldheim. Segev’s purpose is, however, clearly critically historical.

59 See the interviews in the Austrian daily *Der Standard*, 7 September 2010, 6, and in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, 8 September 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5111271> (25 October 2019).

60 Cited in Dalia Karpel, *Hunting Simon Wiesenthal*. Review of Tom Segev, Simon Wiesenthal. *The Life and Legends*, including an interview with the author, in *Haaretz*, 8 September 2010.

However, I would not use the word “lie” to describe the continuous variation through which Wiesenthal elaborated his symbolic narratives. I would say that this was a form that evolved due to the overarching character of Wiesenthal’s project of giving collective testimony. When he wove his own experience into the testimonies of others, he also affected his own individual testimony and memory by fusing it with other experiences. As long as he could keep the format of each specific medium that a given story was expressed in, this was not a problem. Nevertheless, I think Segev may be wrong on at least one count in the above quote: Wiesenthal may not have reaped any benefit from his “lies” in any conventional sense, but his collective testimony did. In his judicial work, Wiesenthal was always meticulous in following the rules of the game, because there was no benefit in enhancing stories in court. In his recollection of the Lemberg trial, Wiesenthal asserted that the judges were impressed by his reasoning about the quality of his testimony, that they appreciated the separation he made between things that he was absolutely sure of and others where he was unsure whether they were self-experienced or stemmed from another testimony of the same event. He asserted that this led his testimony to be assessed as more reliable.⁶¹ In the fictional narratives, on the other hand, there was a benefit in enhancing stories and fusing his own memories with the testimonies of others and with documentation found in archives or in court cases. This was also completely unproblematic in that medium. Where it became problematic was in his autobiographical narratives and in other public representations of his life story, in which he sometimes (as Segev persuasively documented) let the narrative character of his collective testimony take precedence over its factual accuracy.

Conclusion

In a sense, Wiesenthal embodied the process of memory as described by Ricœur. When Wiesenthal took upon himself the task of giving collective testimony, as I have discussed here, he transferred into his own self the process of memory. It ranged from his own personal memory, through giving testimony and assembling and fusing his testimony with other testimonies into a collective testimony – an endeavour that was supported and extended through the documentation he had collected in his archive – to, finally, attempting to make this collective testimony run into and shape collective memory.

As noted above, Ricœur observed how a testimony may return to haunt the historiographical process in its later stage of ‘representation’, maintaining itself on the margins of the historiographical process, even throwing doubt upon its intentions of being truthful. He further elaborated this aspect, noting that “the testimonies of those who survived the extermination camps of the Shoah” tend to provoke “a kind of short-circuit” of the historiographical process, leading the testimony, in its core unassimilated to critical documentation and models of explanation/understanding, straight into the phase of representation, causing a veritable crisis of historical understanding.⁶² However, Botz has taught us to see that Wiesenthal did indeed make a real and extremely well informed historiographical effort to dress his findings in a

⁶¹ See note 47.

⁶² See: Ricœur, *Memory*, 161, 163-166, 175-181, and 497-498. Ricœur developed this line of thought while reflecting on the debate on the Holocaust and “the limits of representation” published in Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the “Final Solution”*, Cambridge, MA 1992. See: Ricœur, *Memory*, 248-261.

model of explanation/understanding. It is conceivable that Wiesenthal's thesis of the guilt of Austrians in the Holocaust – presented in the *Austrian Memorandum* in 1966 – was rejected by the historical profession in Austria precisely because it was taken as a questioning of the profession's intentions of being truthful. Whatever the case may be, Botz demonstrated that the Austrian historical profession in the 1960s (and for at least another two decades) was spectacularly poorly equipped to receive this attempt at historical explanation/understanding and to assimilate it into a critical scholarly discussion. Therefore, I suggest, the powerful, historiographically invested form in which Wiesenthal's collective testimony was presented in the *Austrian Memorandum* merely served to amplify the alienating effect that Ricœur identified. It led an extremely strong current of testimony, like a bolt out of the past, straight into the political centre of Austria, and through the public presentation of the memorandum and the public response and debate that ensued, further into Austrian collective memory.

Concerning the effects of Wiesenthal's action on collective memory, it is useful to turn to Ricœur's argument that "sensus communis" is an important part of the process of assimilating a testimony into collective memory. For acceptance, it is important that the testimony can be placed within a collective frame of reference, a commonly recognised past. For instance, a testimony needs to be divested of its 'foreignness' in order to be accepted; there must be a possibility of identification of the members of the community concerned with the testimony.⁶³ That Austrian collective memory was not yet ready to accept Wiesenthal's collective testimony became apparent some years later. In 1975, Wiesenthal orchestrated yet another of his many public campaigns, making public that Friedrich Peter, the leader of the small far-right Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), who was the designated coalition partner to social democratic Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, had been a member of an SS-Einsatzgruppe on the eastern front during the Second World War and had most probably partaken in the murderous activities of that unit. As usual, Wiesenthal went about things in a thorough manner, making contact with the President of Austria, Rudolf Kirchschläger, holding a press conference, giving interviews, and organising yet another mail campaign targeting Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky. The escalation of the conflict was not only Wiesenthal's fault, as Kreisky reacted furiously, among many other things publicly letting Wiesenthal know that – I am now dressing Kreisky's words in Ricœur's language – "You say we should believe you, because you were there. I don't believe you, because I have spoken to others who were there, and they say you were a Gestapo agent."⁶⁴ Kreisky (on very weak grounds) harshly rejected Wiesenthal's collective testimony. In an opinion poll taken in Austria at the time, 83 per cent of the respondents answered that they

63 Ricœur, *Memory*, 165-166, footnote 24 on 530-531, and 175-176. Ricœur mainly considered the quality of foreignness of Holocaust testimonies in themselves, but I believe one can turn this issue around and consider it in terms of the conditioning of a collective memory making it unable to assimilate even a factually based and well-argued presentation of a (collective) testimony. The foreignness would in that case emanate more from the conditioning of the collective memory than from the quality of the testimony. Ricœur did also look into this aspect, discussing it as a case of "manipulated memory" (Ricœur, *Memory*, 80-86, 448-452), where political institutions present an official history, which is "publicly learned and celebrated", here 85. For instance, I believe this to be case with Wiesenthal's testimony and Austrian collective memory during the post-war era, which is an issue at the heart of my ongoing investigation into the subject of history and memory in the Second Austrian Republic.

64 On the conflict between Wiesenthal and Kreisky in 1975, see: Ingrid Böhler, "Wenn die Juden ein Volk sind, so ist es ein mieses Volk". Die Kreisky-Peter-Wiesenthal-Affäre 1975, in: Michael Gehler/Hubert Sickinger (ed.), *Politische Skandale und Affären in Österreich. Von Mayerling bis Waldheim*, Vienna 1995, 502-531, as well as the references in footnote 52 above.

believed Kreisky, while only three per cent answered that they believed Wiesenthal.⁶⁵

Wiesenthal later wrote that the following six weeks were the worst in his life since the end of the war, that he felt that he was being treated like a leper by the Austrian public, and that he was considering emigrating from “his new Heimat”.⁶⁶ The long-term effect of this public conflict was in practical terms to put an end to Wiesenthal’s commitment to his cause within Austria.⁶⁷ Instead, he focussed on spreading his collective testimony internationally, where he was highly visible and received numerous awards and honorary doctorates for his work during the 1970s and 1980s. The first official recognition Wiesenthal received in Austria came when he was awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna in 1989. At the ceremony, the Chancellor of Austria Franz Vranitzky held a speech in which he focussed on Wiesenthal’s work during the preceding decades as a crucial endeavour in the creation of a future Austrian collective identity, building on a true recognition of Austria’s past.⁶⁸ Vranitzky’s appraisal of the importance of such recognition appears to have reached its completion two years later, when he made the important public admission in parliament of the guilt of many Austrians for the crimes of Nazism and specifically those of the Holocaust.⁶⁹ In the 1990s, Wiesenthal was even given official support for his initiative of building a Holocaust memorial at a central location in Vienna. In October 2000, only a few years before his death, he held a speech at the unveiling of this memorial, the design and placing of which he had closely monitored and defended in public.⁷⁰ Except for when he spoke, Wiesenthal needed to sit throughout the ceremony, too old and fragile to stand for a prolonged period. On one of the pictures taken, the President of Austria Thomas Klestil is standing behind Wiesenthal’s chair, like a guard of honour.⁷¹ In his last years, Wiesenthal’s collective testimony was indeed received and accepted with great acclaim by official Austria, and this recognition is set in stone at the Judenplatz in Vienna. However, its acceptance as part of Austrian collective memory is still an undecided issue.

65 See the interview with Peter Michael Lings in *I Have Never Forgotten You*, Chapter 5, 65:00.

66 Wiesenthal, *Recht, nicht Rache*, 366.

67 I believe this is physically visible in the Simon Wiesenthal Archive, where the files dealing with his project of having his testimony spread and received in the Austrian public reveals a curious gap in the years 1976–1986. See: SWA, I.I., Files “Österreich 01-06”.

68 See: Eva Choung-Fux (ed.), *Vergessen gibt es nicht. Eine Dokumentation der Akademischen Feier am 27. April 1989 in der Säulenhalle des Österreichischen Museums für angewandte Kunst anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrenmitgliedschaft der Hochschule für angewandte Kunst in Wien an Simon Wiesenthal*, Vienna 1989, 33–35.

69 See: Stenographisches Protokoll. 35. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich. XVIII. Gesetzgebungsperiode. Montag, 8. 7. 1991, 3279–3283. Pick, Simon Wiesenthal, 311–312, quotes a letter from Vranitzky to Wiesenthal saying that his “numerous useful discussions” with Wiesenthal had contributed to the government’s new posture and the declaration of Austrian responsibility for the events of the Holocaust.

70 See: Simon Wiesenthal (ed.), *Projekt: Judenplatz Wien. Zur Konstruktion von Erinnerung*, Vienna 2000. See also the traces of Wiesenthal’s endeavours to realise the memorial in SWA, II., C-II.1-3.

71 See the photographs of the ceremony in SWA, II., C-II.2.

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Article

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Continuity and Change in the Vienna Police Force, 1914–1945

Part I

Abstract

In 1914, before the First World War, the Austrian state police and military intelligence created a new type of imperial surveillance system in the Habsburg Monarchy to track spies. In 1938, after the Nazi take-over of Austria, the Gestapo took control of the state police and also reshaped the *Kriminalpolizei* and *Sicherheitswache* to suit Nazi policy. Were there elements in preventative policing under the Habsburg Empire and later political systems that made it easier for the Nazis to reshape the police? Or were the crimes committed by the Viennese police under Nazism only possible because of Nazi restructuring and ideology? Instead of a straight-line progression or a sudden Nazi radicalisation, this paper argues that four different political systems required new policies, while the force itself struggled with internal problems at certain points. However, since the police is a social and cultural institution, there were also prejudices and investigative practices that persisted across eras. Part I of this study traces transformations in the police from 1914 to 1934, while Part II, which will be published in the next issue of S.I.M.O.N., will cover Austrofascism and Nazism.

During four different political systems – the Habsburg imperial system during the First World War, the First Austrian Republic, the interwar Austro-fascist state, and National Socialism – the Viennese police held a variety of attitudes toward the state, acting variously as a defender, an ambiguous rival, or, in the context of the Nazi police state, as a partly autonomous power centre. Despite these changing political contexts and positions toward the state, certain mentalities and practices within the Viennese police remained. The police adapted the concepts of “quiet, order, and security” to suit each era. They expanded the hierarchy of “politically suspicious” people and “state enemies” with new categories. Their methods of determining a political subject’s reliability through background checks and interviews were consistently applied. The transformation of the police force in the Nazi era was not simply a matter of “radicalisation” and the increased use of violent force. Pre-existing Austrian prejudices concerning communists, Slavs, and Jews coloured the worldviews of Viennese police who engaged in political persecution and mass deportation in Nazi-occupied Europe. This was not merely imposed by the German Nazi system, but partly stemmed from Austrian culture and from Austrian police praxis.

This paper takes a novel approach to the question of continuities and ruptures by covering four historical eras, rather than just one or two, as other studies have done. It critically evaluates grave abuses of power, which are often overlooked in the broad

works written by police officials.¹ Methodologically, I have analysed criminal cases, police reports, and protocols of meetings,² reconstructed chronologies, and applied “source criticism”. I also present certain insights from two broader prosopographical/collective biographical studies of the Viennese *Sicherheitswache* (the regular police) and Viennese *Kriminalbeamte* (officials and detectives), which I hope to publish at a future point.³

My analysis draws on the insights of scholars who have covered specific periods relevant to this topic. For example, Donald Emerson⁴ showed how the political police in the Habsburg Empire between 1815 and 1830 clamped down on German, Italian, and Polish nationalism through surveillance and censorship; the political police’s distrust of liberal nationalism became a feature of its surveillance in later stages of the empire. Ulrike Wetz explained how frequently the political authorities between 1848 and the 1870s changed who controlled the police, displaying a pendulum-like movement between absolutism and civilian control – though certainly not with equal time on each side.⁵ Gerhard Jagschitz analysed the history of the *Politische Zentralevidenzstelle der Bundespolizeidirektion Wien*, an office within the Vienna Police Directorate that kept extensive records and reports on “suspicious persons”. He noted that this project began as a cooperative effort between military intelligence and the political police in 1914, in the wake of the discovery that Colonel Alfred Redl, the head of military intelligence, was a Russian spy. Jagschitz concentrated on the later history of this central repository of politically “suspicious people” during the First Republic, when Police President Johannes Schober wanted to create a “non-political” political police that could serve the republic, protecting it against internal and external enemies.⁶ (In a separate article, I covered some of the main aspects of the surveillance system during the First World War, showing that it was created to prevent sabotage but actually became a broader instrument to expel and intern members of non-dominant nationalities.)⁷ Christiane Rothländer, in her detailed study of the early history of the Viennese SS, thoroughly illustrated cases where the Viennese police in the early 1930s did not strongly intervene to stop SS violence on

1 See: Anton Walitschek, *Die Entwicklung der Polizei-Organisation und des Polizeirechtes in Österreich von 1850 bis 1930*, in: Hermann Oberhummer (ed.), *Die Wiener Polizei. Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sicherheitswesens in den Ländern der ehemaligen österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, Vienna 1938, 259-323, and Engelbert Steinwender, *Von der Stadtguardia zur Sicherheitswache. Wiener Polizeiwache und ihre Zeit. Ständestaat, Großdeutsches Reich, Besatzungszeit*, 2 vols., Graz 1992. Walitschek was a police official who served during the republican, Austrofascist, Nazi, and post-war periods. His contribution, written after the police suppression of the Social Democratic movement and the Justizpalast fire in 1927, shows authoritarian tendencies; it is not neutral. Steinwender’s work contains useful information, though he has little archival material on the First World War, is too sympathetic toward the July putschists of 1934, and does not deal with the roles that Viennese policemen played in the ‘Third Reich’. He sticks to the narrative of a police force ‘taken over’ by Nazi Germany, rather than one whose members adapted to the regime.

2 These come from the state police files of the Archiv der Landespolizeidirektion Wien (LPDW), records in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (OeStA) and the Croatian National Archives, documents in the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW), and records of the Landesgericht für Strafsachen and of the Volksgerichte in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA). Specific collections are cited in the footnotes below.

3 In this paper, I have used some of this material drawn from the LPDW and the files of the Kriminalbeamtenreferat in WStLA, 2.5.1.8 A1, Personalakten Kriminalbeamte.

4 Donald E. Emerson, *Metternich and the Political Police. Security and Subversion in the Habsburg Monarchy (1815–1830)*, The Hague 1968.

5 Ulrike Wetz, *Geschichte der Wiener Polizei-Direktion vom Jahre 1945 bis zum Jahre 1955 mit Berücksichtigung der Zeit vor 1945*, (Dissertation), Vienna 1971, 30-56.

6 Gerhard Jagschitz, *Die politische Zentralevidenzstelle der Bundespolizeidirektion Wien. Ein Beitrag zur Rolle der politischen Polizei in der ersten Republik*, in: *Jahrbuch für Zeitgeschichte* (1978), 49-95.

7 Mark Lewis, *The Failed Quest for Total Surveillance. The Internal Security Service in Austria-Hungary during World War I*, in: Judith Devlin/Maria Falina/John Paul Newman (ed.), *World War I in Central and Eastern Europe. Politics, Conflict and Military Experience*, London 2018, 19-41.

the street, nor did detectives thoroughly investigate Nazi acts of terrorism.⁸ Her evidence indicates that certain high-level police officials and detectives at the lower level were sympathetic to Nazism or were Nazis themselves. Emmerich Tálos' survey of the Austrofascist system of rule between 1933 and 1938 argued that several important aspects of police centralisation and expansion occurred in 1929 in the wake of the *Justizpalast* fire of 1927 and the Christian Socials' fear of the *Republikanische Schutzbund*, the paramilitary organisation of the Social Democrats. The 1934 constitution confirmed these changes, while new Security Directors gained new powers to send persons to detention facilities if they believe they threatened public order – without needing to prove this to a court first.⁹

Scholarship on the Viennese Gestapo has treated the organisation as an entity fully under the control of the Nazi state, examining its suppression of enemies of the state, its reliance on confidential informants, its use of torture, and its power to send political opponents, “racially inferior” people, and “workshy” individuals to concentration and death camps. For these reasons, historians have regarded the institution as a fundamental part of National Socialism, not as a transformation of the Austrian state police (which was formally dismantled by the Nazis). Thus, Wolfgang Neugebauer regarded the Gestapo as an integral part of the Nazi terror system, which successfully eliminated organised resistance groups, though there were exceptions in 1944/1945.¹⁰ Thomas Mang argued that Gestapo Chief Franz Josef Huber and Baldur von Schirach (the Gauleiter of Vienna) were the chief decision makers in the deportation of Viennese Jewry starting in 1941, not Adolf Eichmann and his *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Agency for Jewish Emigration). Mang contended that Schirach wanted to increase his standing with his party base by providing them with more housing in overcrowded Vienna, while the planning of the deportations must have emanated from the Gestapo, since Huber, as Inspector of the Security Police and Security Service, was several levels higher than Eichmann. Although Mang's argument is based more on a bureaucratic analysis of power flows and chains of command rather than on “smoking gun” documentary evidence, he tries to show that the idea that the Viennese deportations all stemmed from Eichmann, receiving orders from Berlin, was a convenient post-war ploy used by Huber and his deputy, Karl Ebner, to evade responsibility.¹¹

Still, the question of what remained of the Austrian state police in the Viennese Gestapo falls outside the parameters of Neugebauer and Mang's studies. Franz Weisz investigated this question, showing that Austrian Nazis in the police actually falsified records in their political background checks of Austrian policemen in 1938 in

8 During the Gauparteitag in October 1932, the police stated that they would protect Viennese Jews, but they failed to do so at the Café Sperlhof in the Leopoldstadt, where Nazis stormed the building where Jews were praying during Rosh Hashanah. After an SS teargas attack in the Gerngross department store in December 1932, one of the police officers involved in the investigation was a Nazi (Karl Prieler), as was the officer in charge of the house searches and interrogations (Franz Kamba). Christiane Rothländer, *Die Anfänge der Wiener SS*, Vienna 2012, 203-211, 281-287.

9 Emmerich Tálos, *Das austrofascistische Herrschaftssystem. Österreich 1933–1938*, Vienna 2013, 228-240.

10 These included Wehrmacht officers who successfully executed plans in Vienna to topple the Hitler government as part of the Stauffenberg conspiracy of 20 July 1944, and the activities of the cross-party O5 resistance organisation, although members of its Provisional Austrian National Committee were arrested in 1945. Wolfgang Neugebauer, *The Austrian Resistance, 1938–1945*, translated by John Nicholson and Eric Canepa, Vienna 2014, 34-38, 212-215, 217-219.

11 Thomas Mang, “Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien, mein Name ist Huber”. *Wer trug die lokale Verantwortung für den Mord an den Juden Wiens?*, Münster 2004, 70-106, 257-262.

order to keep a quantity of Austrians on the force.¹² What is not fully discussed is whether the intense anti-socialist and anti-communist stance of the police in the late First Republic and Austrofascist state provided a solid base for Nazi recruitment of higher police officials. That seems to have been the case with Karl Ebner, for example, who had already worked in surveillance of leftist movements in the General Directorate for Public Security and was then hired after March 1938 by the Gestapo to work in a department devoted to the repression of the churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Jews. Ebner had an additional credential: He was involved in Nazi activity during the "illegal period" – meaning the period from 1934 to 1938 when the Nazi Party was banned in Austria.¹³

Carston Dams and Michael Stolle observed that three groups comprised the Gestapo leadership: officials from the criminal police, who welcomed the restriction of constitutional limitations on police power, were motivated by anti-communism, but were "latecomers" to Nazism; legal administrators, who excelled in policy development and became the "fighting administration" in the Gestapo offices deployed to the occupied territories; and *Sicherheitsdienst* personnel who had no prior policing experience but were instrumental in setting the policies of racial persecution.¹⁴ These three groups appear in the Austrian context, though more research is needed about the lower levels of the Gestapo (such as the Criminal Assistants and the Criminal Secretaries) as well as the roles of the *Kriminalpolizei* and the former Viennese *Sicherheitswache* (renamed the *Schutzpolizei* under National Socialism.)¹⁵

The Defensive Intelligence Service during the First World War

The First World War has often been overlooked in the history of political policing in the Habsburg Empire, as well as in the general history of the police.¹⁶ In May 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the war, Major Maximilian Ronge (a General Staff officer in the Habsburg army in charge of the military intelligence office, called the *Evidenzbüro*), Edmund von Gayer (chief of the state police), Johannes Schober (at this time a police official in charge of the espionage department in the state police), and Gustav von Ilosvay (chief of the Hungarian border police) formed a new network of domestic intelligence offices across the Dual Monarchy, linking regular police, state

12 Franz Weisz, Umstellung der personalen Organisation der ehemaligen Österreichischen Polizei auf jene des Deutschen Reiches, in: Wiener Geschichtsblätter 50 (1995), 70-95; Franz Weisz, Die Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizeileitstelle Wien 1938–1945, Organisation, Arbeitsweise und personale Belange, (Dissertation), Vol. 4, Vienna 1991, 1366-1380.

13 WStLA, A1- Vr-Strafakten, Landesgericht für Strafsachen Wien (Volksgesicht), Vg 12 Vr 1223/47, Strafsache gegen Ebner, Karl, Band II, OrNr. 86, Hauptverhandlung, 3 (Blz. 61). See also: Mang, Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien, 191, who noted that Ebner joined an illegal Bezirksgruppe in July 1936 and joined SS-Standarte 89 in March 1937.

14 Carston Dams/Michael Stolle, The Gestapo. Power and Terror in the Third Reich, translated by Charlotte Ryland, Oxford 2014, 41-45.

15 Neugebauer, The Austrian Resistance, 41, affirmed that the *Kriminalpolizei* was part of the Nazi repressive system (a position with which I agree). Hans Safrian, Eichmann's Men, translated by Ute Stargardt, New York 2010, 118-121, 165, noted that Viennese *Schutzpolizisten* were the armed escorts for the deportation trains departing from Vienna and Salonika, Greece. On the role of Viennese *Schutzpolizisten* who participated in massacres of Jews in Galicia, see: Thomas Geldmacher, Wir als Wiener waren ja bei der Bevölkerung beliebt. Österreichische Schutzpolizisten und die Judenvernichtung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944, Vienna 2002.

16 Jens Jäger, Verfolgung durch Verwaltung. Internationales Verbrechen und internationale Polizeikooperation 1880–1933, Constance 2006, 16.

police, and military intelligence.¹⁷ Called the *Defensive Kundschaftsdienst*, it was designed to help police quickly track spies who had already been prosecuted, or persons suspected of being spies.¹⁸ In practice, it was also used to question and track national separatists, anarchists, communists, and persons who expressed anti-monarchical sentiments or criticised the Austro-Hungarian war effort. New elements to the system included the creation of four Central Bureaus that filed information about suspicious persons and issued search-and-arrest notifications to Main Bureaus. Domestic police and military intelligence also cooperated more closely than before.

However, the police were able to adapt several pre-existing systems to the new effort: They already had central filing systems for people with criminal records (*Zentralevidenz*) and lists of wanted suspects (*Fahndungsblätter*). Processes and forms were drawn up to record information about spies and all types of suspicious people, and each Central Office (located in Vienna, Budapest, Zagreb, and Sarajevo) stored these files. Police investigations relied on the pre-existing process of *Erhebung*, in which a person's background and political bearing (*Gesinnung*) were examined, not only whether the person had in fact committed a crime. Police were able to operate with great latitude because civil liberties were suspended during the war; the normal period of 48 hours of arrest was extended to eight days, and security authorities could conduct a house search without a judge's order.¹⁹ Subjects of the monarchy were jailed and sometimes sent to internment camps; this was mainly handled through police administrative processes, since civilian and military courts became backlogged with treason cases.²⁰

State police officials involved in the *Defensive Kundschaftsdienst* were part of the higher police bureaucracy, comprised of officials with backgrounds in law or administration. They were conservative monarchists, opposed to separatist movements led by Polish, Ruthenian, Czech, Italian, or other nationalists.²¹ In their view, the police's

17 Hrvatski Državni Arhiv [Croatian National Archives, Zagreb], Fond 79 [HR-HDA-79], Odjel za Unutarnje Poslove- Središnja defenzivna dojavna služba [UOZV-SDDS], Kut. 5687 (1), 9/1914, K.u.K. Chef des Generalstabes. K.Nr. 4444 von 1914, Protokoll über die Konferenz: "Schaffung der Zentral- und Hauptstellen für den defensiven Kundschaftsdienst" im Mai 1914.

18 For a more detailed study of the *Defensive Kundschaftsdienst*, see: Lewis, *The Failed Quest*. See also: Albert Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler. Österreich-Ungarns Geheimer Dienst im Weltkrieg*, Graz 1998, 258-302, 307-322. Pethö concentrated on the military's role in anti-espionage activities outside the empire rather than police investigations within it. He contended that the main domestic surveillance organisations were the *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* for the Austrian half of the empire and the *Kriegsüberwachungskommission* for the Hungarian half. He dated the foundation of the *Kundschaftsdienst* to April 1915, though the above-cited minutes show it was in May 1914. He was also unsure whether the organisation as a whole was effective, stating that detailed studies were needed to determine whether publishing broadsheets with suspected spies, disseminating information about enemy governments' espionage services, using fingerprinting in front areas, and attempting to draw the population into participating in surveillance were really effective. *Ibid.*, 261.

19 Alexander Koller (ed.), *Ausnahme-Gesetze und Verordnungen für den Kriegsfall*, Vienna 1914, 1-6.

20 In February 1917, the *Evidenzbüro* (military intelligence) of the k.k. General Staff made new recommendations to restrict types of treason and political cases that should be handled by military courts versus civilian courts. See: OeStA, *Kriegsarchiv*, AOK-Evidenzbüro, K. 3575, 1917, Evb 2063 1917, Referat über die am 5. Februar 1917 bei der 4. Abteilung des KM stattgefundenen Besprechung über die Konzentrierung der politischen und Spionageprozesse.

21 The extent to which these officials, collectively, were nationalists who supported their own linguistic group is subject to debate. After the First World War, Schober became Vienna's police president, headed the Greater German People's Party, a "middle-class coalition of seventeen nationalist splinter parties and organizations left over from the monarchy", and became chancellor in 1929. Bruce Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution. A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism*, Chapel Hill 1992, 182-183. The number two man in the Croatian branch of the defensive intelligence service in Zagreb, Artur Femen, became a Croatian provincial councilor after the war. Like other former Croatian civil servants, he took an oath of allegiance to the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in November 1918, and apparently the government did not know that he had worked in the main secret service bureau designed to counter Greater Serbian and South Slav ambitions. See: HR HDA 89, *Zbirka Personalija- BH: Femen, Artur*.

main tasks were to protect the dynasty, the institutions of the state, and the three crucial values of quiet, order, and security (*Ruhe, Ordnung und Sicherheit*). These concepts were defined in the 1850 decrees establishing the competency of the police in the Cisleithanian or Austrian half of the monarchy (*Vorschriften über den Wirkungskreis der k.k. Polizeibehörden*).²²

The state police investigated and tracked persons who belonged to non-German, non-Hungarian nationalities who allegedly wanted to break away from the empire or sympathised with enemy states fighting the empire. The targeting of particular nationalities generally occurred in stages as the war progressed, with particular events triggering the police and military to view these groups as suspicious or traitorous. Serbs with a “Greater Serbian” orientation had already been under suspicion since 1908, when Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this suspicion became acute after the Young Bosnians killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Habsburg throne, and the Austro-Hungarian military believed that Serbia’s volunteer defence organisation, *Narodna Odbrana*, formed an underground network of Serbs inside the empire.²³ Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia were also targeted if they had left the country to join the Serbian army.²⁴ Czechs were targeted for distributing the Russian Czar’s proclamation “To the Slavs” and other anti-Habsburg texts; scrutiny increased after Czech regiments fighting for Austria-Hungary were taken prisoner by the Russian army and some of them switched sides in December 1914.²⁵ Poles in Eastern Galicia who exhibited a pro-Russian orientation or favoured Polish independence were targeted following the dissolution of a Polish Legion in Eastern Galicia in 1914. The persecution of Polish nationalists in the Polish National Democratic Party continued in 1917/1918, because Minister President Ignaz von Seidler wanted to eliminate parliamentary opposition to the military budget.²⁶ Ruthenians had already been targeted in espionage trials in Galicia and Hungary prior to the war; this continued with the outbreak of the war on the grounds that they were pro-Russian, and even when treason and other charges were dropped in 1916, Ruthenians involved in cultural activities and politics were interned at a camp in Thalerhof.²⁷ In Vienna, the police targeted radical socialists at the end of worker strikes in

22 Wetz, *Geschichte der Wiener Polizei-Direktion vom Jahre 1945*, 18-19.

23 Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia’s Great War 1914–1918*, West Lafayette 2007, 5-6, 24; Mark Cornwall, *Traitors and the Meaning of Treason in Austria-Hungary’s Great War*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015), 127-128.

24 See the cases of Petar Dobrić and Milutin Basrak in HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Kut. 5714 (28), 4282/1916. Dobrić was from Croatian Karlovac and was allegedly a military deserter who then joined the Serbian army. Basrak, a teacher’s assistant in Bosnian Gradiška, fought as a Serbian komitadji (guerrilla) against the Austro-Hungarian army. He was captured in 1917 and sentenced by a district court in Zagreb for crimes against the military power and treason.

25 OeStA, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Ministerium des Innern, Präsidiale [AVA/MdI], Präsidium 22, K. 2049, Protokoll Nr. 3294, Z. 3832, Erzherzog Friedrich (Feldmarschall) K.u.k. Armeoberkommando to Standort des AOK, 23 December 1914, Op.Nr. 5581, Tschechische Legion; *ibid*, Memo to Minister President, 3.832/15, 16 February 1915, 28. The author was probably an official in the Ministry of Justice.

26 See the case of Jan Zamorski, OeStA/AVA/MdI, Präs., K. 2076, Präs. No. 8567 ex 1918/M.I. and Präs. No. 8905 ex 1918/M.I. For a more detailed explanation of this case, see: Mark Lewis, *From Spies to International Criminals. The Influence of the Austro-Hungarian Counter Espionage Service on the International Criminal Police Commission*, in: Mats Deland/Mark Klamberg/Pål Wrange (ed.), *International Humanitarian Law and Justice. Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, London 2018, 44-59.

27 Thirteen Ruthenes from Galicia were arrested in 1914 for supposedly spreading nationalist propaganda and working with the Russians. After the Habsburg military prosecutor dropped the treason case against them in 1916, he still ordered that they remain in detention. LPDW, 1915, Scha. St-13, 9593/914/15/K, Z. A 295/14, 13 April 1916.

January 1918, considering them to be “Bolsheviks” who wanted to imitate the Leninists in Russia and start a revolution.²⁸

Jewish organisations were also put under surveillance, though the police were more careful in assessing the actual aims of these organisations than the military, which sometimes assumed they were revolutionary Bolshevik organisations. For example, in February 1918, a “high [military] officer” with “connections to scholarly circles” in Vienna told the Ministerial Commission of the War Ministry that the Jewish organisation B’nai B’rith was allegedly connected to the Bolsheviks and wanted to overthrow the monarchy and create a Central European republic.²⁹ Referring to the major food shortages in Vienna, the officer said that B’nai B’rith was supposedly behind them, intending to aggravate the masses and drive them to revolution. A more level-headed police report noted that B’nai B’rith was a humanitarian organisation, founded in 1894, which enjoyed “the highest reputation” among the broad public, and whose leaders were not engaged in “unpatriotic activity”.³⁰ Still, at the urging of the Ministerial Commission, the police ordered the mail and telegraph authorities to send all the group’s correspondence to Schober.³¹ At the same time as these events, the authorities were on the alert for a Hungarian socialist who was allegedly going to receive two million roubles from the Bolsheviks in Stockholm and bring them to Austria-Hungary using an Entente currency.³² Supposedly, the Social Democrats were going to use the money for revolutionary propaganda. The Ministerial Commission inside the War Ministry wanted border control agents to strictly inspect all Jews crossing the border, since “the whole machination is being done in an international, Jewish way.”³³ The Hungarian Interior Ministry, concerned that the Austrian government had recently relaxed border controls in Austria, instructed its border agents that under “all possible pretexts, Jews heading to neutral foreign countries should be carefully watched and their departures should be hindered when possible.”³⁴ In response, the Austrian Interior Ministry told its provincial chiefs that they should be extremely careful when issuing passports for persons wishing to go to neutral countries and that they should only issue them to Jews “if they are completely unobjectionable from a state police point of view”. The Austrian Ministry repeated the claim that Bolshevik propaganda was being spread “in international Jewish ways” – propagating the myth that Jews were international Bolshevik conspirators.³⁵

The *Defensive Kundschaftsdienst* was a new partnership between civilian police and military intelligence, which developed an information bureaucracy across both

28 For example, police arrested a 17-year-old electrician named Friedrich Hermann for making a “provocative speech” in front of a workers’ house in Favoriten. OeStA/AVA/MdI, Präs. 22, K. 2074, Protokoll Nr. 2414 ex 1918/M.I., Pr.Z.52356/22 K., 21 January 1918. They also arrested a jurist named Rudolf Beer who spoke against ending the strike at a meeting of 3,000 workers at the Lembacher Gasthaus in the third district. Ibid, Pr.Z.52356/23 K., 21 January 1918. The next day, police again arrested persons there who spoke out against ending the strike, viewing them as radicals who were spreading treasonous ideas. Ibid, Pr.Z.52356/27 K., 22 January 1918.

29 LPDW, 1918, Scha. St.-17, 52537K, Memo from Ministerialkommission in k.u.k. Kriegministerium, filed by the K.K. Polizei-Direktion Präsidial-Bureau on 23 January 1918.

30 Ibid, Josef Auer (Polizeiagent), Meldung, 19 February 1918.

31 Ibid, Pr.Z. 52537/2K, Verband der israelitischen Humanitätsvereine “B’nai B’rith” [sic!]; Korrespondenz-überwachung, 24 March 1918.

32 This information came from the Habsburg ambassador in Copenhagen, who obtained it from a “relatively reliable, well informed” source. See: OeStA/AVA/MdI, Präs., K. 2074, Protokoll 2568 ex 1918/M.I., Meldung der kuk. Gesandtschaft in Kopenhagen, 26 January 1918 (Abschrift). The Hungarian socialist was allegedly Jakob Weltner, a trade unionist and delegate to the International Socialist Congresses of 1907 and 1910. G.D.H. Cole, *The Second International, 1889–1914*, Vol. 3, Part 3, *A History of Socialist Thought*, London 1963, 585.

33 OeStA/AVA/MdI, Präs., K. 2074, Protokoll 3619/M.I., 2 February 1918.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, “I. Alle Landeschefs.”

halves of the empire. In the eyes of its chiefs, it was a successful venture that prevented major acts of sabotage during the entire war, and, if the Dual Monarchy survived, the chiefs planned to retain the system for peacetime surveillance.³⁶ However, surveillance and arrests were not able to suppress nationalist activists working abroad, nor could they prevent the widespread exhaustion and hunger that took hold of Vienna in 1917/1918, which led to a loss of confidence in the legitimacy of the civilian bureaucracy and the Habsburg monarchy. Police surveillance and repression, therefore, could serve as a control mechanism, but it did not shape underlying economic relations. Furthermore, in late 1918 and 1919, the Vienna police's central task shifted to focus on security on the streets in revolutionary conditions, specifically by dealing with disillusioned soldiers returning home with their weapons.

On the issue of Jewish refugees, one must point out some fundamental differences between the Viennese police's policy during the First World War and the deportation plans developed by the Nazi Security Service (specifically Adolf Eichmann's Central Agency for Jewish Emigration) and the Viennese Gestapo.³⁷ During the opening months of the First World War, Jewish and Ruthenian refugees from the war zone in Galicia began pouring into the western Austrian crownlands (including the capital Vienna). The government was concerned because they appeared to be penniless and the Viennese public spread fearful rumours that they carried cholera and smallpox.³⁸ In a September 1914 meeting, representatives of the Interior Ministry, the Vienna Police Directorate, the Vienna City Council, and Vienna's mayor decided that Austria would establish "concentration barracks" (*Konzentrationsbaracken*) for refugees; the state would provide food and shelter while private charities would contribute aid. Since the refugees were swarming the train lines, special escorts would take these trains to collection points (*Sammelstellen*), where refugees would be "sorted" (different national groups were assigned different locations in Austria) in order to prevent them from flooding Vienna, whose homeless shelters were full, according to the Police President. The representatives also agreed to prepare lists (*Kataster*) of refugees and lists of open spots in the "concentration barracks".³⁹ During the war, welfare stations in Vienna's second and third districts housed refugees from Galicia and Bukovina, while "politically suspicious" persons were sent to Olmütz, Pottenbrunn, and Thalerhof.⁴⁰

Despite similar-sounding terms (concentration barracks, collection points, and quarantine), there were major differences with Nazi policy. In the agreement of September 1914, a key provision stated that refugees in Vienna would not be forced to go

36 HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Kut. 5717 (31), 596/1917, Nachrichtenabteilung des k. und k. Armeeeoberkommandos. Evb.Nro. 2306 res., Protokoll zu der am 20. und 21. März 1917 stattgefundenen Besprechung mit den Leitern der vier Zentralstellen für den defensiven Nachrichtendienst in Evidenzbüro des K.u.K. Generalstabes, I.

37 Although some readers may be sceptical of this comparison, the issue of Jewish refugees was highly politicised during the First World War and the interwar period, with many publicists and politicians calling for their expulsion. A comparison between the two World Wars is legitimate to show differences in police policies.

38 Stimmungsberichte aus der Kriegszeit, 1 October 1914, 7 January 1915, and 14 January 1915, <http://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrobv/periodical/titleinfo/607252> (22 September 2019). See also: Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity. The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*, New York 2001, 79.

39 See the minutes of the meeting in LPDW, 1914 Sch. V/7, Besprechung bei dem Minister des Inneren, 12 September 1914. Rudolf Schwarz-Hiller, a Jewish liberal who belonged to the Viennese city council, attended the meeting; he became head of the government's central office to help refugees. See also: LPDW, 1914 Nov. Kriegtagesereignisse, Pr.Z.924K, 17 September 1914, for one of the first reports of thousands of refugees arriving in Vienna. The folder is marked November, but it also contains reports from September and October.

40 LPDW, 1914 Nov. Kriegtagesereignisse, Pr.Z.2087K, 7 November 1914.

to the concentration facilities.⁴¹ Moreover, refugees were not exploited for slave labour, never mind being murdered. Instead, the Austrian government recognised refugees as Austrian citizens, supporting them with more than two billion crowns during the war and working with private Jewish organisations, which collected substantial donations from Jewish communities and provided food, clothing, vocational training, and schools for refugee families.⁴²

Vienna's First World War refugee problem evoked different reactions among the police. High officials contended in 1915 that they were eating up food supplies needed for the troops while also running the black market and gambling in local taverns.⁴³ Lower-level policemen claimed that Galician Jewish refugees pretended to be beggars but were really carrying huge amounts of cash.⁴⁴ After the end of the war, the Austrian government did not want to give these people citizenship in the new Austrian Republic, although the Treaty of Saint Germain allowed them to opt for it.⁴⁵ Instead, the government wanted to expel them to the new Polish Republic, prompting the Polish government to protest to the League of Nations. In 1919, Austria expelled 600 Jews (140 through the police force); 8,000 left voluntarily while 6,684 obtained Austrian residency permits.⁴⁶ The Council of the League of Nations applied pressure, and Austria finally agreed in 1921 not to expel persons who wanted to exercise the right of option for citizenship, giving special consideration to the sick, the elderly, and persons whose houses had been destroyed during the war.⁴⁷ However, Austrian antisemites tried to scapegoat Jewish refugees for Austria's food shortages and economic problems in the early 1920s, demanding their internment or expulsion.⁴⁸

Politicisation of the Police in the First Republic

There were several continuities between political policing in the late imperial era and the First Republic, though the State Police Bureau became weaker than it had been during the war.⁴⁹ Johannes Schober was named Police President by Emperor Karl I in June 1918, remaining in this position after the Austrian Republic was proclaimed in November 1918. While the military intelligence side of the former *Defensive Kundschaftsdienst* was briefly reorganised and then dissolved in 1920, Schober was able to rebuild part of the state police into a *Zentralevidenzstelle*, though he had to move carefully, as the new state authorities did not want a domestic spy agency that would become repressive. Initially, the Social Democratic Party leaders approved the creation of the *Zentralevidenzstelle* because they did not want Austria's

41 "In Wien wird getrachtet, die mittellosen Flüchtlinge nach den Konzentrationsorten zu schaffen, ohne Zwangsmassregeln." Besprechung bei dem Minister des Inneren, 12 September 1914, 3.

42 Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*, 65-74.

43 OeStA/AVA/MdI, Allgem., K. 2089, 20, Protokoll Nr. 22276/18, Sicherheitsbericht für das Jahr 1915, 31 July 1916, 2-3, 49.

44 LPDW, 1914, Scha. V/7, K.k. Sicherheitswache-Abteilung 26, Wahrnehmungen während der Dienstleistung in Prerau, 18 November 1914.

45 League of Nations Archive [LNA] (Geneva), 586/10734/9557.

46 LNA, 586/10986/9557. In 1919, there were 22,552 applications for permis de séjour, 16,172 made by Polish Jews.

47 LNA, 586/11412/9557.

48 See the views of Christian Social leader Leopold Kunschak, discussed in Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, 82-86.

49 Since 1871, the State Police was "Section I" in the Vienna Police. According to Wetz, *Geschichte der Wiener Polizei-Direktion vom Jahre 1945*, 56-57, Schober preserved the pre-war police institutional structure and did not make major changes.

intelligence services to fragment after the war, but the party did not make a serious effort to reorient the state police, filled with monarchists and authoritarians, to function in a democratic state. Schober wanted to create an intelligence bureau, attached to the Vienna police, that would collect information about internal and external threats to the state, though according to Gerhard Jagschitz, he also wanted to consolidate his own power over information and its use in the new republic.⁵⁰ Although he had difficulty getting sufficient funding, and some government officials in other agencies did not want to turn over their information to his bureau, fearing it would amass too much power, the *Zentralevidenzstelle* developed a file system with an astounding 250,000 cards containing essential information about political parties, cultural movements, businesses, locales, and civil society organisations.⁵¹ The information bureaucracy consisted of an anti-espionage group, a group that collected foreign intelligence (partly from reading newspapers), and a cataloguing/filing group (*Evidenzbüro*), staffed by former military intelligence officers. The system interfaced with the police, because it relied on police agents who attended meetings of political and cultural organisations, and state police bureaucrats who provided reports on request.⁵² These methods of gathering information were essentially the same as in the late monarchy, though the areas of interest definitely changed.

Domestically, the police began reporting on the activities of the Nazi movement and its conflicts with the Social Democrats, the activities of legitimist organisations, and the communist movement, which supplanted the anarchist movement as a revolutionary force in the eyes of the police. Examining the international situation, the state police filed reports on nationalist movements in the countries bordering Austria (the nascent Czechoslovak and Serb-Croat-Slovene states), informing the government about foreign troop strength and cultural organisations with “irredentist” goals.⁵³ The state police were relatively tolerant of Croatian ultra-nationalists, who often received asylum (even high-level members of the fascist Croatian *Ustaša* were protected until 1934),⁵⁴ while Polish Jewish communists were routinely expelled. When foreigners were involved in cultural or nationalist political activities that could destabilise the countries in the “Little Entente”, they received lighter treatment, but when they were allegedly involved in communist activity in Austria, they were interrogated and expelled.

For example, in 1926 Romanian internal security warned the Vienna Police Directorate that there were “communist terrorists” in Vienna, sending a list of names and an address where they allegedly resided.⁵⁵ The Vienna police investigated the address, finding a Polish Jewish couple; the husband possessed communist literature, while his wife worked in a Jewish workers’ kitchen. The police pursued this as a lead, deciding that the kitchen was a place where Jews involved in Zionism, socialism, and communism frequented. Several Jewish workers were questioned. They were born in Galicia and Bukovina when these had been part of Austria, but these were now parts of Poland and Romania; police said that the workers were domiciled

50 Jagschitz, *Die politische Zentralevidenzstelle*, 56-60.

51 *Ibid.*, 72-74.

52 *Ibid.*, 73.

53 LPDW, Schober Archiv, Sch. 50/Gruppe III 1924, Geplante Errichtung einer Jugoslaviwschen Agitationszentrale in Graz, Pr.Z.IV-2226, 28 June 1923; Militärische Nachrichten aus SHS, *ibid.*, Pr.Z.IV-17/56 Zest, 11 October 1923.

54 Mark Lewis, *The Failure of the Austrian and Yugoslav Police to Repress the Croatian Ustaša in Austria, 1929–1934*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 45 (2014), 186-212.

55 All details from this case come from LPDW, Schober Archiv, Sch. 28 II. 1926, “Rümanische unabhängige Terroristengruppe”, Pr.ZI.IV-37/26/3.

there and had allegedly violated passport regulations. This opened another line of inquiry. Some were involved in a possible business deal to work for a photo-enlarging enterprise in Bulgaria, which the police saw as suspicious because the man who owned the business (named Horowitz) had submitted one set of their photos to the Polish embassy in Vienna (so they could obtain passports) but kept another set – allegedly because he wanted documents that could be used in “false confidential reports”.⁵⁶ It was not clear who the recipient of these reports was supposed to be or why Horowitz was doing this, but the Police Directorate planned to continue the investigation. The police also pursued other names on the original Romanian list not connected with the workers’ kitchen. One was a Romanian national (religion not specified) who elicited suspicion because his wife was already under surveillance for working for the Soviet embassy in Vienna. Another, a Jewish student, worked for the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* library and had the same name as another person on the Romanian list. It turned out he was not the same man in the picture provided by Romanian security, but instead of dropping the matter, the police wanted to determine if he was using a false name.⁵⁷ According to a report that Police President Schober sent to the Chancellor’s Foreign Affairs Office, the Police Directorate began expulsion proceedings against all these people – possibly six or seven – except for the employee of the *Kultusgemeinde*, who was still being investigated.⁵⁸ None possessed weapons or explosives, and none were linked to terrorism.

Legally, the civil liberties that had been cancelled during the war were restored with the establishment of the First Republic. Still, the police leadership did not consistently prevent antisemitic violence, sometimes taking precautionary measures when Austria’s international reputation was at risk, only taking delayed action, or refusing to intervene because another established institution (such as the university) exerted its authority. According to historian Bruce Pauley, police acted correctly by sending 6,000 officers to confront and break up a gathering of 10,000 antisemites who illegally demonstrated during the Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1925. There were 220 arrests over two days, although Jews and people who appeared to be Jewish were attacked on streetcars and in shops.⁵⁹ On the other hand, when the *Landesleitung* of Vienna’s Nazi party convened a meeting in a restaurant in January 1927 to discuss “the *völkisch* common front as an instrument to cleanse public life”, the Vienna police allowed the meeting, which drew 1,000 attendees, including 400 Nazis. (The police had the power to prohibit a public meeting if it threatened order and security.) Only when various German nationalist groups started brawling did the police clear the room and make two arrests.⁶⁰ In the Viennese universities, there were eight incidents of antisemitic violence against Jewish students starting in November 1927, but the universities had sovereign control over their buildings and grounds, which the police respected by not entering. In the fall of 1929, students associated with the *Heimwehr* attacked Jewish students at the Anatomy Institute, while mounted police remained outside.⁶¹

The police leadership’s attitude toward the Social Democratic Party and workers became much harsher in the 1920s, when the social democrats controlled the city government of Vienna but the Christian Socials controlled the federal government, often in

56 Ibid, 4.

57 Ibid, 4-5.

58 Ibid.

59 Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, 108-114.

60 LPDW, Schober Archiv, Sch. 29, 1927, Pr.ZI.IV-36 Exp.

61 Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, 121-125.

coalition with the Greater German People's Party. Yet the issue did not only concern party affiliation or ideology on the part of the police leadership, who had been educated during the imperial era and had served in higher police offices before and during the First World War. Although the police leadership was uncompromising when it came to alleged spies and "security threats" (often loosely defined) during the war, they recognised in the end stages of the war that the suffering civilian population could not simply be ruled by force and that compromises with Social Democracy were necessary. This was far less the case by the late 1920s, when Viennese society was starkly divided by class, ideology, and interest groups. This can be demonstrated by comparing the police's response to worker demonstrations in January 1918 and 1927. During the massive worker strikes in Vienna in January 1918, when workers from almost all industrial branches walked off the job and demanded food and "peace without annexations", the State Police monitored the demonstrations every day.⁶² Police gathered intelligence about the workers' intentions and their feelings about the ongoing negotiations between the Central Powers and the Bolshevik government at Brest-Litovsk.⁶³ In the streets, the police leadership deployed rank-and-file police and mounted police to "maintain order", primarily arresting women workers who seized bread trucks, dispersing workers who blockaded street cars, and breaking up groups of workers who marched to other factories to encourage more workers to join them. The police also called in the military, which sent approximately 15,000 men on the first day of the strike, with more following; troops protected the gas and electricity plants, a water reservoir, the mint office, and the state printing press.⁶⁴ Although there were scenes of antagonism with the police – workers threw stones and snowballs at police, and police brandished their sabres – the number of arrests was generally low. For example, on 16 January 1918, the first day of the strike, the police only arrested 21 persons in a strike involving over 84,000 people.⁶⁵ Much of the strike proceeded without major outbreaks of violence, and when the Social Democratic leadership called for it to end, the police did not want to immediately send in massive force to enforce this decision. Instead, they selectively arrested "agitators", more radical workers who wanted to continue the strike and emulate the Bolshevik Revolution.⁶⁶ The police leadership was cautious in 1918 because they did not want to incite the population, knowing that resuming factory work was necessary to continue fighting the war – which, at the point of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy still thought it could win.

The police response to large-scale worker demonstrations was less restrained and less rational on 15 July 1927, when 200,000 workers put down their tools and protested a jury's decision that members of the *Frontkämpferversammlung* (a radical right-wing Austrian paramilitary) were not guilty of killing a member of the *Schutzbund* and a child in the town of Schattendorf in Burgenland in January. The protests involved several confrontations with the police that turned violent. Workers who marched by the ramp of the University of Vienna (which was protected by a police cordon) were taunted by conservative university students. Outside the *Burgtheater*, worker demonstrators skirmished with police. Other worker demonstrators, marching toward the Ringstraße to join protests in front of the parliament building, were trampled by

62 OeStA/AVA/MdI, Präs., K. 2074, Protokoll Nr. 2414 ex 1918/M.I.

63 Ibid, Pr.Z.52350/4/K. Arbeitseinstellung in Wien, 16 January 1918.

64 Ibid, Pr.Z.52350/2/K; Pr.Z.52350/3/K; Pr.Z.52350/5/K.

65 Ibid, Pr.Z.52350/4/K.

66 Ibid, Pr.Z.52536/19 K., 20 January 1918; Pr.Z.52356/22 K., 21 January 1918; Pr.Z.52356/23 K., 21 January 1918; Pr.Z.52356/27 K., 22 January 1918. I do not want to underemphasise the fact that the police used the threat of force: When a group of 400 workers broke into a sugar factory in the eleventh district on 21 January and stole bonbons valued at 7,000 crowns, police dispersed them with sabres.

mounted police as they entered the area. Workers, angry about police arrests of demonstrators, protested in front of a police station on the corner of Lichtenfelsgasse and Bartensteingasse; after they were charged by incoming police, they stormed the police station and set it on fire.⁶⁷ In the main confrontation, 250 police, armed with military rifles, shot into crowds of workers demonstrating on Bartensteingasse and the area around the city hall. These police had been ordered to the area by Schober, who had been authorised by Vice Chancellor Karl Hartleb (from the *Landbund*) to repress what he believed was a violent revolution.⁶⁸ The social democratic leadership disputed this, as their original plan was for a mere one-hour strike and demonstrations asking for a reversal of the jury's not guilty verdict.⁶⁹ As this occurred, mounted police, attempting to clear the Ringstraße, pushed demonstrators toward the Schmerlingplatz in the vicinity of the *Justizpalast*, where workers barricaded the building. The situation escalated further when police, trapped inside the building, tried to shoot their way out. Workers broke ground-floor windows, entered the building, and threw furniture and paper into the street. After lighting them on fire, some threw burning bundles into the building, spreading the fire. The demonstrators and their barricades prevented the fire department from getting close enough to the building to extinguish the fire (plus their hoses had been cut by demonstrators). The *Schutzbund*, which had arrived on the scene to try to prevent the storming of the building, tried to clear the barricades so that the fire department could lay hoses and extinguish the fire, which was finally possible. The *Schutzbund* also helped policemen trapped inside the building to leave. However, police armed with rifles continued shooting into the crowds, who were hemmed inside the area.⁷⁰

Schober had told Karl Seitz, the social democratic mayor, that he would only order shooting to clear the area so the fire department could get in. Julius Deutsch, head of the *Schutzbund*, claimed that he had told Schober by phone that he was with the *Schutzbund* on the scene and that they would clear the area, a promise to which Schober had agreed. Schober then had a motorcycle courier deliver orders to stop shooting, but it did not reach the police units, nor did an emissary sent by Deutsch. The historians Winfried Garscha and Barry McLoughlin have argued that this was not a communication breakdown: Since Schober allowed the shooting to continue after the area was cleared and the fire department set up its hoses, it was an attempt by Schober to deal a political blow to the Social Democrats.⁷¹ They maintain that the mounted police had lacked restraint during their engagement with protestors and that the police leadership had no overall strategy for dealing with the protests other than clearing the Ringstraße, then shooting into the areas near the parliament building, when they should have cleared the areas and blocked them off, thus preventing demonstrators from returning (obviating the need for more shooting).⁷² In my view, the dynamic of escalation got out of control much more quickly than during the strike movements of January 1918 (which developed and grew over a series of days). In the dynamic in July 1927, the protest marches led to confrontations with police, who had received orders that morning to report regularly about worker strikes and demonstrations and to protect all public buildings.⁷³ Furthermore, the police had known since

67 Winfried Garscha/Barry McLoughlin, *Wien 1927. Menetekel für die Republik*, East Berlin 1987, 117-123.

68 *Ibid.*, 125-127.

69 *Ibid.*, 114-115.

70 *Ibid.*, 128-131.

71 *Ibid.*, 132.

72 *Ibid.*, 134.

73 LPDW, *Justizpalast Sch. I, Juliereignisse 1927*, Zkl 823, *Alle Stadthptl.*, 15 July 1927.

January that there was a potential for demonstrations.⁷⁴ Once the police started responding with force (especially mounted units that attacked and charged the demonstrators), the workers armed themselves with sticks and pieces of iron. Sometimes a triggering event – such as shots fired or false rumours – led the police to respond with harsher measures, while the workers dug in, erecting barricades. Despite discussions between leaders on the two sides at different points, the situation was never brought under control. The police leadership did not demonstrate a willingness to stand down and compromise, as they had done in 1918, when the imperial government had negotiated an end to the strike with the social democratic leadership. Even in the late evening on 15 July 1927, there was further violence, when youth stormed a police station in the seventeenth district (Hernals) and workers besieged a police station in the tenth district (Favoriten). In the latter case, when police dispatched ninety more officers to the scene, someone fired at them from above the *Südbahnviadukt*, killing two policemen. Police returned fire, killing innocent bystanders.⁷⁵

All told, 84 demonstrators were killed and 548 injured, while four police officers and one military officer were killed, and 586 police were injured. The aftermath led to diametrically opposed interpretations of the events. At a commemoration for the victims in October, Mayor Seitz depicted the police's role in the *Justizpalast* events as an echo of 1848: government repression of a democratic demonstration and police violence against innocent people.⁷⁶ The police bureaucracy released a long report countering accusations that it had used excessive force, stating instead that it had saved the state from a communist putsch. It honoured its dead as heroes and obtained commendations from Christian Social Party politicians, who praised the police's role in restoring order.⁷⁷

The "July 1927 unrest", as it was called in police records, led to a greater centralisation of the police in Austria, confirmed by changes in the 1929 constitution, implemented when Schober became Austria's chancellor. Anton Walitschek, an anti-liberal, anti-socialist police official who wrote a history of the police organisation from 1850 to 1930, praised the changes Schober introduced in response to the *Justizpalast* events. The power of the *Länder* (particularly Vienna, which was controlled by the Social Democratic Party) was reduced, while police power was increased. For example, after 1927, many new *Polizei-Direktionen* (police directorates) were created. The municipalities had to dissolve their community police (*Gemeindewache*) and lost power to the police directorates, controlled directly by the Chancellor Ignaz Seipel of the Christian Social Party. The *Länder*, which formerly controlled the registration of weapons and explosives, lost that control to the police authorities. Also, at this point, a new high-level body, the *Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit* was established to supervise all the police authorities, the police forces, and the gendarmerie.⁷⁸

74 LPDW, Schober Archiv, Sch. 29, 1927, Pr.Z.IV-3 Exp, 31 January 1927.

75 Garscha/McLoughlin, Wien 1927, 146.

76 See: Schober's report on Seitz's speech, LPDW, Justizpalast Sch. I, Juliereignisse 1927, Pr.Z.IV-1-766/493/27, 31 October 1927.

77 LPDW, Justizpalast Sch. I, Juliereignisse 1927, Pr.Z.IV-1-766, "Ausschreitungen in Wien am 15. und 16. Juli 1927."

78 Walitschek, *Die Entwicklung der Polizei-Organisation und des Polizeirechtes in Österreich*, 304-309. Walitschek, who welcomed these authoritarian steps, remained a police official during the Nazi period (though he was not a party member). He continued working during the Second Republic, too, and defended the decision in certain police stations to burn all their records in the final days of the Nazi system, which made it more difficult, though not impossible, to unearth how the Viennese Kriminalpolizei collaborated with the Nazi system. See: Brigitte Rigele, *Aktenverbrennung in Akten. Strafverfahren zum Amtsmissbrauch 1945*, in: Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider/Christine Schindler (ed.) *Zeithistoriker, Archivar, Aufklärer. Festschrift für Winfried R. Garscha*, Vienna 2017, 347-360.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s (before the Christian Socials proclaimed the authoritarian constitution of 1934), the police faced an urban situation in which they were not the only armed unit in the streets, but faced violent competitors, such as paramilitaries on the left and right who engaged in violent conflict with each other. The latter asserted the right to use armed force to protect their own groups and political parties, and in some cases prepared for armed revolution. In Max Weber's theory, the state monopolises the use of force and thereby prevents others from using it, yet the Viennese police did not have this monopoly. Various paramilitaries, each with its own agenda – the *Heimwehr* (a right-wing, anti-communist paramilitary affiliated with the Christian Social Party and its own “*Heimwehr*” block), the Republican *Schutzbund*, the Nazi SS, and the far-right *Vaterländische Schutzbund* – violently clashed during party rallies, demonstrations, parades, and encounters in restaurants.⁷⁹ Concentrating on changes to the police, it is important to note the government's overall policies toward these groups, how these changed in the course of 1932/1933, and what the police's actual strategy was. The Austrian government under Chancellor Schober had close relations with the *Heimwehr* (without letting them completely take power) and relations become much closer under the Christian Social chancellors Ignaz Seipel and Engelbert Dollfuß. However, while Dollfuß gave *Heimwehr* leaders cabinet positions and gave *Heimwehr* men the authority to conduct searches and make arrests, *Heimwehr* leaders in 1933/1934 plotted behind the scenes to undertake a coup to topple Dollfuß and also join with the Nazis, though these negotiations did not pan out.⁸⁰

Over an eight-month period from May 1933 to February 1934, the Dollfuß government banned rival parties (the Communists, the Nazis, and the Social Democrats), with the police constituting one of the forces aligned with the state that enforced these bans. Persons who engaged in party political activities, printed or distributed party literature, or planned rallies and events were prosecuted and punished. In the Austrian legal system, the police also had the power to punish persons with arrest (for example, up to six weeks for illegal party activity) without referring the case to a criminal court (which would rule on guilt or innocence). The police also had wide latitude to conduct house searches, using this power to search for weapons kept by the Republican *Schutzbund* and the Nazis. At the pinnacle of the police leadership, there was a conflict between Police President Franz Brandl⁸¹ and the State Minister for Security Emil Fey (the founder of the Vienna *Heimwehr*) because Fey wanted to supplement the police with *Heimwehr* units, which Brandl resisted, not because he believed in “neutral” police (as he claimed when he took the job), but because he sympathised with the Nazi goal of ‘Anschluß’. When he was forced out of

79 For a social analysis of the progression of these confrontations, see: Gerhard Botz, *Nationalsozialismus in Wien. Machtübernahme, Herrschaftssicherung, Radikalisierung, 1938/39*, Vienna 2008. On the *Heimwehr* (which was unable to develop its own Austrian nationalism because there were tensions between a pro-‘Anschluß’ faction and a clericalist faction), see: Edmonson. On the development of the SS (including confrontations and tensions with the SA), see: Rothländer, *Die Anfänge der Wiener SS*.

80 Gerhard Jagschitz, *Der Putsch. Die Nationalsozialisten 1934 in Österreich*, Graz 1976, 62-65.

81 After obtaining a doctorate in law, he started his career in the police in 1898, worked for the State Police during the First World War, and continued in the police under the First Republic, eventually becoming police president on 30 September 1932.

office in March 1933, he joined the Nazi Party.⁸² The next two Police Presidents, Eugen Seydel and Michael Skubl, were supposed to be more reliable supporters of the Christian Social Party and the Dollfuß dictatorship, which the chancellor took a step toward establishing in March 1933 by dissolving the parliament. However, both these police chiefs failed to fulfil their duty to protect the state: Seydel failed to prevent the Nazi putsch against Dollfuß, while Skubl, in February and March 1938, did not want to resist a Nazi invasion, believing that Arthur Seyß-Inquart, the Nazi Interior and Security Minister in Austria, was a ‘moderate’ Nazi, a Catholic who would prevent the implementation of ‘totalism’. In his post-war testimony in the treason trial of Guido Schmidt, Austria’s last foreign minister before the takeover, Skubl stated that there was no point in ordering the police and army to resist a Nazi German invasion, as the loss of life would be too great. He was willing to serve as Security Minister in the Austrian Nazi government, too, but Heinrich Himmler, the Chief of the German Police, demanded he resign.⁸³

After the government banned demonstrations along with the Christian Socials’ rivals in 1932/1933, the police obtained a broader legal framework for repression, but the Nazis’ strategy of trying to weaken the Austrian government by beginning a wave of terrorist bombings in the summer of 1933 – hitting train lines, electrical systems, telephone booths, parks, and businesses – added a new destabilising element to the rocky interwar period.⁸⁴ The Austrian Nazis were strengthened by support from Nazi Germany, which provided weapons, explosives, and places of refuge for SA and SS men who committed acts of violence in Austria. After the Austrian government banned the Nazi Party on 19 June 1933, the Viennese police confiscated individual editions of Nazi newspapers (if they attacked the government or Austrian politicians), dispersed Nazi supporters when they rallied in public, and tracked down and charged Nazis who set off fire alarms in buildings, committed arson, or planted bombs.⁸⁵ However, it gave a certain latitude to Nazi leaders, such as Gauleiter Eduard Frauenfeld, who was allowed to travel during the summer⁸⁶ and was not arrested until December. Some *Kriminalbeamte*, who were either Nazis or Nazi sympathisers, were lackadaisical in their investigations of Nazi crimes.⁸⁷

Overall, the state’s response to Nazi bombings included arresting 1100 leaders, shutting down Nazi Party offices, stripping Austrian Nazis of their Austrian citizen-

82 Chancellor Dollfuß appointed Fey Minister for State Security after a chaotic shootout between the SS and the Schutzbund in the working-class district of Simmering on 16 October 1932 during the Nazis’ Gauparteitag. Police intervened with their weapons, killing two Nazis and a passer-by, as well as beating up Schutzbund members inside the local party building and ransacking the premises. Once Fey was appointed, he banned all socialist, communist, and Nazi demonstrations. See: Rothländer, *Die Anfänge der Wiener SS*, 218-227, 319-320.

83 *Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt vor dem Wiener Volksgericht*, Vienna 1947, 325-327.

84 Jagschitz, *Der Putsch*, 42-43. Winfried Garscha, *Nationalsozialisten in Österreich 1933-1938*, in: Emmerich Tálos/Wolfgang Neugebauer (ed.), *Austrofascismus. Politik – Ökonomie – Kultur. 1933-1938*, Vienna 2005, 104-105.

85 OeStA/AdR BKA BKA-I BPDion Wien, *Polizeidirektion Wien Berichte*, July 1933, K. 33, Seydel to Fey, *Nationalsozialistische Parteigänger*, Pr.Zl.IV-4066/33/37, 18 July 1933.

86 *Polizeidirektion Wien Berichte*, August 1933.

87 Rothländer, *Die Anfänge der Wiener SS*, 284-294, showed that this was true the year before (1932) in connection with the SS teargas attack on the Gerngross department store. The police held many of the suspects in custody, then let them go because they claimed they could not come up with sufficient evidence; one of the police detectives on the case was a Nazi (Karl Prieler), while the *Kriminalbeamte* responsible for interrogating the SS members (Franz Kamba) was also a Nazi. Both *Kriminalbeamte* were later also involved in the Nazi putsch in July 1934. The case only eventually went to trial in March 1933 because someone, probably a disgruntled SS man, sent an anonymous letter telling police who had left the Nazi Party headquarters (the Adolf-Hitler-Haus) right before the attack and then come back. With this information, the higher-level Security Bureau reopened the case and began checking the building’s logs, which turned out to have been altered.

ship, using special legislation to seize property, and reintroducing the death penalty (on 18 July 1934) for persons who possessed explosives with the goal of using them to endanger public security.⁸⁸ The *Heimwehr* meanwhile continued pushing for influence in state security on the ground. Fey ordered the creation of the *Schutzkorps* in July 1933 to “assist” police and gendarmes to maintain public order if they were short on manpower. The men in the *Schutzkorps* came from various regional right-wing authoritarian paramilitaries, including the *Heimwehr* and *Sturmscharen*.⁸⁹ Fey’s bans on associations did not apply to them; in fact, they operated with their own authority or cooperated with police in searching and seizing Nazi and Republican *Schutzbund* weapons.

While the police seemed reactive in the case of the Nazis, they were pro-active in the case of the Viennese communists, whom they viewed as the greater threat. This can be traced back to their opposition to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the attempt to create an Austrian council republic in 1918, and the Hungarian communist take-over in 1919.⁹⁰ On a deeper level, however, high police officials came from upper-middle-class (or upper-class) families and were educated with law doctorates; a communist revolution could have meant a loss of their property, positions, and perhaps their lives. Street-level policemen came from both Vienna and neighbouring Lower Austria, usually from families of tradesmen (not industrial wage-workers) or small farmers, and the traditionally Catholic ones saw communism as a threat to religion, social order, and private property. Although the police banned communist publications, broke up demonstrations, and searched for weapons, they ambitiously arrested and jailed communists before the latter planned demonstrations, on the grounds that this was necessary to protect public order. For example, house searches, arrests, and jail sentences prevented communist leaders from staging a major demonstration on 1 August 1933, which was supposed to be an “International Anti-War Day”.⁹¹

Finally, during the late republic, a small number of policemen (*Sicherheitswache* and *Kriminalbeamte*) joined the Nazi Party while it was still legal. Using personnel records, I studied the careers of 82 *Sicherheitswache* officers who were hired before the Nazi takeover of Austria in March 1938 and were still on the force during the Nazi period.⁹² The names were chosen from rosters and financial records of men who guarded deportation transports of Austrian Jews and Roma from 1941 to 1943; others had guarded other equipment transports or were mentioned in other police re-

88 Jagschitz, *Der Putsch*, 53. Garscha, *Nationalsozialisten in Österreich*, 104–105. OeStA/AdR BKA BKA-I BPDion Wien Berichte, July–October 1934 (K. 44), ZI 205.277/34, Bundesgesetz zur Abwehr politischer Gewalttaten.

89 Tólos, *Das austrofaschistische Herrschaftssystem*, 224.

90 Hans Hautmann, *Geschichte der Rätebewegung in Österreich 1918–1924*, Vienna 1987, 490.

91 OeStA/AdR BKA BKA-I BPDion Wien, Polizeidirektion Wien Berichte, August 1933, K. 34, Skubl to Fey, “Geplante kommunistische Demonstration anlässlich des ‘Internationalen Anti-Kriegstages’ am 1. August 1933 in Oesterreich”, Pr.Z.IV-5116/5/33, 2 August 1933.

92 The data is on file with the author, who hopes to publish the study at a later point. The actual percentage who joined the Nazi Party before March 1938 is probably smaller than 15.85 percent, since the group of 82 represents policemen who were still on the force after the Austrofascist government removed alleged socialist policemen from the force between 1927 and 1934. Therefore, the percentage of *Sicherheitswache* who joined the Nazi Party in the late 1920s and early 1930s would likely be smaller, since there would have been more left-leaning policemen on the force at the time. As for the total number of police, it is unclear how many were on the force in the early 1930s. In 1911, there were 4,514 *Sicherheitswache* and 389 inspectors, excluding the “Polizei-Agenten”, later known as *Kriminalbeamte*. See: OeStA/AVA/MdI, Allgem., K. 2087, Nr. 23503–911, 13 July 1911. In the autumn of 1940, there were 3,300 *Schutzpolizisten* (former *Sicherheitswache*, then part of the German police in Vienna). See: LPDW, BPD-Wien 1938–47, Personalstände beim Polizeipräsidenten von Wien.

cords. Only thirteen (15.85 percent) joined the Nazi Party prior to March 1938.⁹³ It is difficult to assess from personnel records why these men joined the party. Nazi Party records (*Gau* records) usually only discuss their party loyalty and service, not their motivations. Most of the autobiographies in the policemen's personnel files were written after the Second World War, when they wanted to minimise their involvement or conceal it, not explain it. Nevertheless, the data suggests that certain traditional explanations of why men joined the Nazi Party may not apply here. For example, a traumatic experience on the front during the First World War was not an automatic predictor of radical right-wing activity; many policemen in the overall group of 82 were veterans but did not join the party. Rural origins did not necessarily predicate party membership either. Many of these policemen came from Lower Austria, a bastion of traditional Catholicism and support for the Christian Social Party, but few joined the Nazi Party. And while many worked in agriculture or in small trades before they joined the police and may have been part of the "declining *Mittelstand*", others came from the same backgrounds and did not join the Nazi Party during the late republic.

Results were similar among the *Kriminalbeamte* who were on the force during the First Republic: Only a small number of these mid-level officials, inspectors, and detectives joined the party before 1938. Here, I studied 94 Austrian *Kriminalbeamte* who worked for the police during the Nazi period, using the records of the post-Second World War *Kriminalbeamtenreferat*, a department that determined whether former police officials should be allowed back on the force and whether new hires were politically acceptable.⁹⁴ I supplemented this sample with additional *Kriminalbeamte* that I found through reading records of Austrian war crimes trials. This was a different type of data-set than the *Sicherheitswache* personnel records, because these *Kriminalbeamte* served in different police agencies (the Viennese police, the border police, or the Gestapo). Although this group (like the *Sicherheitswache*) were all Austrian, some had first joined the German police because they were Nazis who escaped to Germany after the Austrian Nazi Party was banned on 19 June 1933 and were then transferred to Austria when it was incorporated into the 'Third Reich'. Therefore, in this data-set, only 24 actually joined the police before 1938 (specifically between 1912 and 1937). Seventeen of them were members of the Nazi Party, but I was only able to determine that fourteen joined before the 'Anschluß'. Of this group, seven started in the Austrian police and six started in the German police. The seven are the ones that we can examine as having been in the Austrian police prior to the Nazi takeover and who had joined the Nazi Party prior to March 1938: five between 1931 and 1934 and two in 1937.⁹⁵ Because the overall number in the set of 94 is not a statistical sample, but constitutes cases that the *Kriminalbeamtenreferat* selected for

93 One of these policeman's entry date to the Nazi Party was 1 June 1937, and this date may have been invented to make it appear there were more 'Old Fighters' on the force than there really were. After the Nazis came to power, Austrian Nazis in charge of the police wanted to preserve the number of Austrians, so part of their personnel review process included giving policemen false dates stating that they had joined the Nazi Party during the 'illegal period'. See: Weisz, *Umstellung*.

94 I went through approximately 636 files (WStLA, 2.5.1.8 A1) and selected those who were in the police during the Nazi era (94 cases). This group includes men who were in the *Kriminalpolizei*, the Gestapo, and the *Grenzpolizei*. Some men moved from one division to another during the Nazi period, others were in different areas of the police before 1938. I also studied the *Volksgesicht* records for any policeman who was examined by the *Kriminalbeamtenreferat* (if he was also investigated by the state prosecutor) and, in cases where it was unclear when the man joined the Nazi Party, I examined his *Gau* records, too. (In other cases, the *Gau* records were contained in the *Kriminalbeamtenreferat* files, because the State Police examined these after 1945 and sent copies to the *Kriminalbeamtenreferat*.)

95 See footnote 98.

investigation after the Second World War, the percentage of policemen who joined the Nazi Party before the Nazi takeover (7.4 percent) is not a statistical sample of the whole force at that point in time. However, this suggests that the number who had joined was small. Although Konrad Rotter, a *Kriminal-Bezirksinspektor* who founded a Nazi Party group just for policemen in 1930 (“Gersthof 2”), claimed that the group had 1,000 members by 1933,⁹⁶ this number may be inflated. Weisz found that when the Nazis wanted to rebuild the police after March 1938, *Kriminalrevierinspektor* Johann Hoi, who had set up a secret organisation to provide welfare support for illegal Nazi policemen after the failed Nazi putsch in July 1934, could only produce sixty names of Austrian policemen who had been ‘illegal’ Nazis.⁹⁷ This is not to minimise the significance of the spread of National Socialism in the police. It is not only the number that mattered, but why they joined and their impact, as they represented the emergence of a ‘third camp’ in the police, neither Social Democratic nor Christian Social, which had as its goal the overthrow of the state.

It is difficult to pinpoint one overarching reason why the men in the *Kriminalpolizei* sample joined.⁹⁸ All were generally anti-communist, but there were other groups in Austria (the *Heimwehr* and the *Sturmscharen*, for example) which were also anti-communist. Only three had served in the military during the First World War, so the theory that a traumatic frontline experience radicalised them politically may have played a role, but not necessarily for the whole group. (Plus, there were other *Kriminalbeamte* who had also been on the front and did not join the Nazi Party). These seven men were born in different areas of Austria (Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland, and Carinthia), so it is hard to generalise that a conservative rural culture influenced them all. The overall context of the late republic must be kept in mind, starting with the depth of the depression and the inability of the government to provide sufficient financial aid to the unemployed. This led to the disintegration of the two main political camps in the republic, creating room for a third camp, the Nazis, to draw certain economic groups toward them, including public employees, many of whom supported a pan-German nationalism.⁹⁹ The acceleration of class conflict caused

96 “Rotter Bericht I (Institut für Zeitgeschichte Wien, ER-19, DO-647, Mappe 63, Putschbericht von Konrad Rotter)”, 30 August 1934, 2, using the pagination from Kurt Bauer’s transcription at <http://www.kurt-bauer-geschichte.at/Juliputsch.htm> (22 September 2019). Jagschitz, *Der Putsch*, 71, cited 1,000 members too, relying on this report.

97 Weisz, *Die Geheime Staatspolizei*, 1303.

98 Otto Schleifer (born 14 February 1907 in Vienna) joined the Nazi Party in 1931. He transferred from the Gendarmerie to the Vienna Kriminalpolizei in 1937, then joined the Vienna Gestapo in 1941, where he beat and tortured prisoners. WStLA, 2.5.1. 8 A1-18, Schleifer, Otto; see also: Vg 1a Vr 1272/45. Franz Rückert (born 2 April 1882 in Tratten near Klagenfurt) joined the Nazi Party in 1932. He joined the Vienna Sicherheitswache in the 1920s (the specific date is unknown) and was a Revier-Inspektor until he retired in 1941. Vg 2c Vr 1876/46. Johann Danzmayr (born 15 November 1902 in Hadersdorf-Weidlingau, Lower Austria) started in the Vienna Sicherheitswache in 1923, transferring to the Vienna Gestapo in 1939. It is possible that a feeling of resentment played a role in his decision to join the Nazi Party in 1932. In 1931, his application to get into a commander training course (Chargenschulkurs) was rejected. WStLA, 2.5.1. 8 A1-4, Danzmayr, Johann, Bitte um Aufnahme in den Offiziers-anwärterkurs der Ordnungspolizei, 24 April 1938. Florian Preisegger (born 5 July 1899 in Pötsching, Burgenland) joined the Vienna Sicherheitswache in 1927 and the Nazi Party in May 1933. He was dismissed from the police in 1934 because he was involved in the Dollfuß putsch, then went to Berlin, where he worked for the Berlin Gestapo from 1935 to 1938 before transferring to the Vienna Kriminalpolizei. WStLA, 2.5.1. 8 A1-16, Preisegger, Florian; Vg 12a Vr 8720/46. Karl Künzel (born 8 September 1907 in Vienna) spent four years in the Austrian army (1926–1930), then joined the Vienna Sicherheitswache in 1930, serving as a driver for the State Police. Although his SS-Führerpersonalakte states that he joined the Nazi Party in May 1937 (Bundesarchiv [Berlin-Lichterfelde], R 9361-III/538507), he was active in the movement before this point, because he was investigated and punished for Nazi activity during 1933–1936. He joined the Vienna Gestapo in 1938 and was later second-in-command of the “worker education” camp at Ober-Lanzendorf, where he gravely mistreated prisoners and ordered the transport of prisoners to Mauthausen. WStLA, 2.5.1. 8 A1-11, Künzel, Karl; Vg 3b Vr 4750/46.

99 Ernst Bruckmüller, *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs*, Vienna 1985, 500–504.

middle-class parties to criticise democratic institutions and call for a governing body, based on a system of corporate orders, to either take over and replace the parliament or to serve as another chamber therein.¹⁰⁰ Deeply rooted antisemitism of the religious, economic, and racial types was ever-present in post-war society, where there were frequent discussions about a *numerus clausus*, separate schools for Christian and Jews, the expulsion of Jewish immigrants, and the supposedly “corrupt Jewish influence” in modernist culture.¹⁰¹ Vienna also had a persistent shortage of housing, despite the municipal administration’s construction of large-scale communal apartment blocks.¹⁰² It is no accident that once the Nazis came to power, Viennese Nazis not only received jobs in the police, they also received apartments confiscated from Jewish Austrians.¹⁰³

Therefore, a mixture of factors may have attracted policemen to National Socialism during the late republic: economic hardship, the attraction of pan-German nationalism, the message of ‘German’ renewal, the promise that antisemitic policies would benefit Austria, and the persona of Hitler. *Polizei-Revierinspektor* Franz Rückert, who had joined the Vienna *Sicherheitswache* in the 1920s and became the watch commander in the Bräunerstraße station in Vienna’s first district, perhaps joined due to his belief in Hitler, stating in his 1939 application for “Old Fighter” status: “I have and will always aim to realise the idea of the Führer.”¹⁰⁴ However, this may have been an exaggeration that he thought the *Gau* leadership would like to hear, because after the war, when he was prosecuted for being an ‘illegal’ Nazi (he was found innocent¹⁰⁵), he stated that he had filled his 1939 application with “lies” in order to secure a job for his son, who was an unemployed mechanic and had also joined the party.¹⁰⁶ Rückert may, therefore, have had economic and familial motivations. Nevertheless, he seems to have believed in the mission of the party, despite his post-war claims that he only supported Austria’s “economic annexation to Germany”.¹⁰⁷ He held the position of *Blockleiter* from August 1938 onwards and his application for “Old Fighter” status was approved, indicating that the party saw him as reliable, despite his post-war claims that he was not really involved in the party.¹⁰⁸

Another policeman, Franz Wiedermann, born in 1896 in Hirtenberg, Lower Austria, represents a complex case in which social and psychological factors may have influenced his belief in Nazi ideology. A veteran of the First World War on the Italian front (who was captured), he joined the *Sicherheitswache* in 1922, then entered the police commander school (*Chargenschule*) in 1926 to become a *Kriminalbeamte*. By 1932, he attained the rank of *Rayonsinspektor*. This career path shows that he had been promoted during the First Republic and did not become a Nazi because he had been passed over. He joined the Nazi Party in 1932, though his support for the ideology may have started much earlier. According to an autobiographical statement he wrote in 1938 (to seek readmission to the party after the Nazi takeover), he said he had joined a “National Socialist workers’ association” in 1920 while he was an office

100 Tálos, *Das austrofaschistische Herrschaftssystem*, 10-12.

101 Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, 80-95, 121-127, 157-173, 183-189, 198-203.

102 Botz, *Nationalsozialismus in Wien*, 414-415.

103 LPDW, *Normalien 1939*, *Polizeipräsident in Wien*, P 5000/39, *Betr: Wohnungsfürsorge für Angehörige der staatlichen Polizei*, 30 September 1939.

104 Vg 2c Vr 1876/46, *BLZ. 6*, Rückert an die Gauleitung Wien der NSDAP (Abschrift), *Betrifft: Aktion “Alter Kämpfer”*.

105 *Ibid.*, *Urteil* (Abschrift), 13 September 1947.

106 *Ibid.*, “*Verantwortung*”, 15 March 1946.

107 *Ibid.*, 3.

108 *Ibid.*, 3-4.

worker in a woodworking firm in Pfaffstätten, Lower Austria. He boasted that his firm was the only “National Socialist” firm in “red Triestingtal”, where industrial firms and “red” socialist workers were located.¹⁰⁹ This indicates that he was attracted to an anti-communist, pan-German nationalist ideology from a very early point. Unlike most of the policemen in the sample, his mother died when he was four, and his father, a butcher in Salzburg, died in 1921, a few years after Franz returned from the war. While working as a waiter before the First World War, he was introduced at age fifteen to homosexual sex by older waiters.¹¹⁰ After he became a policeman, he got married and had a child, as virtually all the policemen did in my sample. From 1939 to 1941, while stationed in occupied Poland, he had sex with two young men (who were under 21 years old) and was convicted of sodomy by an SS court.¹¹¹ He was sentenced to twelve years in prison and was sent to Dachau concentration camp,¹¹² but was later released to help suppress the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Badly burned,¹¹³ he did not return from the war, according to information provided by his wife.¹¹⁴ Among the 94 cases of *Kriminalbeamte* I studied, his case is atypical in some ways (his homosexual activities and trial by the SS), but typical in others: He joined the police after having had a short career in another profession, advanced through the ranks before 1938, and worked in an urban police station where there were conflicts between Nazi policemen and those who, during the Austrofascist period, belonged to the single permissible political party, the Fatherland Front. Wiedermann stated that he had protected Nazi Party members in his precinct (Schmelz in the sixteenth district) and destroyed evidence that he found when searching the houses of Nazis. He claimed he was repeatedly denounced by Fatherland Front members, which contributed to his sense of grievance against the “system regime” (as Nazis called the Austrofascist government).¹¹⁵ This too was typical of the mind-set of Nazi Viennese policemen. The end of the republic saw an increasing politicisation in the actions of

109 WStLA, 2.5.1.8 A1-23, Kriminalbeamtenreferat, Wiedermann, Franz, Blz. 58, Lebenslauf, 21 August 1938.

110 Ibid, Blz. 98, Feld-Urteil, SS- und Polizeigericht XV Breslau (Abschrift), St.L. 103/42, 15 July 1942, 11.

111 Ibid, Blz. 101, 14. Because these cases were investigated in a Nazi framework, and witness statements were made to police and prosecutors (rather than to a private confidant), the men’s reasons for engaging in sexual activity with Wiedermann are subject to interpretation. One of his sexual relationships was with an 18-year-old (Kurt Z.) whom he met while stationed at a border checkpoint at Geiersdorf in 1939. Kurt was the son of a family who rented Wiedermann a little settlement house, where Kurt also lived. Wiedermann made sexual advances which Kurt tried to resist, but then the youth gave in and there was a mutual masturbation episode. In 1940, Kurt visited Wiedermann in Glogau/Glogow, Poland, and after a night of heavy drinking, Wiedermann pressed himself against Kurt and carried out “coitus-like actions”, according to the court judgment. Wiedermann also attempted sexual contact with Kurt again when he visited the family. The court refused to believe Kurt’s protests that he had resisted Wiedermann, instead believing the latter, who said Kurt had already engaged in homosexual activity before he met him, having been “corrupted” by a priest. The other case involved a 17-year-old butcher’s apprentice, Arthur K., whom Wiedermann met in a restaurant in Glogau, when Wiedermann was stationed at a border post there, north of Liegnitz/Legnica. After extremely heavy drinking at a restaurant, Wiedermann invited Arthur to his apartment and paid him to have anal sex. They were heard by the landlady, who confronted them. The matter was reported to the police, probably by the landlady. The SS court’s judgment argued that Wiedermann was not “a typical homosexual” – with the underlying subtext that a true Nazi and family man could not be a homosexual – contending that he was a man who sought sexual relations with young men because he was “uprooted” and separated from his family when he was sent to Poland. The judge also blamed the supposedly “lax” moral and legal environment in Vienna before 1938. After he was punished, the court said, he could be “won back over for his family and also for the Volksgemeinschaft”. Ibid, Blz. 100, 13.

112 Ibid, Blz. 103, Staatliche Kriminalpolizei, Kriminalpolizeileitstelle Wien, KPL-A-40/4/3/1942, 21 July 1943, 3. An die Leitung des Strafvollzugslager der SS und Polizei-Abteilung Z in Dachau.

113 Ibid, Kriminalpolizeileitstelle Wien, Büro A, Bericht, 28 November 1944.

114 Ibid, Polizeidirektion Wien, Kriminalbeamtenreferat, Betrifft: Wiedermann Franz, Aufenthaltsermittlung, 29 June 1946.

115 Ibid, Lebenslauf, 21 August 1938; Meldung der Beamten welche als Alte Kämpfer angesehen werden können (Abschrift), 4 April 1939.

the police vis-à-vis the public and intensified political conflicts among policemen within the ranks, representing a change in police culture involving power struggles inside station houses. The history of the next era shows that efforts to force the police officers to conform to the state's ideology were not wholly successful, challenging the view that the police was simply a political tool of the state.

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Article

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“We beg you not to equate the names of Gypsies and knife-grinders with honest traders”

Itinerant Trade and the Racialisation of ‘Gypsies’ in the Czech Lands between 1918 and 1938

Abstract

This article focusses on common contemporary associations of itinerant trades with ‘Gypsiness’ and the consequent relationship between adopting anti-Gypsy measures and state intentions to regulate the profession of itinerant trades. By analysing the intended bill on itinerant trades, this article shows how administrative police terms such as ‘Gypsies’ and ‘work-shies’ were intertwined. It further argues that limiting space for mobile, self-employed economic activities went hand in hand with legalising the status of second-class citizens in 1927 when a new law On Wandering Gypsies was passed by the Czechoslovak Parliament. The article also analyses the agency of one particular itinerant traders’ association called Kotva (Anchor) and pays attention to the traders’ manifold defensive strategies. Because of their close contacts with Roma and Sinti (with whom they shared social and economic spaces) the traders sought to set themselves apart from Gypsies and to present themselves as ‘decent citizens’, in other words part of the Czechoslovak nation. In their successful effort to shield themselves from being included in the new police register of ‘wandering Gypsies’, they reproduced and amplified the state aim to eliminate ‘work-shies’ among itinerant traders. The article thus deals with the process of racialization of the category of ‘Gypsies’ in interwar Czechoslovakia, with racialization here being presented as an intricate historical process which was influenced even by non-state historical actors.

A few years after the Czechoslovak Republic was established in 1918, the government in Prague received a number of complaints about the “Gypsy scourge” made by local state authorities and municipalities from various districts in Bohemia. The local authorities demanded the adoption of a special law on “Gypsies, itinerant performers, peddlers etc.”¹ When these demands to “solve the Gypsy question” were made again shortly after Czechoslovakia accepted the Munich Agreement in September 1938, local authorities defined the group of inhabitants who were supposed to be targeted

1 Národní archiv v Praze [National Archives in Prague] (NA), Ministerstvo vnitra – stará registratura [Ministry of Interior Records – Old Registration] (MV-SR), karton (k.) 357; NA, Předsednictvo Ministerské Rady [Presidium of Ministerial Council] (PMR), k. 2514.

and interned simply as Gypsies² or “wandering Gypsies” – a term which reflected the legislative changes made during the interwar period – and “vagrants” or “work-shies”.³

The main aim of this article is to elaborate on the fact that itinerant performers, peddlers, and circus performers – specific economic professions historically associated with a nomadic lifestyle and therefore with ‘Gypsiness’ – were excluded from this category in the late 1930s. I here aim to outline the process of narrowing down the category of Gypsies in interwar Czechoslovakia.

Scholarship⁴ on anti-Gypsy measures and social welfare has only very recently started paying more attention to the economic activities (e.g. self-employment strategies) that were described as peddling, hawking, or simply as itinerant professions and were associated with Gypsies. Continuing from current research in the field, this article first examines the state effort to regulate peddling and itinerant trades in interwar Czechoslovakia in connection with contemporary anti-Gypsy measures, especially the *Law on Wandering Gypsies* from 1927. Second, the article reconstructs the agency of itinerant traders themselves. An analysis of the journal *Kotva*,⁵ which was published by the Association of Travelling Entertainment Business Owners between 1920 and 1941, reveals the defensive strategies they applied in order to prove they belonged to the society of ‘decent’ Czechoslovak citizens and, at the same time, to distance themselves from the common image of Gypsies.

The article thus aims to contribute to the broader research question regarding the long-term process of racialisation of the category of Gypsies, which is usually grasped in terms of developments either in interconnected expert fields of knowledge such as anthropology and criminology (in particular criminal biology) or in the police practices influenced by the changes of political regimes and ideology (in particular in the ‘Third Reich’).⁶ By contrast, this text shows that racialisation was a much more intricate process which was not only shaped by the actions of various scientists, policemen, officials, politicians, and the Nazi leadership, but also affected by non-state actors such as itinerant traders.

2 Throughout this article, I use the terms (anti-)Gypsy/ies and (anti-)Roma with different meanings. By the term Gypsy/ies, I refer to the contemporary usage through which the term labelled various groups of people, such as peddlers, itinerant traders, or vagrants, as well as ethnic Roma and Sinti. When I use the term Roma or Sinti, I am naming individual or collective historical actors, which identified themselves as or were considered members of ethnic Roma or Sinti communities. At the same time, I distance myself from the position, which for example Leo Lucassen advocated that the label Gypsy denominated inhabitants with an itinerant lifestyle. Leo Lucassen/Wim Willems/Annemarie Cottaar, Introduction, in: Leo Lucassen/Wim Willems/Annemarie Cottaar (ed.), *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*, New York 1998, 1-13. As Jennifer Illuzzi pointed out, Roma and Sinti tended to be much more sedentary than we imagine: Jennifer Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914. Lives Outside the Law*, Basingstoke 2014, 18-19. This holds true even for the context of the Czech Lands in the interwar period.

3 NA, Zemský úřad v Praze – policejní a bezpečnostní záležitosti [Provincial Office, Prague Records – Matters Related to the Police and Security] (ZÚ-pbz), k. 853-854.

4 Juliane Tatarinov, *Kriminalisierung des ambulanten Gewerbes. Zigeuner- und Wandergewerbepolitik im späten Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main 2015; Sigrid Wadauer, *Asking for the Privilege to Work. Applications for a Peddling Licence (Austria in the 1920s and 1930s)*, in: Andreas Gestrich/Elisabeth Hurren/Steven King (ed.), *Poverty and Sickness in Modern Europe. Narratives of the Sick Poor, 1780–1938*, New York 2012, 225-246; Sigrid Wadauer, *Mobility and Irregularities. Itinerant Sales in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s*, in: Thomas Buchner/Philip R. Hoffmann-Rehnitz (ed.), *Shadow Economies and Irregular Work in Urban Europe (16th to Early 20th Centuries)*, New York 2011, 197-216.

5 *Kotva. První odborový časopis Celostátní organizace majitelů cestovních zábavních podniků* [The Anchor. The First Union Journal of the National Association of Travelling Entertainment Business Owners], 1920–1941.

6 Peter Widman, *The Campaign against the Restless. Criminal Biology and the Stigmatization of the Gypsies 1890–1960*, in: Roni Stauber/Raphael Vago (ed.), *The Roma. A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, Budapest 2007, 19-29; Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy. From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, London 1997. On the context of interwar Czechoslovakia, see: Pavel Baloun, *Von der “Landplage” zur “fremden Rasse”. Die Repräsentation der Zigeuner in der tschechoslowakischen Kriminalistik (1918–1939)*, in: *Bohemia* 59 (2019) 1, 50-76.

Czechoslovak Anti-Gypsy Measures and the Bill on Itinerant Trades

The complaints about the “Gypsy scourge” made by local Czechoslovak authorities between 1921 and 1923 led to long-term ministerial and administrative debates.⁷ High-ranking officers of the Czechoslovak gendarmerie, state officials from different ministries, and provincial offices across the state sought to formulate a solution to the so-called ‘Gypsy question’ which would fit the image of Czechoslovakia as modern, civilised, and Western liberal democratic nation state.⁸ They differentiated between repressive and preventive measures. Apart from tightening existing police measures against vagrancy and begging, in other words the whole complex of anti-Gypsy measures inherited from the Habsburg Monarchy,⁹ the first measures were also supposed to restrict licences issued to itinerant traders. In the image of the newly established state being constructed in contrast to the alleged ‘outdated’ and ‘oppressive’ Austria-Hungary, the participants placed a strong emphasis on the latter measures. A special police register based on dactyloscopy, labour camps or colonies, and special education for children who were supposed to be taken away from their parents constituted the most frequently mentioned preventive measures.

The ongoing debate, however, ended with a statement by the Ministry of the Interior in 1924 that the desired bill would violate the Czechoslovak Constitution as well as the international treaties, which had Czechoslovakia signed after the First World War.¹⁰ Thus, the concerns about damaging the image of the state outweighed the demands of local authorities, which were articulated in terms of public security. The Ministry of the Interior, further, referred to the lack of state finances needed especially for the preventive measures.¹¹

The situation changed rapidly in 1927 when the gendarmerie discovered a so-called Gypsy criminal band from Moldava nad Bodvou, a village near Košice in eastern Slovakia, which attracted the attention of the Czechoslovak as well as other European media because of a sensational accusation of cannibalism.¹² The trial legitimised the creation of a new bill entitled *On Wandering Gypsies* by the centre-right Czechoslovak government, which was passed by parliament on 14 July 1927. The Czechoslovak Act No. 117/1927 *On Wandering Gypsies*, which followed anti-Gypsy

7 The analysis of the administrative debate on the ‘Gypsy question’ is based on the following archival sources: NA, Ministerstvo spravedlnosti [Ministry of Justice Records] (MSpr.), k. 562; NA, MV-SR, k. 1; NA, Zemské četnické velitelství v Praze [Records of the Headquarters of the Provincial Gendarmerie] (ZČV), k. 100.

8 Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe (1914–1948)*, New York 2009.

9 Tara Zahra, “Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge”. Roma, Migration Panics and Internment in the Habsburg Empire, in: *American Historical Review* 122 (2017) 3, 702–726; Susan Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide, and Rule. An Integrative History of Poverty Policy, Social Policy, and Social Reform in Hungary under the Habsburg Monarchy*, Budapest 2011; Marius Weigl, *Armutspolitik, Antiziganismus und Wohlfahrt in Cisleithanien zwischen 1900 und 1914*, in: Olga Fejtová/Milan Hlavačka/Václava Horčáková/Veronika Knotková (ed.), *Poverty, Charity and Social Welfare in Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2017, 389–408.

10 On the international context, see for example: Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe’s Twentieth Century*, New York 1999, 40–76. On the context of interwar Czechoslovakia, see: René Petráš, *Menšiny v meziválečném Československu. Právní postavení národnostních menšin v první Československé republice a jejich mezinárodněprávní ochrana [Minorities in Interwar Czechoslovakia. The Legal Status of National Minorities in the First Czechoslovak Republic and their International Legal Protection]*, Prague 2009.

11 NA, MV-SR, k. 1, opis odpovědi ministerstva vnitra na interpelaci poslance F. Matznera o vzmáhajícím se sužování cikány (11. června 1924) [Copy of the Ministry of the Interior’s Response to F. Matzner’s Questioning of the Wandering Gypsies] (11 June 1924).

12 NA, Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí – výstřížkový archiv [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Clippings Archive], k. 2328.

measures taken in France in 1912¹³ and Bavaria in 1926,¹⁴ enabled the state authorities to strip a group of inhabitants of their civil rights granted by the constitution. “Wandering Gypsies” were fingerprinted and their body measurements were recorded by the local gendarmerie. This information, together with further personal data, was sent to a centralised police register, the so-called Gypsy register, part of the register of habitual criminals of the Czechoslovak gendarmerie. “Wandering Gypsies” received special “Gypsy passports” and “wandering permits” and were obliged to have these documents with them at all time.¹⁵ The main intention of the creators was clearly articulated in the official administrative journal of the Ministry of Interior in 1928, namely to “fight against an ancient evil which lies in the fact that among us lives an element which is foreign, even dangerous to our culture and our social order”.¹⁶ Instead of prohibiting the movement of wandering Gypsies and similar vagrants entirely, the law thus aimed at regulating it by means of putting this heterogeneous group of inhabitants under permanent police surveillance and by means of various locally enforced restrictions regarding camping sites, the number of people travelling together, and so forth.

From the very beginning, the creators of the bill *On Wandering Gypsies* relied on the fact that additional legislative norms would be prepared to extend the complex of anti-Gypsy measures in different ways. However, their preparations and hearings took much longer than expected. Almost two years later, in June 1929, the Czechoslovak parliament passed Act No. 102/1929 *On the Establishment of Forced Labour Colonies*,¹⁷ which was supposed to complement the existing system of workhouses and unified legal differences between the Czech Lands, Slovakia, and Carpathian Ruthenia. However, various traders’ associations along with the Chamber of Commerce complained about creating new state competitors and emphasised the extraordinary economic conditions arising from the Great Depression. Hence, no forced labour colonies ended up being established in interwar Czechoslovakia.¹⁸

Another legislative norm upon which the creators of the law *On Wandering Gypsies* counted was the bill on itinerant trades which the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Trades had been preparing since 1927.¹⁹ One of the main motivations behind this bill was the unification of existing legislation on itinerant trades in interwar Czechoslovakia, since different regulations – inherited from Cisleithania (the

13 Martine Kaluszynski, Republican Identity. Bertillonage as Government Technique, in: Jane Caplan/Jane Torpey (ed.), Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World, Oxford 2001, 123-138.

14 Volker Zimmermann, “Zigeuner” als “Landplage”. Diskriminierung und Kriminalisierung von Sinti und Roma in Bayern und den böhmischen Ländern (Ende 19. Jahrhundert bis 1939), in: Milan Hlavačka/Robert Luft/Ulrike Lunow (ed.), Tschechien und Bayern. Gegenüberstellungen und Vergleiche vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart, Munich 2016, 207-223.

15 Celia Donert, The Rights of the Roma. The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia, Cambridge 2017, 21-26.

16 Vratislav Kalousek, Zákon o potulných cikánech I. [The Law on Wandering Gypsies I], in: Věstník ministerstva vnitra ČSR [Journal of the Ministry of Interior] 9 (1927) 8, 217-224, here 223.

17 At the beginning of this norm lay a bill proposed by a group of republican representatives in the Czechoslovak parliament in 1921 and again in 1926. See: Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna [Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library], Národní shromáždění 1920–1925 [National Assembly 1920–1925] (NS), tisk 2282, http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/tisky/t2282_00.htm (27 July 2019) and NS 1925–1929, tisk 631, http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1925ns/ps/tisky/t0631_00.htm (27 July 2019).

18 See: NA, PMR, k. 1997, and NA, Ministerstvo vnitra – nová registratura [Ministry of Interior Records – New Registration] (MV-NR), k. 296.

19 NA, MSpr., k. 562, odpověď ministrů vnitra, spravedlnosti a průmyslu, obchodu a živností na interpelaci poslanců H. Bergmanna, Fr. Zeminové, Emila Špatného a spol. (4. 6. 1927) [Reply of the Ministers of the Interior, Justice and Industry, Trade and Trades to the Question of H. Bergmann, Fr. Zeminová, Emil Špatný et al. (4 June 1927)].

Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy) – applied in the Czech Lands than in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. Moreover, some of these decrees were almost 100 years old.²⁰ Preparations of the bill took eight years because the ministry consulted various chambers of commerce located in different parts of the state as well as manifold associations of entrepreneurs, peddlers, stallholders, and itinerant traders concerning the draft. The long-lasting debates revealed that these actors represented very diverse economic interests which conflicted and overlapped across the lines of class, nationality, and regional ties.

The majority of the chambers of commerce, which represented mainly the interests of the upper middle class, preferred an abolition of itinerant trades in general or at least restrictions to such extent that itinerant trades would be significantly reduced.²¹ Smaller entrepreneurs were divided not only into individual associations, which advocated on behalf of the interests of their specific professions, but also into national or regional camps. Small Czech entrepreneurs in particular complained long-term to the ministry about “wandering Slovaks”, who purportedly practiced itinerant glazier or tinker works in large numbers. The Czech association of glaziers repeatedly asked the ministry to order the local authorities to police “wandering Slovaks” and expel those who practiced the trade without legal permits.²² Many other organisations were also concerned about the inclusion of their professions in the bill, which would allegedly lead to an expansion of itinerant traders coming from Slovakia, in other words promoting economic competition instead of reducing it.²³

At the same time, the ministry received several letters made by associations of itinerant traders themselves or by local authorities on their behalf, which in very similar ways emphasised the social neediness of these professions in relation to the social and economic conditions in the region. For example, sievers from northern Moravia buttressed their plea with the argument that their professions traditionally passed from father to son and were practiced mainly within the territory of one region. They thus shielded themselves from the negative image of a nomadic lifestyle. They were also able to underpin their plea with the support of the local sieve producers and thereby allayed any suspicions of living at the expense of sedentary (non-itinerant) workers.²⁴ In another letter, the local authority from Valaská Belá, a village in western Slovakia, conveyed a complaint by several local inhabitants who itinerantly practiced glazing work about their persecution by the Czech authorities. They argued that, just as with the many Czechs working in Slovakia, their profession should be at least tolerated with respect to the humane principles of the new state and added that under Hungarian rule “our glaziers in Budapest could practice their work without any obstacles”.²⁵

The ministry officials managed to integrate both these conflicting demands into the bill by stressing differences in the social and economic development between the

20 NA, Ministerstvo obchodu, průmyslu a živností [Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Trades Records] (MPOŽ), k. 2002, důvodová zpráva k návrhu zákona o kočovných živnostech [Explanation to the Proposed Legislation on Nomadic Trades].

21 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, Ústředna čl. obchodních a živnostenských komor v Praze [Chambers of Commerce and Trade in Prague] (9 February 1933).

22 E.g. NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, Svaz závodů sklenářských v Československu [Association of Glass Factories in Czechoslovakia] (24 March 1932).

23 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, Jednota mistrů klempířských [Union of Tinsmiths] (18 April 1932), Společenstvo soustružníků, deštníkářů, kovotlačitelů, dýmkařů, formařů a hřebenařů ve Velké Praze [The Association of Turneries, Umbrellas-makers, Metal-extruders, Pipe-makers, Forge-makers and Cresters in Great Prague] (15 February 1936).

24 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, Severomoravští sítaři pracující na licenci [Northmoravian Sieve-makers Working under License] (21 March 1937).

25 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, Notářský úřad vo Valaskej Belej [Notary Office in Valaská Bela] (31 October 1934).

Czech lands and the so-called ‘East of the Republic’²⁶ – Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia with their manifold folkloristic traditions were thus construed as backward peripheries of the modern state. Here, social neediness was supposed to be the major concern of the authorities. In the territory of the Czech Lands, which were understood primarily as the economic centre of the state, social neediness was by contrast supposed to only play a very marginal role, with the exception of a few peripheral regions with long-lasting traditions of practicing very specific itinerant trades.²⁷

The category of social neediness to which the historical actors were so accustomed – as the before-mentioned pleas show – stemmed from the system of poor relief inherited from Austria-Hungary.²⁸ At the heart of both similar and locally administered frameworks stood the domicile (*Heimatrecht*), which on the one hand determined poor relief and on the other shaped policing of vagrancy, begging, and prostitution. Given the process of mass migration to industrial cities of the rural population, which nevertheless often preserved the legal ties (domicile) to rural areas, local municipalities shared the majority of the costs of industrialisation. In this context, local administrations very often issued licences to local paupers and people with disabilities for specific door-to-door services such as collecting bones, leather, and rags as well as knife-grinding, and busking as an alternative means of poor relief.²⁹ Thus, these manifold self-employed economic activities were practiced as regular jobs along with officially legitimised begging, which was otherwise prohibited.

The statistical data collected by the Czechoslovak central administration between 1927 and 1928 reflected the fact that the former Austrian-Hungarian practice was still used by local authorities in the new state. A significant majority of the licences issued or prolonged by the state authorities in the Czech lands related to the collection of bones, leather, and rags.³⁰ Hence, the intended regulation of itinerant trades was closely related to the plan to decrease poor relief and to replace it with more centrally organised social welfare such as unemployment insurance and the like. Given the attitude of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Trades, precisely these former self-employed practices, which represented an alternative form of poor relief, were to be targeted by the new legislation and reduced substantially in the Czech lands. But at the same time these practices were supposed to be tolerated in the context of the ‘undeveloped’ or ‘backward’ East.

The bill on itinerant trades was proposed to the Czechoslovak Parliament in 1935 but did not pass.³¹ A major topic of disagreement was the question of which itinerant

26 Pavel Baloun, *Československá civilizační mise. asimilační praktiky vůči “cikánským” dětem v letech 1918–1943* [The Czechoslovak Civilizing Mission. Assimilation Practices towards Romani Children 1918–1943], in: *Dějiny-Teorie-Kritika* [History-Theory-Criticism] 15 (2018) 2, 175–202; Stanislav Holubec, “We Bring Order, Discipline, Western European Democracy, and Culture to this Land of Former Oriental Chaos and Disorder”. Czech Perceptions of Sub-Carpathian Rus and its Modernization in the 1920s, in: Stanislav Holubec/Joachim von Puttkamer (ed.), *Mastery and Lost Illusions. Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, Munich 2014, 223–250; Victoria Shmidt, *Public Health as an Agent of Internal Colonialism in Interwar Czechoslovakia. Shaping the Discourse about the Nation’s Children*, in: *Patterns of Prejudice* 52 (2018) 4, 355–387.

27 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, *důvodová zpráva k návrhu zákona o potulných živnostech* [Explanation to the Draft Wandering Trade Act], 8–9.

28 Jakub Rákosník/Igor Tomeš, *Sociální stát v Československu. Právně-institucionální vývoj v letech 1918–1992* [The Welfare State in Czechoslovakia. Legal and Institutional Development 1918–1992], Prague 2012; Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide, and Rule*.

29 Wadauer, *Asking for the Privilege to Work*, 225–246.

30 See the reports compiled by district offices in Bohemia and Moravia NA, MPOŽ, k. 2003.

31 NA, MPOŽ, k. 2002, *poznámka MPOŽ* (28 November 1941).

trades were supposed to be included in the law and therefore which of them would have acquired a better status and which were to be significantly restricted.

The explicitly articulated relation between the new Czechoslovak anti-Gypsy measures and the proposed bill on itinerant trades was based on the state goal to firstly 'eliminate' those who allegedly committed illegal acts (such as vagrancy, begging, and theft) "under the pretence of professing itinerant trades"³² and, second, to put these inhabitants under special, permanent police surveillance. Because professions which were most frequently associated with Roma and Sinti such as collecting bones, rags, and leather or busking, for example, were never included in the bill, state officials also specifically targeted the heterogenous group labelled as Gypsies. Limiting the space for self-employed mobile economic activities³³ went hand-in-hand with legalising the status of second-class citizens³⁴ under the term of "wandering Gypsies".

In the Name of Professional Honour: Itinerant Traders' Struggle for Economic and Civic Recognition

On 15 September 1920, several itinerant traders, mainly from Bohemia, established the Association of Travelling Entertainment Business Owners, called Kotva (Anchor), and published the first issue of their monthly journal under the same title.³⁵ Kotva, which had around fifty members to start with, united itinerant puppeteers, individual performers, travelling cinematographers, owners of circuses and menageries, and others.³⁶ Some of them belonged to old and large families of famous travellers/travelling show people such as the Berousek, Kaiser, Kludský, Kočka, Kopecký, and Lagron families.³⁷ Although it was a very heterogeneous group of itinerant traders who did business in entertainment, they were all subject to the same originally Habsburg legislation.³⁸ Taking into account that at the beginning of the 1920s 12.3 per cent of the inhabitants who were labelled as Gypsies by the state authorities in the territory of Bohemia were denominated as "itinerant performers"

32 NA, MPOŽ, důvodová zpráva k návrhu zákona o potulných živnostech, 8-9.

33 In 1926, the Czechoslovak parliament passed Act No. 87/1926 On Peddling, according to which peddling licences were to be denied to those, who committed offences such as begging and vagrancy. See: Zákon č. 87/1926 Sb. z. a n. ze dne 4. května 1926 o podomním obchodě: Law No. 87/1926 Collection of Laws of May 4th, 1926 Concerning the Peddler-Business. <https://www.epravo.cz/vyhledavani-aspi/?Id=4161&Section=1&Id-Para=1&ParaC=2> (27 July 2019).

34 Donert, *The Rights of The Roma*, 45-47.

35 *Organisační almanach* [Organisational Almanach], in: *Kotva* 19 (1938) 7, 2.

36 See for example the list of subscribers at the end of the issues from the 1920s: *Adresář předplatitelů* [Address Directory of the Subscribers], in: *Kotva* 4 (1923) 6, 4.

37 The Czech word *světští* could be used either to denominate travellers in general or a community of travelling show people. Although they are commonly understood as non-Romani travellers, such a clear-cut ethnic distinction is misleading. The relation between these travelling show people families and Roma is much more intricate and ambiguous. They distanced themselves from any connection with Gypsies and yet, at the same time, their popularity had a lot to do with the romantic image of Gypsies and they shared many similar features. See: Markéta Skočovská, *Světští. Identita a základní kulturní rysy* [Světští. The Identity and its Basic Cultural Features], diploma thesis, Prague 2010, 93-95. Recent genealogical as well as historical research shows that these families had manifold family ties with Roma and Sinti from the Czech lands. Jana Horváthová, *Meziválečné zastavení mezi Romy v českých zemích* [Stopping by the Roma from the Czech Lands in the Interwar Period], in: *Romano Džaniben* 12 (2005) 3, 63-84; Hanka Tlamsová, *Loutkoherci, gymnasté, kramáři a šlejiři. Proměny životních strategií světských rodů od konce 18. do počátku 20. století* [Puppeteers, Gymnasts, Vendors, and Blade Sharpeners. Changes in the Life Strategies of Itinerant Lineages between the Late Eighteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries], diploma thesis, České Budějovice 2016, 52-142.

38 Ivan Klímeš, *Kinematograf, rakouský stát a České země 1895–1912* [Cinematography, the Austrian State, and the Czech Lands, 1895–1912], in: *Iluminace* 11 (2002) 1, 73-87.

by profession, they all had to deal with the label of ‘Gypsiness’ in their everyday lives.³⁹

Kotva’s goal was to unite all ‘honest traders’ in order to achieve official state recognition as entrepreneurs instead of being reputed to be itinerant traders and associated with Gypsies or ‘roving bands’ and treated as such by various police authorities. Hence, they demanded such changes in legislation, which would make them subject to the trade regulations instead of various police measures targeting Gypsies. The improvement of their economic status was supposed to go hand-in-hand with the state recognition of their civic rights because municipalities often denied them domicile and consequently access to poor relief or suffrage in the same way they did to Gypsies.⁴⁰

In this context, setting themselves apart from Gypsies and presenting themselves as ‘decent citizens’, i.e. part of the Czechoslovak nation, constituted a crucial agenda for Kotva. A strong emphasis was put on the notion of professional unity and professional honour, which was related to the intention of representing the interests of the whole profession.⁴¹ Equally important to establishing the imagined professional community was the effort to portray this community as part of the Czechoslovak nation. In various articles published on the pages of the journal, the authors often stated that Kotva’s membership included many former Czechoslovak legionaries who had fought for national independence.⁴² In the 1930s, these members even used to go to meetings with state authorities or to deliver official complaints on behalf of Kotva.⁴³ Itinerant puppeteers represented further proof of belonging to the nation, as they were portrayed as descendants of the so-called Czech revivalists who helped defend the language, culture, and traditions in times of Habsburg repression long before the Czechoslovak Republic was established.⁴⁴ In this way, Kotva tried to build its own image of honest, reliable, and loyal entrepreneurs who were mistreated by the authorities of the state that they had helped establish and who were denounced by the nation that they had helped revive as cultural workers.

This emphasis on professionalism as well as the advocacy of national interests also functioned as a shield against the possible symbolical contamination with ‘Gypsiness’. ‘Roving bands’ or ‘knife-grinders’ were supposed to represent those who took advantage of the state licences for itinerant traders and who purportedly lived on begging and theft under the pretence of practising itinerant trades. Their licences were depicted as “begging licences”⁴⁵ which on the one hand revealed their place within the system of poor relief but on the other highlighted the substantial difference. Whereas travelling entertainment business owners were itinerant because of economic needs, in other words for professional reasons, the Gypsies’ nomadic life-

39 A specific administrative register of Gypsies was created between 1922 and 1924, not long after the state census was conducted in the newly established Czechoslovakia in 1921. State authorities collected data on the total of 53,274 inhabitants that were – for various reasons – labelled as Gypsies. Ctibor Nečas, *Evidence československých Cikánů z let 1922–1927* [Registers of Czechoslovak Gypsies 1922–1927], in: *Český lid* [The Czech People] 73 (1986) 2, 66–71.

40 *Dostanou majitelé cestovních a zábav. podniků volební právo?* [Will Travelling Entertainment Business Owners Receive the Right to Vote?], in: *Kotva* 15 (1934) 5, 1.

41 *Pro stavovskou čest a hospodářské zabezpečení* [For Professional Honour and Economic Protection], in: *Kotva* 15 (1934) 12, 4–5.

42 *Referát přednesený před valnou hromadou místopředsedou kol. Měchurou* [A Paper Presented by the Deputy Chairman Měchura at the General Meeting], in: *Kotva* 11 (1930) 11, 3.

43 *Protokol ze sjezdu Prvního celostátního spolku majitelů cestovních zábavních podniků* [The Proceedings from the First Statewide Meeting of Travelling Entertainment Business Owners], in: *Kotva* 19 (1938) 5, 1–2.

44 *Tradice loutkařů a lidových umělců* [The Tradition of Puppeteers and Folk Artists], in: *Kotva* 15 (1934) 4, 5.

45 *Hausírka* [Door-to-door Sale], in: *Kotva* 19 (1938) 3, 2.

style allegedly came from their close connection with nature and animalism. Kotva's members also contrasted their domesticity (neatness, normative gender roles, school education, and so forth) with the Gypsies, who allegedly embodied the reverse: filthiness, prostitution (concubinage), and illiteracy. Here, the urgent need to distance themselves from Gypsies reflected the fact that in reality they – as well as many other itinerant traders and peddlers in different parts of interwar Czechoslovakia – did share with them social and economic spaces such as camping sites, fairs, and market-places and often created bonds with them.⁴⁶

In the 1920s, this close connection with Gypsies on the level of popular imagination as well as in everyday life led to amplified police surveillance. Given the professionalisation of police practices by means of new techniques of identification and classification,⁴⁷ Kotva had to face the threat of being included in the special police registers and, through their contamination with 'Gypsiness', of eventually being put on a par with so-called habitual criminals.⁴⁸ Hence, Kotva adopted several self-defence strategies. First, all members received special yearly renewed membership cards which they could produce when checked by police authorities.⁴⁹ They also received special membership badges, which they were supposed to attach to their wagons.⁵⁰ These were meant to distinguish them visually as honest entrepreneurs from other itinerant traders and at the same time prevent them from being included in the special police register as Gypsies. Second, in order to show their willingness to cooperate with police authorities and to underpin their status as honest traders, Kotva planned to create a register of their own.⁵¹ Finally, they hired their own lawyer who was supposed to represent the members when dealing with the authorities and to help them file complaints.⁵²

After the Law on Wandering Gypsies was passed in Czechoslovakia in 1927, Kotva feared the newly created police register and intensified its effort to negotiate with officials from the Ministry of Interior. Even though membership in the association was not explicitly mentioned, the ministry created a circular, which ordered the relevant police authorities not to target those travelling entertainment business owners who honestly practised their trade.⁵³ They were at least partially successful in this endeavour as Kotva members were not labelled as 'wandering Gypsies' nor included in the so-called Gypsy police register. Because of their lifestyle, however, as well as manifold close connections with Roma and Sinti and regional differences in the enforcement of the new anti-Gypsy measures, they had to distance themselves time and again from 'Gypsiness' in their contacts with the state authorities.⁵⁴

The strengthening of anti-Gypsy measures impacted a growing number of members and led to renewed efforts by Kotva seeking state recognition during the 1930s. In 1934, Kotva became part of the Central Union of National Socialist Tradesmen's

46 Horváthová, *Meziválečné zastavení*, 68.

47 See: Baloun, *Von der "Landplage" zur "fremden Rasse"*.

48 Evidence a pohyb cikánů I [Register of Gypsies and their Movement I], in: *Bratrství [Brotherhood]* 8 (1925) 5, 19-20. See also: *Zlo venkova [Gypsy Scourge]*, in: *Kotva* 7 (1925) 2, 3.

49 *Těžký úkol [Difficult Task]*, in: *Kotva* 7 (1925) 2, 3.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Výborová schůze [Board Session]*, in: *Kotva* 22 (1941) 8, 1-2.

52 The lawyer regularly attended meetings of the board. *Protokol [Minutes]*, in: *Kotva* 11 (1930) 11, 1-3. For the official complaint, see: *Moravský zemský archiv [Moravian Provincial Archives]*, *Zemský úřad Brno [Provincial Office in Brno Records]*, k. 2541, *stížnost Sdružení cestovních a zábavních podniků se sídlem v Praze [Complaint of the Association of Travel and Entertainment Enterprises Based in Prague]* (13 April 1927).

53 *Ponižující soupis našich podniků zase straší [Humiliating Register of our Businesses Threatens Us Again]*, in: *Kotva* 15 (1934) 9, 3.

54 *Ibid.*

Associations (*Ústřední svaz jednot a spolků národně socialistického živnostnictva*) and, thus, the governing political party, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party.⁵⁵ This step was meant to prove their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state. At the same time, the political capital of the wider organisation was supposed to provide them with the desired economic status as well as civic rights (for example suffrage). Although they gained a better position in negotiations with the state authorities, these attempts failed to bring any legislative changes.

In the First Czechoslovak Republic, Kotva never managed to represent all travelling entertainment business owners⁵⁶ and therefore never became the only officially acknowledged organisation representing the united interests of the profession.⁵⁷ The lack of success in this field generated more concerns for the professional honour and reliability of the traders and members themselves. It is not an accident that the recurrent calls for purging the profession of “all dishonest elements” resembled the aim of the bill on itinerant trades.⁵⁸ By reshaping the popular image of Gypsies – in order not to include the travelling entertainment business owners – Kotva’s agency reproduced and amplified the state aim to eliminate ‘work-shies’ from among itinerant traders.

Racialisation of the Category of Gypsies

The special central police register of ‘wandering Gypsies’ which was established on the basis of the Law *On Wandering Gypsies* in 1927 had a crucial impact on the old police’s administrative category of Gypsies. All the data, such as fingerprints, bodily measurements and descriptions, personal data, court and police files etc. collected from every corner of Czechoslovakia were put together in order to reconstruct Gypsies as a specific and dangerous population, including their birth and mortality rates.⁵⁹ Given that the central police authorities repeatedly instructed the lower organs of the state to target all ‘racial’ Gypsies,⁶⁰ the numbers from the register reflected the general shift in understanding of the category. For example, from around 37,000 inhabitants (including children) who were labelled as ‘wandering Gypsies’ until 1937, only 180 (far less than one per cent) were placed in the category of non-Gypsies, meaning vagrants who lived like Gypsies.⁶¹ Thus, in contrast to the demands of the local authorities from the early 1920s, only a small fraction of peddlers, itinerant traders, and itinerant performers were included in the police register during the

55 Do nové práce [Towards New Work], in: Kotva (1934) 2, 3.

56 At least two other organisations which represented travelling entertainment business owners were founded on the territory of Czech Lands in the interwar period. One was located in Prague and the other – uniting German traders – in Most. Neupřímnost mosteckého spolku [Insincerity of the Association from Most], in: Kotva 12 (1931) 4, 2.

57 Pro pořádek mezi majiteli produkčních licencí. Licence jen lidem mravně bezúhonným a hospodářsky potřebným! Sdružení proti nadbytečnému počtu licencí! [For Order among the Travelling Entertainment Business Owners. Licences only for those Morally Irreproachable and in Need Economically! United against a Superfluous Number of Licences!], in: Kotva 15 (1934) 11, 3.

58 Ibid; Zlo venkova; Pro stavovskou čest a hospodářské zabezpečení [For Professional Honour and Economic Protection], in: Kotva 15 (1934) 12, 4-5.

59 Baloun, Von der “Landplage” zur “fremden Rasse”.

60 See the Czechoslovak gendarmerie’s instructions in: Potulní cikáni [Wandering Gypsies], in: Bezpečnostní služba 1 (1931) 7, 107; Rudolf Košťák, Učebnice pátrací taktiky [Textbook of Investigative Tactics], Prague 1935, 83.

61 NA, ZČV, k. 1076, Ústřední četnické pátrací oddělení, evidence cikánů, přehled činnosti za rok 1937 [Investigation Department of the Central Gendarmerie, Gypsies Register, Activities in 1937] (3 January 1938).

interwar period in Czechoslovakia. In practice, only those who had family ties with Roma and Sinti were usually targeted by the Czechoslovak gendarmerie.⁶²

The racialising effect of the register shaped the state authorities' understanding of the category of Gypsies as well as of "work-shies" and itinerant traders, which reflected the modern nation state's norms of 'hard work', 'decent professions', and so forth. At the same time, however, these categories did not overlap entirely. Because the bill on itinerant trades did not pass in the Czechoslovak parliament, there was still some room left for tensions. The Roma and Sinti living in the Czech lands sought these spaces in order to escape from the register. Just like the members of the Association of Travelling Entertainment Business Owners, they presented themselves as non-Gypsy 'honest traders' with varying degrees of success.⁶³

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62 Horváthová, *Meziválečné zastavení*, 68; Jana Horváthová, *Dílčí příspěvek k zamyšlení nad povahou a působením zákona č. 117/1927 Sbn. o potulných cikánech ze zorného úhlu současných znalostí v oblasti romistiky a sociální práce. (Na základě nepublikovaných písemných i ústních pramenů)* [Partial Contribution to a Reflection on the Nature and Practice of the Act No. 117/1927 on Wandering Gypsies from the Perspective of Current Knowledge in the Field of Romani Studies and Social Work (Based on Unpublished Written and Oral Sources)], in: *Milý Bore, profesoru Ctiboru Nečasovi k jeho sedmdesátým narozeninám věnují přátelé, kolegové a žáci* [Dear Bor! To professor Ctibor Nečas, on his 70th Birthday from his Friends, Colleagues and Students], Brno 2003, 311-319.

63 See MZA, ZÚ, k. 7026. Until 1938, only 156 inhabitants were removed from the register. See: NA, ZČV, k. 1076.

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Quotation: Pavel Baloun, "We beg you not to equate the names of Gypsies and knife-grinders with honest traders." Itinerant Trade and the Racialisation of 'Gypsies' in the Czech Lands between 1918 and 1938, in S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 6 (2019) 2, 44-55.

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Article

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Dr. Géza Dombovány and the Budapest Circle of Jewish Legal Defenders

A Cultural History

Abstract

From 1867 onwards, Jewish middle-class families played a key role in the modernisation of Hungary. Within this group, I focus only on those families in which two subsequent generations decided to pursue a legal profession. A prominent example of this was Géza Schulhof von Dombovár and his son, Géza Richárd Dombovány. Through their adaptation to Hungarian society and their struggles with antisemitism, I intend to show some of the inner dynamism within Hungarian society more broadly, in which these Jewish lawyer families functioned for decades. In the 1880s and 1890s, Jewish Hungarians emerged in larger numbers in the legal profession and also in other segments of Hungarian public life. Some non-Jewish Hungarians perceived this as an invasion and, since educated Jewish Hungarians were accepted to fight duels, duelling represented a sphere where social tensions surrounding Jewish/non-Jewish coexistence could be fought out. This article addresses this phenomenon and suggests that one can observe a higher self-esteem among young Hungarian lawyers that was based on a combination of the emancipation process and the legal and army training they received. Furthermore, there was an interrelationship between their duelling activity which followed from this higher self-esteem and the militant legal defender activism they performed following the First World War.

Introduction

It was not uncommon to commit suicide around Christmas time. The 1938 Christmas edition of the Budapest newspaper *8 Órai Újság* (8 O'clock Daily) reported two fresh stories of notables who took their own lives in these festive days, both of them by firing into their own hearts.¹ The first was Dr. Liebermann, an ophthalmologist professor, whose brother thought the tragedy was related to the Second Anti-Jewish Law proposed by the Hungarian Prime Minister the previous day, on 23 December 1938. According to this planned law, Dr. Liebermann – although he was raised a Christian – was going to be counted as a Jew from the next year on, and he did not want to wait until this moment. Somewhat later, around midnight, a second suicide of the day was committed by Dr. Géza Dombovány, an attorney of law, who, before killing himself next to the Jewish cemetery, had left a farewell note on his desk to clarify the reasons behind his act. This message reads: “I don’t owe anyone even a penny, I leave because of the Jewish law!”²

1 Egy ismert ügyvéd öngyilkossága [The Suicide of a Well-Known Lawyer] and Agyonlőtte magát Liebermann Leó orvostanár [Leo Liebermann Medical Teacher Shot Himself], in: *8 Órai Újság*, 25 December 1938, 8.

2 “Senkinek a világon nem tartozom egy fillérrel sem, a zsidótörvény miatt távoزم!”

This study concentrates on the background of this second suicide and tries to reconstruct Dombovary's mind-set based on episodes from the life of this man. He never wanted to deny his Jewish identity, yet he felt devastated by the draft of the Second Anti-Jewish Law (the later Act IV of 1939). The novelty of this law compared to the previous legislation was that it differentiated Jews from Hungarians on a 'racial' basis, moreover defining Jews as a foreign element in the Hungarian nation. This was inconceivable for Dr. Dombovary, a lawyer primarily known as a Jewish rights defender and activist, who in the years 1919 to 1921 led the Legal Aid Office at the Pest Israelite Community. Yet there is much more to his story than just this short public engagement in the immediate post-First World War period. In my research project, I investigate Dombovary's agency through which I want to present him as an eminent example of the second generation of Jewish Hungarian lawyers that was living and working in Budapest, an emerging metropolis of the era. As Penny Summerfield pointed out recently, decades like the 1960s and 1970s saw a shift from writing the histories of important individuals like statesmen or rulers, whose great characters would influence world politics, towards social forces such as larger groups and classes. Summerfield also noted that from the 1980s onward, the 'individual' returned to the centre of historical investigation, however, not "in isolation but as part of a community; the single voice is heard speaking both for itself and for a collectivity".³ In this vein, I look for the voices of a significant part of the Budapest lawyers' chamber (Bar Association) in the story of Geza Dombovary. This is because after 1900 the ratio of Jewish Hungarians within the Hungarian Bar Association skyrocketed. In 1890, there were already 918 Jews among its 4,202 members, with even this relatively high number rising to 3,049 lawyers of Jewish background out of 6,743 Bar members in 1910.⁴ To clarify what lawyers meant for representing Jewish Hungarians in public life: In 1928, there were six Jewish MPs sitting in the Hungarian parliament, five of whom were graduates of the Faculty of Law.⁵ In addition, among the Jewish legal professionals there were a number of persons who, like Dr. Dombovary, made quite an effort in their legal practice to defend and advance the integration of Jews into Hungarian society. By shining a light on the circle of these Jewish Hungarian lawyers, one can learn a great deal about the Jewish community of Budapest.

That Dombovary took his own life was a consequence of the illiberal turn in Hungarian society at the time. In recent years, since 2014 especially, we have heard a lot about how Prime Minister Viktor Orban is guiding Hungary from liberal democracy into an illiberal one. This move includes using law and state funds for strengthening social differences and hatred, limiting space for NGOs, journalists, academics, and other potentially critical voices, advocating against pluralism, and over-emphasising the greatness of the Hungarian nation. Orban is an admirer of Regent Horthy, who led the first illiberal independent Hungary from 1920 until 1944. However, prior to him, especially between 1867 and the First World War, Hungarians displayed remarkably liberal ideas, particularly when it came to the legal rights of Jewish citizens. Hungarian society's approach towards Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a mixture of tolerance and antisemitism, but it was the former that was codified in laws. First of all, Act XVII of 1867 stipulated that Jewish and Chris-

3 Penny Summerfield, *Subjectivity, the Self and Historical Practice*, in: Sasha Handley/Rohan McWilliam/Lucy Noakes (ed.), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History*, London 2018, 21-22.

4 Data quoted in: Maria M. Kovacs, *Liberalizmus, Radikalizmus, Antiszemitizmus* [Liberalism, Radicalism, and Antisemitism], Budapest 2001, 22.

5 They were Marcell Baracs, Jeno Gal, Geza Desi, Erno Brody, and Bela Fabian, with the only non-lawyer being Pal Sandor.

tian citizens possessed exactly the same civic and political rights. Victor Karády even maintains that there was a tacit assimilationist social contract between Jews and elite non-Jews. Accordingly, the equal rights of the Jews were taken for granted and their bourgeois entrepreneurship was encouraged (especially as no Hungarian nobleman was aspiring to do such business) so long as Jews were willing to culturally assimilate and support the Hungarian elite's nationalist project vis-à-vis the Slavic minorities' separatism.⁶ Some two decades after the emancipation law, Act XLII of 1895 confirmed the 'receptió' (admission) of the Jewish denomination. This meant that the structure of Jewish religious communities was made administratively equal with the Catholic and the main Protestant religious organisations.⁷ On 4 March 1894, during the debate of the later law, reportedly about 250,000 Hungarians demonstrated on the streets of Budapest for liberalism and for the equal rights of the 'Israelites', as Jews were officially called.⁸ Two decades later, however, in 1918–1920, pogroms and Jew-baiting became a part of everyday life on the very same streets.

Critics might say the comparison is exaggerated, but I think the post-1918 and the post-2010 radical turns from liberalism to illiberal exclusionary nationalism reveal historical parallels. What was crucial in both instances was that due to the exclusionary aspect of their nationalist propaganda both needed easy scapegoats. While Prime Minister Orbán's system instigates hatred more sophisticatedly against 'migrants' (Islam), George Soros (Jews), the LGBT community, and finally against Roma, the hatred of interwar Hungarians chiefly targeted the Hungarians of Jewish origin. In both cases, furthermore, Hungary mentally closed itself off and chose to pursue a different path than did the developed Western world.⁹ This prompted both the League of Nations in the 1920s and the European Union in the 2010s to investigate whether or not the Hungarian government's acts breached international obligations. In addition, both Horthy's and Orbán's systems internally had the features of a quasi-feudal state, where connections, protections, and corruption defined one's place in the social hierarchy rather than talent, output, competitiveness, and performance.

Why I mention all of this here is because it is striking that Dr. Dombovány made his mark in Hungarian Jewish history in a very narrow timeframe, between 1919 and 1922, exactly in the worst moments of the first illiberal turn. Géza Dombovány was already a 44-year-old man when the First World War ended, yet until this point he had not really been involved in the official dealings of the Budapest (or rather only Pest) Jewish Community. However, he made a crucial impact in this relatively short, immediate post-war era, a period coinciding with the peak of popular anti-Jewish aggression in Hungary. What were the underlying causes behind his public appearance? In order to trace the possible causes, I will investigate Dombovány's pre-1919 background and pose the following questions: Which groups did he identify with? What were the most evident changes in his self-understanding? I will also investigate to what extent it was a matter of choice or force that made Géza Dombovány fight for the acceptance of Hungarian Jews by the majority society and to scrupulously docu-

6 Victor Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás* [Jewry, Modernisation, and Embourgeoisement], Budapest 1997, 19. Contrary to this, István Bibó thinks that assimilation was illusionary, and from the dominant elite's perspective it was only important that Jews learn Hungarian and declare themselves Hungarian at the census count: *Zsidó asszimiláció és zsidó öntudat* [Jewish Assimilation and Jewish Identity], in: István Bibó, *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Works], Budapest 1986, vol. 2, 745-747.

7 Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*, Detroit 1996, 361-365.

8 Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két nemzedék. Az Egyenlőség évtizedei 1881–1931* [Two Generations. The Decades of Equality 1881–1931], Budapest 1993, 64. Jews were called 'Israelites' because, at this time, they were perceived merely as a separate religious denomination rather than a national minority.

9 Of course, later much of the West got under authoritarian rule, led by Mussolini, Hitler and Franco.

ment and report to the authorities each and every anti-Jewish act of violence in the early interwar times. What did it possibly mean to him to ‘defend’, as it seems he felt very comfortable in his role as a legal ‘defender’ of the Hungarian Jews in the immediate post-First World War era.

The Army Veteran

When seeking to reconstruct the driving forces behind Dr. Dombovary’s actions, it is perhaps best to start at his tomb. The speeches delivered at his funeral as well as a lengthy obituary in the biweekly *Egyenloseg* (Equality) – a newspaper closely associated with the Pest Jewish Community – can give us an idea on which paths we should walk in order to map the important experiences of this lawyer’s life. The obituary was written by Dr. Erno Ballagi, another lawyer, who recalled that he first met Dombovary when both of them were officers in the Austro-Hungarian Army.¹⁰ Taking part in the battles of the First World War as Austro-Hungarian soldiers was a proud moment for these people. Jews often perceived army service as a chance to earn wider social acceptance and social integration through heroism. Therefore, during the war, the main Jewish media outlets, like the above-mentioned *Egyenloseg* or the *Mult es Jovo* (Past and Future), promoted the stories of Jewish Hungarian battle heroes.¹¹ In 1917, the lawyer Vilmos Vazsonyi became the first Jew in Hungarian history to be appointed a minister. His appointment underscores that the golden era of liberalism and assimilation thus extended through the First World War. However, the years 1914 to 1918 were also the period when the mainstream approach towards Jewish Hungarians was radically turned around. This was due to those politicians, journalists, and high-flying clergy representatives like Bishop Ottokar Prohaszka, who promoted a false representation of Jewish men as service shirkers and financial profiteers of the war, and of Jewish soldiers as cowards.

After the war, Dombovary did a lot to counter these claims, which is why his obituary’s second reference point refers to another kind of fight for Jewish self-respect through civic activism. He regarded himself as someone whom nowadays we would perhaps call a civil rights activist, and as such he purposefully chose legal cases where he could appear in public as a warrior of Jewish legal self-defence. One such occasion was a show trial in 1921/1922 at the Budapest court over the number of fallen Jewish soldiers.¹² Years after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the understanding of the war among Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians still differed radically, so much so that a headcount of the lost souls seemed necessary to arrive at the truth. In January 1921, a Member of Parliament by the name of Mr. Avarffy published an article in the daily *Nemzeti ıjsag* (National Newspaper) claiming that no more than one per cent of Jewish soldiers died in combat during the First World War.¹³ The chief editor of the journal *Egyenloseg* responded by calling him a liar, as one per cent

10 Bucsu Dombovary Gezatol [Farewell to Geza Dombovary], in: *Egyenloseg*, 29 December 1938, 4.

11 Publicising the stories of heroes was also a practice among other socially less appreciated groups such as women or workers. See: Eszter Balazs, The Image of the Jewish Soldier-Intellectual, in: *Mult es Jovo*, The Hungarian Review Promoting Jewish Cultural Renaissance (1914–1918), in: Gerald Lamprecht/Eleonore Lappin-Eppel/Ulrich Wyrwa (ed.), *Jewish Soldiers in the Collective Memory of Central Europe. The Remembrance of World War I from a Jewish Perspective*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2019, 121-143, 126.

12 See: Erno Ballagi, *Elesni kozerdeket volt* [It was in the Public Interest to Fall], in: *Egyenloseg*, 10 December 1921, 1.

13 Elek Avarffy, *Nehany szo a galiciaiakrol es egy kis statisztika* [A Few Words About the Galicians and Some Statistics], in: *Nemzeti ıjsag*, 6 January 1921, 1-2.

would be hardly more than 500 casualties on the Jewish Hungarians' side. This was nowhere near the real figure of over 10,000 Jewish Hungarian soldiers who lost their lives during the battles of the First World War.¹⁴ This debate interested Dombóváry all the more since being a war veteran was an integral part of his identity, little surprise that he got involved in it.

The discourse over the sacrifice of Jewish servicemen seemed to be a key question of immediate post-First World War discussions between Jews and non-Jews, thus a trial could potentially have a major impact on Hungarian public life. A lot was at stake because even the idea of a law on a numerus clausus – a regulation drastically limiting the entry of Jewish students to Hungarian universities – was rooted in this notion of Jewish unworthiness for equal rights. The Jewish editor calling the MP a liar provoked a court case: MP Avarffy sued him and it was Géza Dombóváry who acted as the defence attorney. To certain extent, Dombóváry also wanted to act as the defender of the entire Jewish community. He orchestrated strategic litigation in order to negate the ever more popular antisemitism, an anti-Jewish sentiment that saw the alleged lack of Jewish combat sacrifice as the very reason why Jewish Hungarians were unworthy of equal rights in Hungary. As a defence attorney, Dombóváry took two important steps, first prompting the court to contact the Hungarian Central Statistical Office to inquire about the official number of Jewish casualties.¹⁵ Then, he ordered the staff of the Legal Aid Office where he worked as acting director to write to all the Hungarian Jewish communities including the smallest rural ones.¹⁶ They responded with certified records from their religious registries concerning the losses of their community members in the years 1914–1918, with the cause and place of death indicated. Dombóváry thus managed in 1921 to mobilise large parts of pre-Trianon Hungarian Jewry and, by the end, two huge suitcases were needed to transport all the evidence collected by Dombóváry's team to the courtroom.¹⁷ The editor was acquitted of all charges on 2 November 1922 and, more importantly, the Central Statistical Office released a report citing a figure of 10,000 fallen Jewish soldiers. Contemporaries commented that “with this trial and the resulting verdict [...] 25 months after the acceptance of the Numerus Clausus Act, the main argument of the antisemites about the untrustworthiness of Hungarian Jewry and their lack of loyalty were shown to be a lie”.¹⁸

If one attempted to draw a mental history of Géza Dombóváry, one might assess that he often acted as someone with wounded pride, and this was certainly the case in the early 1920s concerning the issue of his time in the military. It follows from this, as well, that the above detailed court case was very important for him. We possess some information about how Dombóváry saw himself, and to be certain, he was very proud of his army achievements. Following the First World War, a cancellation of membership fee liabilities had been offered by the Budapest Lawyers' Association (Bar Association) to war veterans. Dombóváry accepted the offer, declaring that “I was away from Budapest and fought through the entire World War from the first day to the last.”¹⁹ Regarding what taking part in the war meant to Dombóváry, we can find further evidence in a correspondence between the Ministry of Defence and the

14 Avarffy hazudik [Avarffy is Lying], in: *Egyenlőség*, 15 January 1921, 1.

15 Szabolcsi, *Két nemzedék*, 325.

16 *Ibid.*, 318, 322.

17 The popular daily *Az Est* mentions that Dombóváry submitted to the court the data of thousands of fallen Jewish servicemen on no less than 56 pages. Find this in: *Az Est*, 8 February 1922, 8.

18 Ernő Ballagi, cited in: *Ibid.*, 319.

19 A Budapesti Ügyvédi Kamara Irattára [The Archives of the Budapest Bar Association], Dr. Dombóváry Géza, file no. 2397, see the document dated 3 March 1920.

Pest Israelite Community from 1920. The cause of this exchange of letters was a complaint from a certain Mr. Eibenschütz, who turned to the Jewish community's legal aid office to tell how violently he had been treated by some Hungarian soldiers one day in late May 1920. According to the claimant, unknown soldiers arrested him on the street without any reason other than being Jewish, and detained him and his four friends at the makeshift army headquarters in the former stock exchange building. There, all of them supposedly were beaten by stocks of rifles and bayonets, and later their injuries had to be treated by emergency doctors. Mr. Eibenschütz turned to the Jewish legal aid office for help, and Dombovány had no reason to question the credibility of the claimant, who had visible injuries from beatings and was covered with bandage red from fresh bloodstains. Dombovány therefore prepared a report about the case, which was then immediately mailed to the Ministry of Defence.²⁰ The ministry's angry response rejected part of the accusations and, in a letter dated 3 July 1920, they claimed that only two persons had been arrested and not five, and even those two had not been beaten. At the same time, the ministry requested the personal data of that "biased worker of the Jewish community who could prepare such a report full of exaggerations based on fake information and whose letter was taken as an insult against the Hungarian army and its officers".²¹ Dombovány's alleged error offers further clues about his commitments to the military. In the letter of response, the head of the Jewish community defended him for the following reasons: First, Dombovány, even though he was solely responsible for all documents leaving the legal aid office, worked for free and had dealt mostly alone with a great number of clients, whose number exceeded 1,000 in the last year. Second, the Jewish community's letter underlines that Dombovány had strong affections towards the Hungarian army especially as he had fought through the entire World War. He volunteered for frontline combat and was decorated for his brave services as a commander of a machine gun unit in Montenegro.²² No doubt, in 1920 this information had to be made public by Dombovány himself, who always approached his fellow war veterans with the utmost respect and who always remained nostalgic about his world war experiences. It seems to me that Dombovány's and the obituary writer Ballagi's post-war pride was a general feeling among Jewish Hungarian men, and their sentiment found its way into the self-consciousness of the entire Hungarian Jewry. Evidently, Jewish Hungarians acted as if they had gained something with their bravery in the trenches. To exaggerate this notion, they behaved and thought of themselves almost as if they had been some kind of winners, even though the Austro-Hungarian army had lost the war, and Hungary had consequently lost some two thirds of its territory, which is an important point to consider.

Hungarian Jewish lawyers' experiences in the First World War seem to have had long lasting consequences. This is because, for decades, Jewish Hungarians frequently recalled their army service as proof of their Magyar identity and as a counterargument against antisemitism. It supposedly proved their equality with the rest of Hungarian society, both in terms of their patriotic feelings and their readiness to make sacrifices for the homeland. What is more, even the Hungarian state showed its appreciation towards those Jewish veterans who were decorated because of their First World War services at the front by exempting them from the effects of the anti-Jewish laws in 1938/1939. Precisely because these regulations prompted Jewish families

20 Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár [Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives] (HU-HJA/HU-MZSL), PIH-I-E, boxes no. B 10/2 and 3, Black Book, Eibenschütz case, number 23.

21 Ibid., letter dated 3 July 1920 and signed by Lieutenant Colonel Perczel, 102/920.

22 Ibid., response from the Jewish Community signed by Ferenc Székely, 101861.

and various authorities to preserve the evidence of wartime decorations, we have numerous sources concerning the participation of Jewish Hungarians in the First World War, in addition to those files stored at the army archives of Vienna.²³ In the case of Dr. Dombovary, we should not forget those documents, which are to be found in the archive of the Budapest Bar Association. It was when the First Anti-Jewish Law came into effect that the lawyers' chamber enquired about their Jewish members' army records. To get exemption from the law, Dombovary, for example, filled out a form in June 1938. He counted himself to the *tuzharcos* or "combat fighter" category and attached a statement by Colonel Kratochwil from November 1917 that declared Dr. Geza Dombovary to be the recipient of the Karl Troop Cross.

The Duel Hero: Militant Youth and the Hungarian Noble Ideal

Dombovary's bravery in combat earned him a decoration, and this bravery has a lot to do with another important cultural factor which greatly affected the life of many Jewish lawyers, namely the phenomenon of duelling. For the likes of the young Dombovary to become duel-worthy was a hybrid form of Jewish emancipation in the sense that legislation forbade duelling, but it was approved by cultural habits and by the leniency of its criminal punishment. Around the last third of the nineteenth century, it represented a relatively novel institution, whereby armed Jews could defend their honour, and it opened up a new form of social intercourse between educated Jews and non-Jews. Unlike in Hungary, many nationalist student fraternities in Austria followed the Principle of Waidhofen excluding Jews from duels and other honorary affairs. It was not the case in Budapest, and although obviously not too many people were directly involved in duels, contemporary media in Hungary always reported them. Finally, duelling is of central importance to this particular paper because Dombovary himself was a famous duelling hero. In his later years, he even became a leader of the Jewish athletic club VAC's fencing branch.²⁴ One could try to understand his tragic suicide as a symbolic moment: He protected his body with blades throughout dozens of duels, but destroyed it with firearms when anti-Jewish legislation made his existence impossible. It is no mistake that the obituary's author depicted Dombovary as a martyr "whose soul was taken to the grave by the sorrow of his Jewish community", his martyrdom having been caused by the proposed new anti-Jewish legislation.²⁵ In any case, the cultural discourse concerning whether or not a Jew could become a loyal member of the Hungarian nation was the question around which the institution of duelling evolved, and as such it contributed to the construction of Geza Dombovary's identity.

The above quoted obituary leaves no doubt that there was a close companionship between the writer, Dr. Ballagi, and the deceased, Dr. Dombovary, and what tied these two lawyers together was a jointly waged campaign. Besides being a lawyer, Ballagi was also a journalist, and in that capacity, he documented various stages of this fight.²⁶ One gets the feeling that although these gentlemen constituted the second educated generation after the formal emancipation of the Hungarian Jews, it

23 osterreichisches Staatsarchiv – Kriegsarchiv.

24 Dombovary's name is included in an entry about the VAC Vivo es Atletikai Club in: Peter ujvari, Magyar Zsido Lexikon [Hungarian Jewish Lexicon], Budapest 1929, 955.

25 Bucsu Dombovary Gezatol, 4.

26 See for example: Erno Ballagi, A belyeges seregben [In the Stamped Army], Budapest 1930, or Ballagi's countless articles in *Egyenloseg*.

was the very first generation to refuse to silently accept the anti-Jewish attacks from non-Jews. In reconstructing the background of these Jewish legal defenders, it is fair to assume that while they were proud Hungarians, at the same time they also nurtured a strong Jewish identity. It was possible to be proud of this hyphenated Jewish-Hungarian identity, even though this identity was confronted by anti-Jewish sentiment every day.²⁷ Here we need to clarify what antisemitism meant in these days. Today, the experience of the Shoah has made antisemitism forever unacceptable. Yet, around 1900 in East Central Europe, it was culturally acceptable to maintain an openly anti-Jewish attitude as a cultural code without shame or embarrassment.²⁸ Thus, these immediate post-emancipation times were marked by social tensions in Hungary. Understandably, Jewish individuals like the young Ballagi and Dombóváry wished to be accepted by the majority society, yet the frequency of publicly expressed antisemitism embarrassed the Jewish Hungarians. They encountered discrimination regularly, from their schooldays onwards. In 1885, the neolog (reform) Pest Israelite Community mulled over the initiative of setting up a separate high school for Jewish students because of the widespread maltreatment the Jewish youth experienced in public schooling and in Christian gymnasiums.²⁹ At this point in time, the Jewish leaders rejected this idea as they were afraid that a separate school would derail the integration of their offspring.³⁰ Nevertheless, the very discussion shows that there was a need for protecting the 'Jewish' part of the Hungarian Jews, even though at this time assimilation remained a stronger desire among the community leaders.

Considering the broader picture, one gets the impression that Jewish communities in Central Europe to this day often find themselves in crisis, only because it is so hard for them to decide how assertive the official Jewish standpoint should be vis-à-vis the majority society. For example, Jews living in Wilhelmine Germany at the end of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a new Jewish generation confronting antisemitism much more proactively than their forefathers had. This generational change was marked with the appearance of the Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens in 1893, while in Hungary a comparative generational change was most notable in an activist group campaigning for the 'receptió' (admission), meaning the equal legal recognition of the Jewish religion along with the Christian denominations.³¹ Regarding the Centralverein's generation, Jacob Borut convincingly differentiated their form of Jewish activism from that of previous German Jewish leaders.³² The latter, Borut argued, received emancipation from

27 Jay Winter created the term "hyphenated-identity": Jay Winter, *Remembering War. The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven/London 2006

28 Raul Cârstocea/Éva Kovács, *The Centre Does Not Hold: Antisemitism in the Peripheries between the Imperial, the Colonial and the National*, in: Raul Cârstocea/Éva Kovács (ed.), *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries. Europe and Its Colonies 1880–1945*, Vienna 2018, 9–14.

29 Avigdor Löwneheim, *Befogadók és kirekesztők, A pesti Izraelita Hitközösség 1904. évi alapszabálymódosításának háttéréről* [Receptionists and Excluders. The Background to the Amendment of the 1904 Statute of the Pest Israelite Community], in: *Múlt és Jövő* (1993) 3, 10–21, 10

30 Guy Miron claimed that "[t]he central political aim of modern Jews in Hungary, Neolog as well as modern Orthodox, in the last decades before World War I was to consolidate their emancipation and to become integrated within the Hungarian state as equal citizens". See: Guy Miron, *The Waning of Emancipation*, Detroit 2011, 158.

31 As Konrad Jarausch maintains, "Most Jews who joined the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (CV) hoped that they would eventually be fully accepted as Germans.": Konrad H. Jarausch, *Broken Lives*, Princeton 2018, 33.

32 Jacob Borut, *Jewish Politics and Generational Change in Wilhelmine Germany*, in: Mark Roseman, *Generations in Conflict. Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770–1968*, Cambridge MA 1995, 105–120.

above, from the authoritarian government of Bismarck, who was encouraged by German liberal politicians to act. This earlier German Jewish generation therefore had a greater trust in the authorities and generally refrained from standing up openly against antisemitism and from requesting more rights. Thus, up until the early 1890s, Jews were extremely worried about their public image, until a new wave of antisemitism broke in upon the next generation of Jewish activists, who took a much more self-defensive standpoint. Similarly, when the young Vilmos Vázsonyi called for the 'recepció' in Budapest, he was criticised first and foremost by the reigning Jewish Community leaders, who thought a movement like this could cause the re-birth of a latent antisemitism. They thought antisemitism was slumbering among Hungarians – let us not forget that the Tiszaeszlár Affair had happened less than ten years ago. Similarly, according to Jacob Borut, German Jews thought that standing up publicly against anti-Jewish charges would only fuel German antisemitism.³³ German Jewish leaders were also worried about confronting authorities when representing Jewish interests because they thought it could be taken as an "unwillingness to integrate", an argument that we saw appearing in Budapest during the debate whether or not to found a separate Jewish high school.

For the Budapest Jewish leaders, the desired assimilation seemed like a reasonable goal following the formal emancipation of Hungarian Jewry in 1867, and progressive Jewish leaders were hesitant to hinder this process. One has to keep in mind the *quid pro quo* character of the emancipation law: At least the leaders of the Neolog community understood that emancipation was offered on the condition that Hungarian Jews underwent a serious magyarisation and westernisation.³⁴ The Orthodox did not follow this trend: They regarded Jewishness as a nationality, whereas the neologs defined themselves as Hungarians of Israelite faith.³⁵ When the representatives of this neolog community discussed and finally rejected the idea of a Jewish high school, Géza Dombovány was only eleven years old, and he attended a Lutheran gymnasium. As a teenager, he had various hurdles to overcome to become a lawyer. One was attaining the baccalaureate, but antisemitism was much more prevalent at the university level, where there was a sharply growing Jewish presence in these decades. While in 1870, the ratio of Jewish Hungarian students at the Faculty of Law at the University of Budapest was around 17 per cent, in 1885 this number had risen to 35 per cent.³⁶ Victor Karády suggested that once Jews were freely admitted to all levels of elite schooling, they appeared to be more successful than their non-Jewish schoolmates because of their cultural and religious background. The Jewish Hungarians' "advanced measure of literacy in Hebrew, [...] multilingualism, their 'religious intellectualism' based on the habit of Talmudic learning, the socially in-built appreciation of studying, and the cult of (sacred) texts and books" proved to be a significant advantage over the Hungarian students studying with them in secondary level or in universities.³⁷ Suddenly, Jews became overrepresented in these schools, and Jewish

33 Ibid., 107.

34 William McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, New York 1972, 91-94. McCagg demonstrated this situation through the example of Dr. Ignác Hirschler, chairman of the Pest Israelite Community from 1860 to 1883.

35 Hungarian Jewry split into three separate factions in 1869/1870: the neolog, the orthodox, and in between them the status quo groups. It is difficult to estimate the respective size of each group, but orthodoxy was surely in the majority in the countryside, while many more reform Jews resided in Pest.

36 Victor Karády, *Jews in the Hungarian Legal Professions and among Law Students from the Emancipation until the Shoah*, in: Carsten Wilke/András Kovács/Michael Miller (ed.), *Jewish Studies at the Central European University VIII 2011–2016*, Budapest 2017, 23-54, 38.

37 Ibid., 27.

over-schooling in elite educational tracks became a popular strategy for achieving partial assimilation and full social integration.

It was also during this time period, the last third of the nineteenth century, that for the first time in Hungarian history some Jews were accepted as opponents in duels. Until this moment, it was unthinkable that a full member of Hungarian society could or should defend his honour against Jews – generally perceived as lower-ranked humans – in the egalitarian context of a duel. However, formal emancipation, but even more acculturation and embourgeoisement empowered Jewish members of the higher middle classes, and if these people were graduates of high schools, then they were regarded as *satisfaktionsfähig*.³⁸ A large portion of the Jewish middle class developed a special sensitivity on both parts of their hyphenated Jewish-Hungarian identity, which was the underlying reason behind their various social conflicts. Avigdor Löwenheim explained in his excellent although little known piece *Jews and Duelling* that the phenomenon of the duel for Hungarian Jewish individuals itself represented both a form of self-defence and an aspect of assimilation to the majority society, through which they could express their self-esteem.³⁹ Traditionally, only certain gentlemen were eligible for duel, predominantly of course the aristocrats, army officers, or university graduates. Although Act V of 1878 specifically forbade duelling in Hungary, this highly formalised fight remained in practice as a reminder of the recent feudal social setup. Here it is worth mentioning Péter Hanák's concept of the ideal type of Hungarian in the nineteenth century. The proto-Hungarian was a strong nobleman with a twirled, tapering moustache, lavish in his spending and a daredevil when it came to the question of honour.⁴⁰ In many ways, Jewish acculturation involved mimicking this noble proto-Hungarian man, which resulted in Jewish youngsters engaging in bravado in duels. In 1888, there were 71 persons sentenced for duelling in Hungary, of which nine were Jewish Hungarians.⁴¹ In 1885, the Jewish fencing trainer Mózes Freyberger opened his famous fencing studio.⁴² Ever more young Jews joined fencing clubs, ever more of whom could afford paying special attention to building and strengthening their bodies.⁴³ It was this emerging duelling pattern that trained the generation of the young Géza Dombovány. These youngsters here learned to defend their Jewish Hungarian honour and thus this became the first generation that was not willing to accept racial slurs. Following the admired Hungarian noble tradition, they wanted to challenge their abusers and wanted them to pay for their acts with pain. One of the Jewish Faculty of Law students, Jenő Fuchs, went as far as winning the Olympic gold in fencing at the London and the Stockholm games. As the chief editor of the *Egyenlőség* journal phrased this in a dialogue with Theodor Herzl in 1903: "The Jews in Hungary became Hungarians not only regarding their language, but their temperament was also magyarised, therefore, if someone smashed their head, they were going to smash the attackers' head. We stand on our feet and defend ourselves."⁴⁴

38 Ibid., 29.

39 Avigdor Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj* [Jews and Duelling], in: *Múlt és Jövő* (1992) 4, 83-94.

40 Péter Hanák, *A kert és a műhely* [The Garden and the Workshop], Budapest 1988, 84-85, 94-98.

41 Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj*, 87.

42 Mihály Kalman, *Cutting their Way to Success. Hungarian Jewish Sportsmen in the Interwar Era*, in: Leonard Greenspoon (ed.), *Jews in the Gym. Judaism, Sports and Athletics*, West Lafayette IN 2012, 132. Freyberger later magyarised his name to Károly Fodor. He was the trainer of the famous Olympic champion fencer Attila Petschauer.

43 Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj*, 91. See also: Dániel Bolgár, *Miért van olyan sok magyar zsidó olimpiai bajnok?* [Why are there so many Hungarian Jewish Olympic Champions?], in: *Népszabadság* (NOL), 2 October 2016; <http://nol.hu/kultura/miert-olyan-sok-a-magyar-zsido-olimpiai-bajnok-1634169/> (5 September 2019). Here Bolgár rightly noted that in these years doing sports was an option exclusively open to the richer social strata.

44 Szabolcsi, *Két nemzedék*, 86.

According to the historian Avigdor Löwenheim, a strong wave of anti-Jewish violence occurred among the Budapest university students in 1896 following the Hungarian parliament's approval of the 'receptió' (admission) of the Jewish denomination. This law – initiated, as mentioned above, by another Jewish Hungarian lawyer, Dr. Vilmos Vázsonyi – in effect meant an official recognition of equality between the Jewish and Christian denominations. Before then, for instance, Jewish weddings had been not officially recognised like Christian marriage ceremonies.⁴⁵ The new legislation solved such problems, but in doing so it galvanised popular antisemitism.⁴⁶ Jew-baiting became especially frequent in October 1896, around the time of the student self-government elections at the university. Many students recited anti-Jewish slurs popular among Viennese citizens at the time, particularly among the supporters of Karl Lueger.⁴⁷ Jewish contemporaries, on the one hand, commented on the immature nature of these attacks, while on the other hand asserting that the Jewish youth behaved in a 'magyar manner' even when it came to virtue and bravado in duelling. To quote one of them: "The Hungarian university students of Jewish faith showed that they do not tolerate any kind of insults and that they take the offence directed against their religion as an offence against themselves."⁴⁸ The disturbances among the students continued the following year and, in one incident, when antisemitic songs were heard in a Budapest café, a Jewish student from the Faculty of Law asked to stop the music. This request prompted a fierce argument in which two students raised swords against each other. A report about the duel, in which the non-Jewish counterpart suffered a head injury, mentioned the young Géza Dombovány as the duel assistant.⁴⁹ However, he was named as Richárd Schulhof, thus he disguised himself behind the name his family had used prior to magyarising and used his middle name instead of his first name.⁵⁰ He himself fought several heroic fights. Marcell Hajdu, a duelling hero, lawyer, and politician, was the head of the National Fencing Club. Another young Jewish Hungarian duelling hero of this time, Marcell Baracs, decades later acted as the defence lawyer for Immánuel Löw, the rabbi of Szeged, when in 1920 the rabbi had to stand trial for insulting Regent Miklós Horthy.⁵¹ In the same year, Géza Dombovány was busy writing reports to governmental officials about the hundreds of physical attacks committed against Jews by the extreme right.⁵² In 1923, Dombovány initiated a duel against a journalist because of his opinion concerning a Hungarian poet's love affair with a Jewess.⁵³ So seemingly, the practice of active self-defence in university circles therefore appeared to be a formative experience for some Jewish students at the Faculty of Law, which some of them kept practising in the interwar years as well, now as adult men. Meanwhile, some of those who had been ready to fight duels against antisemites during their university years

45 See: *Ibid.*, 53-73.

46 Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj*, 83.

47 Such as the expression *Saujud*.

48 Károly Sebestyén, *A magyar ifjúság* [The Hungarian Youth], in: *Egyenlőség*, 18 October 1896, 3, cited in: Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj*, 90.

49 Löwenheim, *Zsidók és a párbaj*, 90.

50 Géza Dombovány received a short, two-day prison sentence in 1908 for duelling with another lawyer, J. Fuchs. See: *Budapesti Hírlap* 207 (29 August 1908), 10.

51 Immánuel Löw, the rabbi of Szeged, received his PhD from the University of Leipzig in 1878. In 1920, he was arrested and tried for treason, but later acquitted. He spent close to three months in prison, until he was moved to house arrest on 13 July 1920. Nine days later, assassins fired shots into his apartment, but the rabbi was unharmed. See: Máté Hidvégi/Tamás Ungvári, *Löw Immánuel válogatott művei* [Selected Works of Immanuel Löw], Budapest 2019, 41.

52 HU-MZSL/HU-HJA, PIH-I-E, Box no. B 10/2.

53 The journal *Ellenzék* (Opposition) reported on the case under the headline: *Párbaj Petőfi miatt* [Duel Because of Petőfi], in: *Ellenzék*, 26 January 1923, 5.

now showed readiness to also use their legal knowledge to counter antisemitism in post-First World War Hungary. Géza Dombovary and Marcell Baracs belonged to this group, both acting as defence attorneys in show trials against Jewish notables between 1920 and 1922.

Family Background and Expectations

Returning to the obituary published after Dombovary suicide, in one of the final paragraphs the author explains, in a tone of a close friend, why the police found Dombovary’s elegantly dressed body next to the Jewish cemetery: “Every Sunday you came here to the Jewish cemetery, [...] you visited the tombs of your father and mother. Every week you came, you would never miss a Sunday visit, your faithful child’s heart drove you here, just as during that tragic night, when again your broken heart brought you to your parents’ tomb.”⁵⁴ Clearly, the obituary writer here reflected on the strong bonds that tied the two generations together. Geza Dombovary’s father – Geza senior – passed away in June 1918, and I believe, the pain caused by his father’s death contributed to Dombovary’s public engagement on behalf of the Jewish community. My reading of Geza Dombovary’s life, and especially of his potential mindset from 1918 onwards after experiencing the proximity of death on the battlefield and then hearing the news that his father had passed away, is that these two factors triggered something in him. It is difficult to be certain what happened here, but maybe he just decided to do something meaningful. We only know that prior to this, he was mostly appearing in the press because of his duelling bravado or for representing members of the nobility in the courtroom.⁵⁵ Contrary to this character, in November 1918 he was suddenly quoted as a negotiator sent by the Jewish community to the ambassador of the newly formed state of Czechoslovakia. There, he requested information about the more than 1,000 Jewish Hungarians who had been arrested by the Czechoslovak authorities when they took control of the Upper Lands (Felvidek) in now Slovakia.⁵⁶ Although they were radical when responding to antisemitism, unlike some top intellectuals of Jewish origin like Georg Lukacs, the second generation of Jewish lawyers did not confront their parents’ value system. Rather, they generally followed their fathers’ principles. I therefore aim here to capture in Dombovary’s actions the type of cultural transfer that took place between him and his father, which certainly influenced his choices and preferences. To this end, I will briefly introduce the stories of a few other Jewish Hungarian lawyers from the same historical era as a potential comparison to support my findings based on the Dombovary case, for instance some members of the Barach/Baracs and Weiszfeld/Vazsonyi families.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Schulhof/Dombovary family was living through remarkable times, therefore the young Geza had many reasons to hide his real name when he got into trouble because of his duelling. His father was a successful lawyer in Budapest who had been ennobled by King Franz Joseph in 1885 and who wanted to make a gentleman out of his son. A police report on his suicide quoted in *8 Orai Ujsag* stressed how well-dressed Geza Dombovary was when his body

⁵⁴ Bucsu Dombovary Gezatol, 4.

⁵⁵ See for example an article entitled Poros hitbizomany [Fidei Commission on Trial] in *Budapesti Hirlap* of 20 September 1910, 11, where Dr. Dombovary is mentioned as the legal representative of Count Wrbna-Kau-nitz.

⁵⁶ Szabolcsi, *Ket nemzedek*, 255/256.

was found next to the Jewish cemetery. Looking at his photo, his face, and his precisely cut, spiky, Franz-Joseph-style moustache, one might think he looked like the kind of proto-Hungarian nobleman discussed above. His whole appearance suggests that he was a Hungarian gentleman.



Géza Dombovány around 1937,
Archives of the Budapest Bar Association, file no. 2397.

In fact, the choice to send him to army officer training at the age of nineteen signals what his father planned for the young Géza Dombovány's life. A career in the Austro-Hungarian army was often a means for noble families to direct their children's lives.⁵⁷ In a way, his parents did determine his future through this upbringing, by imagining that their son was going to be a well-integrated member of the nobility. This is what they wanted to prepare him for. Compared to his grandfather's early adult life in the tiny backward town of Dombovár in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is noteworthy to what extent the young Géza Dombovány's upbringing followed the pattern of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's elites at the end of the same century. From the information stored in his army file, it becomes clear that Géza entered the army as a volunteer as early as 1 October 1893, some fifty days prior to his nineteenth birthday, where he joined Regiment no. 2.⁵⁸ Such one-year voluntary service was typical for the offspring of Austria-Hungary's leading classes. At the end of the training, most young men could pass the officers' exam and earned the right to publicly wear a sword. Following the exam, the young Lieutenant Dombovány was transferred to the reserve unit and discharged on 13 October 1894. Less than a year later, on 28 August 1895, he was called up for a 28-day weapon exercise ending on 24 September and, from this time onwards, he repeated this practice regularly in his adult life. Géza Dombovány was thus already a reserve officer of the *k. und k.* (kaiserlich und königlich) Austro-Hungarian imperial and royal army, when he embarked on his legal studies and he knew exactly how and for what to use guns. Spending his formative years partly in the army, partly as an undergraduate at the Faculty of Law of Pest University, Dombovány grew up in a militant defensive milieu. He was a Jew, but at the same time an army officer, who was soon to become

⁵⁷ According to Péter Hanák, Hungarian noblemen exclusively engaged in certain careers, becoming for example military officers, diplomats, and religious or political leaders: Hanák, *A kert és a műhely*, 96.

⁵⁸ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv – Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Archiv der Republik, Kriegsarchiv, see the so-called Qualifikationslisten, 479, box Domansky – Döme.

a lawyer, which meant he also became fully aware of his rights and obligations as equal to any citizen of the Habsburg Empire. He learnt that he had to fight and fend off anti-Jewish attacks and he carried this drive in his heart until his suicide at the Pest Jewish cemetery.

Nevertheless, aside from high paternal expectations, the child and teenager Géza received something else at home: He saw his father's remarkable success and learned a great deal about his family's mobility. William McCagg, the author of *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, finds that "a family atmosphere in which mobility and mobilization were taken for granted" was an important factor in children's later achievements.⁵⁹ McCagg focussed on the offspring of Hungarian Jewish noblemen around 1900, some of whom became world famous scientists. But his statements on the importance of mobility patterns seem to be true for lawyers as well. Géza Dombovány's father, Géza Ferencz Schulhof, was born in Dombovár on 11 March 1848, just four days before the outbreak of the great Hungarian Revolution. His father, Adolf Schulhof, was a physician. Géza senior was still a child when the Schulhof family moved to Pécs, where he later finished high school. He completed his first year of legal training at the University of Vienna, the second year he spent in Prague, and only in the third and fourth years did he study and finish at the University of Pest.⁶⁰ Prior to the First World War, this was possible since universities across the Habsburg Empire recognised semesters and courses taught at any institution within the empire.⁶¹ In 1869 – with a legal degree in hand – Géza Schulhof moved back to Pécs and was appointed deputy notary of Baranya County. Two years later, he received his doctorate in law and in the autumn of 1871 he opened his law firm in Budapest. He got married in 1874 and on 29 November of that year his son Géza junior was born. In the early 1880s, he completed and published a three-volume *A magyar büntető törvénykönyv magyarázata* (Explanation of Hungarian Criminal Laws), a book highly appreciated and widely used both by the members of the juridical system and the defence attorney community.

The life of Géza Schulhof senior is thus a good example of mobility. Dr. Vilmos Vázsonyi, the man behind the 'receptió' (admission) law of the Jewish denomination (Act XLII of 1895), was born Vilmos Weiszfeld in 1868 in a poverty-stricken Jewish community. His father was a poor Jewish teacher in Sümeg, yet their material poverty was compensated by a spiritual and cultural wealth: Apart from the father being a teacher, two of his uncles were rabbis.⁶² Vázsonyi himself saw the foundations of his later political success in everything he got from his father and his family during his childhood, because the Jewish family – he thought – provided stories about the Jewish experience of centuries, without which a Jew could not succeed in life.⁶³ Vázsonyi was the seventh child of teacher Weiszfeld, a pious Jew, who moved his family to the centre of Budapest in the hope of better opportunities. Opportunity did arrive when his son Vilmos entered the Faculty of Law. Besides studying, he became a student leader. In his anti-government speech of 1889, he was still quoted by Budapest dailies as Vilmos Weiszfeld, and from 1890 onwards he wrote popular political articles in *Pesti Hírlap* (Pest Journal).⁶⁴ Our protagonists knew each other well. In 1894, Vilmos

59 McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses*, 69.

60 See Géza Schulhof's CV attached to his ennoblement file: Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (MOL), K148-1907-2, file no. 241., 25-29.

61 Judith Szapor, *The Hungarian Pochontas. The Life and Times of Laura Polanyi Stricker*, Boulder CO 2005, 120.

62 Ballagi, *A bélyeges seregben*, 34-38.

63 Vilmos Vázsonyiné, *Egyszer volt* [Once Upon a Time], Budapest 2015, 15.

64 *Ibid.*, 16.

Vázsonyi founded the Magyar Demokrata Party, the Hungarian Democratic Party, to represent the petit bourgeoisie.⁶⁵ In 1898, Géza Schulhof senior, Géza Dombóváry's father, was one of ten members of the directory board of this party.⁶⁶ Marcell Baracs, the former duelling hero and the defence lawyer of Immanuel Löw, became an MP of the same party, while Marcell Hajdu represented this party on the municipal level in Budapest. Marcell Baracs was also vice president of the Budapest Bar Association, the chamber of lawyers, which until today keeps individual documentation of these gentlemen. Yet this is just a fraction of the available sources: Since many of these lawyers showed remarkable activity in public affairs, inevitably they left behind rich research materials.

Public Engagement and Ennoblement as Assimilation Techniques

As mentioned earlier, the ideal type of Hungarian in the nineteenth century was the strong, brave nobleman, who lived on an unreasonably high standard of living, and here we should mention yet another important characteristic of this noble ideal, which was public engagement. The two decades prior to the 1848 revolution were a time of radical social reforms in still feudal Hungary, reforms in which liberal noblemen played a leading role. Moreover, even the 1848 revolutionary leadership was made up primarily of noble Hungarians.⁶⁷ This is why William McCagg thought that “[t]he Magyar Nobles also were an inspiration” for the Jewish capitalists of the late nineteenth century.⁶⁸ Consequently, numerous Jewish but also German assimilation candidates sought ennoblement to become real Magyars and the authorities advised the new noblemen to magyarise their names.⁶⁹ Péter Hanák added to this that the Hungarian bourgeoisie were not an integral part of the political establishment in these decades and that it accepted the aristocracy and gentry as the leading political force.⁷⁰ Therefore, becoming part of the nobility and engaging actively in public life crowned the emancipation efforts of certain Jewish Hungarians. It is interesting that most of the quoted historians – Löwenheim, Hanák, as well as McCagg – suggested that Jews in Hungary somewhat exaggerated assimilation. They idealised the nobleman, took part in duels, and became active in national politics. But instead of judging these as unnecessary steps in adjusting to the majority society, we should remind ourselves that this was a general notion in Hungarian culture around 1900. At a time when Viennese authors, artists, and scientists were withdrawing from public affairs and concentrating on the psyche, on dreams, and so forth, the Hungarian elite was busy eliminating the backwardness of its nation.⁷¹ Part of this process was the overemphasis of national belonging, which might also explain why certain Jewish individuals went so far in their assimilation and why they wanted to join the sphere of political leaders and the nobility. To be certain, this increased public activity by Jewish Hungarians explains why we have so many valuable historical sources, for example Dombóváry's father's, Géza senior's official request for Hungarian ennoblement. In 1884, he submitted this five-page curriculum vitae to the Budapest mayor's office,

65 Ibid., 13.

66 Vilmos Vázsonyiné, *Az én uram [My Lord]*, Budapest 1931, 73.

67 McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses*, 76.

68 Ibid., 75.

69 Ibid., 79-80.

70 Hanák, *A kert és a műhely*, 136.

71 See Hanák's lengthy comparison between Vienna and Budapest in *ibid.*, 130-174.

which transferred the documents to the prime minister.⁷² This text is full of references to public engagement, as it describes what Géza senior had managed to add to Hungarian legal academia and the legal order and the ways in which he had institutionalised help for the poor. His clear intention was to improve Hungarian society as a whole, but his words reflect such traditional Jewish values as charity and solidarity. From a Jewish studies point of view, this text could even be read as a form of *tikkun olam* (healing the world), a concept in Judaism that makes the improvement of the world and of society a religious commandment.⁷³ What the request for ennoblement does not mention, however, is that Géza senior represented the leaders of the first labour movements in Hungary free of charge when they were arrested for organising strikes among the workers. Through this pro bono work, Géza senior in fact set an example for his son, who worked tirelessly after the First World War for the Jewish Legal Aid Office.

Jewish Legal Defence in 1918–1921

As mentioned earlier, the Jewish community's history in Hungary took a major turn in late 1918, moving sharply from a phase of empowerment towards a form of victimhood. At the end of the war, the brutalisation effect of the four-year battles and the inevitable suffering that accompanied them radicalised the popular anti-Jewish sentiment and, from November 1918 onwards, resulted in deadly pogroms in various parts of Hungary. Although the great majority of Hungarian Jews still lived in poverty in the countryside, a certain type of assimilated Jewish male had appeared in Budapest by that time: He was well-integrated, had finished his legal studies, and lived a socially active life. He was a veteran of the First World War and had experience in politics, journalism, or academia. By then, approximately every second member of the Budapest Bar Association was of Jewish origin.⁷⁴ Géza Dombóváry was one of them. At the end of the war, turbulent times arrived in Hungary: The Habsburgs were dethroned, but the first independent and democratic Hungarian Republic lived for no more than four short months. It was replaced by the Béla Kun-led communists, who perpetrated the so-called Red Terror. Once the Entente powers had defeated Béla Kun's Red Army, Hungarian paramilitary groups were formed by the extreme-right officers of former troops of the Austro-Hungarian army. These militias then regularly molested and beat Jewish Hungarians in Budapest, while the most horrible brutalities were committed by members of the Rongyos Gárda (Ragged Guard) militia in the area of Kecskemét, with hundreds being tortured to death and lynched. Since the Judeo-Bolshevik myth was widely spread, the aggression endangered all Hungarians of Jewish origin. Moreover, on 1 March 1920, Miklós Horthy was elected as regent of Hungary and a couple of weeks later the country had to sign the Treaty of Trianon, which meant that Hungary lost more than two thirds of its territory (71.4 per cent). The extremist propaganda then blamed the Jews even for the territorial losses. In 1920, the Hungarian parliament accepted the Numerus Clausus Law (Act XXV of

72 HU-MOL K148-1907-2, file no. 241., the ennoblement of Géza Schulhof, 25-29.

73 Another parallel from German Jewish circles here appears in George Mosse's memoir. Mosse claims no less than that "Jews seem to have been over-represented among philanthropists" around 1900 what Mosse sees as a self-confirmation of their newly won social positions. Find this in: George L. Mosse, *Confronting History. A Memoir*, Madison WI 2000, 23.

74 Official statistical data shows that in 1910, 3,049 out of 6,743 lawyers in Hungary were Jewish, which represents approximately 45 per cent. See: Kovács, *Liberalizmus, Radikalizmus, Antiszemitizmus*, 22.

1920), thereby radically restricting (to six per cent) the enrolment of Jewish Hungarians in the universities.⁷⁵ This was the general picture when Géza Dombovary took up the position of director at the Legal Aid Office of the Pest Israelite Community.

Without going into the detail, Geza Dombovary then put all his time and energy into countering and documenting the everyday aggression perpetrated against Jews in these immediate post-First World War years. He recorded statements by the victims about the attacks and tried to initiate either legal proceedings or at least to get the responsible authorities to intervene. In cases where the official armed forces committed anti-Jewish attacks, he reported them to the authorities and did not shy away from reporting hate crimes by dignitaries like Ivan Hejjas to the police, thereby adhering to the rule of law even in this time of lawlessness. He and his colleagues documented hundreds of cases and corresponded with the countryside Jewish communities if it was necessary to represent their interests. This was the case, for example, with the atrocities targeting the Izsak Jews. The Ebredo Magyarok Egyesulete – EME (The Association of Awakening Hungarians) founded its branch in this village in February 1920, and this was the moment when Jew-baiting began. This organisation often invited guest speakers to its meetings from the leadership of the Ragged Guard and, as underlined in a police report completed in October 1921, every meeting ended with the harassment of local Jewish individuals or the smashing of windows in Jewish homes.⁷⁶ Since the local functionaries did nothing to stop these events and did not even attempt to punish the wrongdoers, it seemed that they approved the harassment of Jews, especially the Chief Constable Lajos Forster. In the next phase of the anti-Jewish actions, the head of the local chapter of EME ordered local Jewish men to the town hall, where these people were beaten and were told to leave the village. There were Jewish males who were attacked at night in their homes. The same leader of the EME (called Balogh) organised “fundraising” for the national army of Hungary, which meant in practice that he ordered the Jewish families of Izsak to pay large sums. Mano Rozsa alone paid 40,000 Crowns to this fund.⁷⁷ As a consequence of this series of attacks, basically all Jewish Hungarian citizens left Izsak, while their former homes were robbed by the EME’s awakening Hungarians. In the end, the EME donated these Jewish owned houses to refugees arriving from the territories lost after the Treaty of Trianon. In this type of cases, Dombovary went as far as to send the names of the offenders to the public prosecutor.⁷⁸ He represented the victims in the resulting trials and also negotiated with ministries whether or not it was safe for the Jewish inhabitants of Izsak to return to their village.

Conclusion

In this article, I tried to draw up a cultural history of the second generation of Jewish Hungarian lawyers. A particular group of Jewish Hungarians, among them the Budapest Jewish lawyers, benefitted greatly from legislative changes granting equal rights to Jewish citizens. They took part in the modernisation of the country, some

75 See: Maria M. Kovacs/Viktor Karady (ed.) *The Hungarian Numerus Clausus Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Interwar Central Europe*, Budapest 2011; Maria M. Kovacs, *Disenfranchised by Law*, in: S.I.M.O.N. Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 1 (2014) 2, 136-143.

76 See the police report on the atrocities committed in Izsak from 1921, in: Budapest Fovaros Leveltara (HU-BFL) [Budapest City Archives] VII_5_e_1949_20630, 2816-2824.

77 *Ibid.*, 2820.

78 HU-MZsL/HU-HJA, PIH-I-E, Box no B 10/2, particularly a letter from Dombovary addressed to public attorney Albert Vary, 81.270.

were even ennobled, and many more of them took part in public life. Certain segments of non-Jewish society felt threatened by this relatively quick Jewish emancipation and assimilation: They regarded it as a Jewish invasion of Hungarian social space. Since educated Jewish Hungarians were permitted to fight duels, duelling represented a sphere where social tensions surrounding Jewish/non-Jewish coexistence could be unleashed. Undoubtedly, these lawyers did not belong to the top elite of Hungarian intellectuals, who – like Oszkár Jászi, Felix Bódog Somló, or Georg Lukács – went much further in modernism and objected Magyar nationalism and on whom a substantive literature exists.⁷⁹ Likewise, it would be false to claim that these Jewish lawyers were representative of Hungarian Jews, as the bulk of Hungarian Jewry in these years was a largely uneducated group living in poverty, often orthodox in its religion and foreign in its language. However, these lawyers were among a small circle that negotiated the nationwide regulations and actions concerning the Jewish Hungarians. Thus, my project cast new light on a small group of intellectuals, which group was nevertheless sometimes in a position to influence the lives of many. Being an integral part of my larger study, the present article aimed to highlight how certain youth experiences – such as duelling or army training – could influence the later legal practice of a Jewish Hungarian lawyer. Furthermore, at least in the cases of Géza Dombovány and Marcell Baracs, there was an interrelationship between their duelling activity, which followed from their higher self-esteem, and the militant legal defender activism they performed following the First World War.

With my closer reading of the sources left behind from Dr. Dombovány's life, I also attempted to define factors which contributed to the constructing of this lawyers' self and his identity. These factors almost certainly included being a war veteran, a duelling hero, and a good son. He often showed the characteristics of an offended nobleman as well and he never stopped being a well-known defence attorney with the intention of relying on the rule of law in any circumstances. In addition, I wanted to show through the example of Dombovány what an illiberal exclusionary system does with individuals like him. It forces them again and again to radically reconstitute their self, sometimes in discourse, but most of the time in defiance of mainstream social views. In the long run, Dombovány's actions seemed very responsive, he usually went against the current when responding to antisemitism by taking jobs at the Jewish community, or by duelling, and certainly, his suicide was a responsive act as well, as was made crystal clear by the last note he left on his empty desk.

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⁷⁹ Many progressive intellectuals formed a circle around periodicals such as *Huszadik Század* [Twentieth Century] or *Nyugat* [West] and gathered in clubs like the so-called Társadalomtudományi Társaság [Social Science Society] or the Galilei Kör [Galilei Circle]. See for example: Judith Szapor, *The Hungarian Pocahontas*, and McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses*, 102-109 as well as 195-198, or Péter Csunderlik, *Radikálisok, szabadgondolkodók, ateisták. A Galilei Kör története* [Radicals, Free Thinkers, and Atheists. The Story of the Galilei Circle], Budapest 2017.

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Article

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Children's Memory

The Experiences of Hungarian Jewish Children as Forced Labourers in Vienna and its Vicinity in 1944/1945

Abstract

Through an in-depth analysis of a testimony of a child survivor of the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity in 1944/1945, which he gave in a DP camp in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, this article examines crucial aspects of the experiences of the Hungarian Jewish forced labourers in Vienna and tests the usefulness of testimonies from children and young adolescents for historical research. The present study explores some of the unique features of the so-called Strasshof deportation within the Holocaust and investigates what it means for the story of the Viennese forced labour itself that we have to rely heavily on memories of children to learn about it.

As with numerous other events of the Holocaust, historians need to rely heavily on testimonies – both life writings of survivors and oral history sources – in order to learn about the experiences of Hungarian Jewish forced labourers brought to Vienna and its vicinity in the so-called Strasshof deportation. Even though historians typically distrust these kinds of sources and prefer to use them merely as illustrations or as anecdotal evidence, such sources are indispensable, as many major events of the Holocaust, especially towards the end, are barely documented by any other sources. Obviously, certain aspects of the experiences of the victims (for example concerning their individuality and various group identities) can be studied only by scrutinising documents created, at least partly, by the victims themselves. It has moreover become clear by now that even when historians set out to answer basic questions of traditional historical research concerning place, time, events, and activities, (the order of these things as well as possible relationships between them, such as causality), they have to turn to the wealth of information that is contained in survivor testimonies and to utilise these sources systematically.

Identifying the events and places of the Strasshof deportation offers a typical example, as the ongoing project of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) entitled “Jüdische Sklaven in einer ‘judenreinen’ Stadt. Die Topographie der ungarisch-jüdischen Zwangsarbeit in Wien 1944/45”¹ clearly shows. In order to pinpoint the places and discern the facts relating to the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity, the researchers rely heavily on oral history sources and life writings.

Other quite recent research projects also demonstrate that the use of survivor testimonies is necessary. For example, Christopher Browning’s research on a Nazi slave labour factory in Radom County and its evacuation to Birkenau was a milestone in

1 <https://ungarische-zwangsarbeit-in-wien.at/> (8 November 2019). The project was financed by the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ).

the process of accepting the necessity of relying on survivor testimonies.² Another characteristic example of events that are mainly documented in survivor testimonies are the infamous death marches of Jews from Budapest towards the inner parts of the ‘Third Reich’. Kinga Frojimovics reconstructed the main routes of the death marches on the basis of early post-war testimonies given in Hungary in 1945/1946 to the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary (Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság, DEGOB).³ A further example based chiefly on survivor testimonies is Daniel Uziel’s research concerning Jewish camp inmates working in the German aviation industry. His sources consisted of 236 survivor testimonies from the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, which he drew upon not only to reconstruct daily life in the factories and camps, but also to understand the production processes in the factories and to determine what exactly was being produced.⁴ Consequently, the question is not whether we should rely on survivor testimonies, but how to do so in the most efficient and ethical way.⁵

The focus of my long-term research is to develop a methodological toolkit for analysing texts and interviews by survivors in order to glean as much historical information from them as possible. The development of a comprehensive methodology – combining historical, linguistic, literary, psychological, sociological, and anthropological methodologies – is indispensable. The analysis of trauma narratives, especially those concerning long-term traumas, necessitate the use of special hermeneutic devices developed by the fields of literary scholarship, linguistics, and psychology. Drawing on Cathy Caruth’s research on trauma, Anna Menyhért stressed the fact that “literary texts that deal with traumatic experience develop a specific language: the language in which trauma is recitable”.⁶ Menyhért, a literary scholar and creative writer, focussed on literary texts. However, by studying a large number of testimonies, I argue that all trauma narratives – whether deliberately artistic or not – develop a special language necessitating specific hermeneutics on the part of the research-

2 Browning carefully reflected on his methodology, too. See: Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories. Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, Madison 2003, 37-85.

3 See: A magyarországi munkaszolgálat a második világháború alatt [Forced Labour Service in Hungary during the Second World War] (in Hungarian and Hebrew): http://www.tm-it.co.il/avodat-kfiya/show_item.asp?levelId=65137 (8 November 2019).

4 Daniel Uziel, “We were specialists ...”. Jewish Slave Workers in the German Aviation Industry; Paper delivered at the 3rd Annual Summer Workshop for Holocaust Scholars of the Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research in Jerusalem entitled *The Persecution and Murder of Jews. Grassroots Perspectives* on 6 July 2010.

5 Éva Kovács’s historiographical paper focusses systematically on ethical issues as part of the theoretical basis and methodology of historical research concerning Holocaust testimonies: Éva Kovács, *Testimonies in the Digital Age. New Challenges in Research, Academia and Archives*, in: Werner Dreier/Angelika Laumer/Moritz Wein (ed.), *Interactions. Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video Testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Berlin 2018, 76-89. She also published a more comprehensive study in Hungarian: Éva Kovács, *Post-testimony. A tanúságtétel helye a soá történeti elbeszélésében* [Post-Testimony. The Place of Testimonies within the Historical Discourse on the Shoah], in: *socio.hu*. 107-119; DOI:10.18030/socio.hu.2018.3.107 (8 November 2019).

6 Anna Menyhért, *Traumaelmélet és interpretáció. Nagy Gabriella Eset című írásának elemzése* [Trauma Theory and Interpretation. An Analysis of Gabriella Nagy’s Writing Entitled “Eset”/“Case”], 168-182, 182; http://studia.lib.unideb.hu/file/6/124/szerkeszto/szerkeszto_02_12_09_Menyhert_Anna.pdf (8 November 2019).

er.⁷ Moreover, besides combining the literary, linguistic, and psychological hermeneutic devices, the study of survivor testimonies of long-term historical traumas requires adding the methodologies of historical research, especially those of source criticism.

For my goal of developing a methodology for analysing trauma texts, the testimonies recounting the Strasshof deportation are especially illuminating for several reasons. First of all, due to special circumstances, in order to learn about the story of the Strasshof deportation, it is not only necessary to analyse a large number of survivor testimonies, but we also have to deal with testimonies that are considered especially suspicious by historians: those given by former deportees who were children or young adolescents at the time. Some of the child testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation were given immediately after the Holocaust, but the majority of them were given much later, when the survivors were adults.

That the testimonies of those who were children at the time are disproportionately important sources for historical research concerning the Strasshof deportation is due to both the special circumstances of this deportation and the post-war milieu. The majority of the survivors of the Viennese forced labour belonged to groups from a specific geographical region, social status, as well as age. The Hungarian Jewish forced labourers were deported to Strasshof from four entrainment centres in southern Hungary and many more children and adolescents survived than did other deportees taken from the Hungarian provinces, as the latter had been taken to Auschwitz. In addition, most of the survivors of the Strasshof deportation remained silent in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, because compared to the experiences of Auschwitz deportees, they felt that they had nothing to say. Consequently, the majority of the Strasshof survivors who eventually related their witness accounts did so much later, mainly in the course of the large-scale testimony collecting projects of the last third of the twentieth century. By that time, it was mainly the former child deportees who were still alive and well enough to testify.

Trauma narratives requiring special hermeneutic devices as they test the boundaries of representation and memory are suspicious in the eyes of traditional historians in general, but children's narratives as sources of reliable information – mainly because of the scope of their understanding and interest – are feared to be even more problematic. Children's testimonies are generally thought to be less valuable for historical research than those of adults, because children usually have a much more limited understanding of their surroundings than adults do and children's interests

7 In addition to what happens within testimonial texts relating to traumas, especially long-term social traumatisations, scholarly texts analysing trauma narratives for historical, social-historical, sociological, or psychological research also become more personal, involved, and committed. Scholarly texts register this way certain phenomena within and in connection to the texts created by the survivors. Not only does the language of the survivors leave traces in the texts that analyse them, but the fact that the audience (interviewers, researchers, and so forth) need to turn their entire being into a hermeneutic tool during the analysis also makes the language of the resulting studies more personal, using more tropes, sometimes becoming even more poetic. A good example of poetic language use is the ground-breaking Hungarian manuscript by Tihámér Bakó and Katalin Zana entitled *A transzgenerációs trauma és terápiája* [Transgenerational Trauma and its Therapy], which will be published by Routledge in 2020. For quite a long time, psychoanalysts, literary scholars, and anthropologists have dealt with the consequences of using the methodology of turning the observer's entire being into a hermeneutic device. Psychoanalysts employ the term "free-floating attention" to denote this mode of listening with one's entire being. In the first chapter of her book, *Személyes olvasás* [Personal Reading], Anna Menyhért showed the genesis of the concept of personal reception and its contexts in Hungarian literary scholarship, concluding that a personal mode of reception of trauma narratives, resulting in a more personal style of scholarly writing, is more adequate for writing about trauma narratives than less personal, traditional scholarly styles. See: Anna Menyhért, Elmondani az elmondhatatlant. Trauma és irodalom [To Tell the Un-speakable. Trauma and Literature], Budapest 2008, 11-60.

are more focussed on their immediate environment than on the 'bigger picture'. Children's memories are thought to be more fragmented, more visceral and sensual, thus less intellectualised than those of adults. Moreover, children are viewed as less capable of differentiating among the sources of their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings than grownups.

Therefore, the testimonies documenting the Strasshof deportation serve as an important test case for studying the usefulness of children's testimonies in learning about historical traumas. It is also a methodological imperative to find out how the fact that we see Viennese forced labour through the eyes of former child deportees influences our knowledge about that particular site of the Holocaust. In other words, we have to explore what it means for the story itself that in learning about it we have to rely heavily on memories of children.⁸

Moreover, the testimonial texts concerning the Viennese forced labour of the Hungarian Jews facilitate research focussing on theory and methodology because they include a variety of texts, ranging from memoir-novels belonging to high literature through school compositions to oral history testimonies. A large number of testimony-collecting projects with their specific ideologies and aims were involved in recording the testimonies, which are, as a result, formulated according to various genres. Also, different techniques were used to record the testimonies, which exist in various written or audiotaped or videotaped forms. All of the genres, methods of collecting, and the presence of real and/or posited audiences (interviewers, fellow survivors, researchers, and/or any other listeners) influenced the testimonies in various ways. It is also important that we have many testimonies that were rendered by child survivors coming from all sorts of social and religious backgrounds, from the ultra-orthodox through the neolog to the secular.

The different kinds of testimonies studied together illuminate crucial features of one another. As literary tools are crucial both in encoding historical information and decoding them, it is especially advantageous that we have a wide variety of literary and non-literary testimonies concerning the Viennese forced labour. Moreover, those artists who testified by writing literary pieces also gave other types of testimony that can be compared with one another. For example, Mária Ember, who was thirteen years old when she was deported to Strasshof, gave an interview to the USC Shoah Foundation.⁹ Pál Bárdos (eight years old when deported to Strasshof) testified to the project led by Júlia Vajda.¹⁰ István Gábor Benedek (BIG) who was seven years old when deported to Strasshof, also gave a number of interviews to various testimony-collecting projects.¹¹

8 In this article, I aim to examine crucial aspects and special features of the so-called Strasshof deportation as well as to understand the complex role played by child survivors of Viennese forced labour in relating that unique experience in the history of the Holocaust. Therefore, the primary context of this study consists of other testimonies and ego documents of survivors of the Viennese forced labour and not the crucial research done on child forced labour during the Second World War. However, the context of child forced labour during the Second World War constitutes an efficient way of developing this research further. On child forced labour during the Second World War, see for example: Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Deportation und Zwangsarbeit. Polnische und sowjetische Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa 1939–1945*, Essen 2013; Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Die Heeresgruppe Mitte. Ihre Rolle bei der Deportation weißrussischer Kinder nach Deutschland im Frühjahr 1944*, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation. 3 (2016) 1, 54–63, as well as Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit. Erinnerungen jüdischer Kinder 1938–1945*, Essen 2018.

9 USC Shoah Foundation Institute, VHA/49300.

10 OSA Archivum, HU OSA 419 Júlia Vajda Totalitarianism and Holocaust Interview Collection, <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/jD7PkvrB> (8 November 2019).

11 For instance, he also gave an interview to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, VHA/49300.

These artist survivors also facilitated the giving of testimonies for others, for example by acting as interpreters.¹²

The artistic testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation moreover belong to various literary genres, encompassing various forms of novel, short stories, short story collections, and Chassidic tales. Ember and Bárdos, for instance, used different methods to turn their memories into novels.¹³ The major difference can be found in their respective ways of authenticating their childhood memories. Benedek (BIG) related his memories in short story sequences.¹⁴ Similar to this genre, there is an interview concerning the Strasshof deportation that is included as a Chassidic tale in Yaffa Eliach's collection of testimonies *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*.¹⁵ The tale entitled *A Holy Book*, which relates the story of the miraculous survival of a large Chassidic family, the Berkovitzs, illuminates and epitomises crucial and unique features of the Strasshof deportation within the history of the Holocaust.

The story of the Berkowitz family plays a crucial role in the overall structure of Eliach's collection of Chassidic tales. The tale's importance is stressed by the fact that it is a self-reflexive Chassidic tale that thematises Chassidic storytelling itself, by making it a part of the tale: "In the cold, long evenings of fall and winter [in the Strasshof camp] they [the large family] huddled together, sitting in the dark and listening to Grandfather's hasidic tales, many of them about the family's holy book."¹⁶ Moreover, this tale alludes heavily to an important Chassidic tale about the role of storytelling that "has passed through the hands of philosophers, scholars, and storytellers – notably Martin Buber, S. Y. Agnon, Gershom Scholem, Walter Kaufmann, Elie Wiesel, and Abba Kovner."¹⁷ Levi Cooper identified this tale as central to various layers of Jewish culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and analysed many variants in chronological order. Eliach herself quoted this much cited, central tale in her foreword.¹⁸

By relating the tale of the survival of the Berkowitz family, Eliach forcefully captured both the marginality as well as the importance of the story of the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity in 1944/1945 within the Holocaust of the Jews of Hungary. The paradox of the story's marginality, uniqueness, and simultaneous centrality to the story of the Holocaust of the Jews of Hungary is finely balanced. Eliach achieved this informative balance by including only one tale about the Strasshof deportation in an entire collection filled with stories of Hungarian Jews who were deported to Auschwitz or were forced labourers in the framework of the

12 Mária Ember, for example, not only connected Deborah Dwork to survivors in order to interview them, but also helped Dwork as an interpreter to interview, for instance, András Garzó, a survivor of Auschwitz and Mühldorf. See: Deborah Dwork, *Children with a Star. Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, New Haven CT 1991.

13 Mária Ember's *Hajtúkanyar* [Hairpin Bend] was published as part of a series of Ember's collected works: Mária Ember, *Hajtúkanyar*, Budapest 2007; Pál Bárdos, *Az első évtized* [The First Decade], Budapest 1986.

14 István Gábor Benedek, *A komlósi tóra* [The Torah of Komlós], Budapest 1994, and István Gábor Benedek, *Bergeni keringő* [The Bergen Waltz], Budapest 2011.

15 Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, New York 1988, 92-94. I have presented my argument that Yaffa Eliach's collection of Chassidic tales contain testimonies of Holocaust survivors that are crucial oral-history sources of historical research and that the attacks on the testimonies are entirely unwarranted at a number of conferences. See for example: Rita Horváth, *Hasidic Families under Pressure. An In-Depth Analysis of the Holocaust Testimonies Collected by Yaffa Eliach*, paper delivered at the international conference *The Holocaust and its Aftermath from the Family Perspective* in Prague, 15/16 March 2017, and Rita Horváth, *Jewish Experiences of the First Months of the Nazi German Occupation of Poland as They Emerge in Literary Holocaust Survivor Testimonies*, paper delivered at the international researchers' workshop *The Initial Turmoil of the International Institute for Holocaust Research*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 21–24 June 2015.

16 Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, New York 1988, 92.

17 Levi Cooper, 'But I Will Tell of Their Deeds'. Retelling a Hasidic Tale about the Power of Storytelling, in: *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 22 (2014), 127-163, 127-128.

18 Foreword to Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, XIX-XX.

Hungarian army, and assigning to that one tale a crucial role in the book's organising narrative structure. Moreover, the uniqueness of the Strasshof deportation is emphasised by the fact that the protagonists, the Berkowitz family, were able to live their entire Chassidic tradition largely unchanged during their Strasshof experience. Even the hierarchy within the family remained unchanged and the head of the family had multiple means (mainly his prayer book and the telling of Chassidic tales about its merits) to transmit an unchanged Chassidic tradition. This is unique in Eliach's book, which otherwise focusses on drastic changes within Chassidic society and tradition as a consequence of the Holocaust.

Thus, the artistically rendered testimony concerning the Strasshof deportation in Eliach's collection, through its positioning in the overall thematic structure of the book as a unique yet crucial story, exposes one of the central paradoxes of the Strasshof deportation which all the testifiers registered and somehow encoded into their accounts. This paradox has to do with the fact that a certain amount of normalcy could be retained during the experience of the Viennese forced labour, which was truly unique in the Holocaust. The consciously literary testimonies are crucial for my research not only because – like Eliach's rendition of the testimony concerning the Berkowitz family – they highlight as well as bring into focus many crucial features of the Holocaust, but also because they illuminate those special literary techniques that all witnesses rely on to various degrees while testifying. Therefore, literary trauma texts help us to develop a general tool kit for analysing all trauma texts, especially those concerning massive human-made social traumas.

On 7 June 1944, the mayor of Vienna requested Hungarian Jewish forced labourers from the head of the Reich Main Security Office to work in the war industry.¹⁹ This, in combination with Rezső Kasztner's negotiations with Adolf Eichmann, is probably the reason why some Jews from the Hungarian provinces were not deported to Auschwitz but were sent to labour camps in the vicinity of Vienna and in the city itself.²⁰ Between 25 and 28 June 1944, five trainloads of Jews from four deportation centres (Baja, Debrecen, Szeged, and Szolnok) in southern Hungary, a total of 15,011 people, were transported to the Strasshof camp near Vienna.²¹ By the time of the deportation, the ghettoised Jewish families were no longer intact. As the majority of Jewish men of military age had already been drafted for forced labour within the framework of the Hungarian army, the deported families predominantly consisted of women, children, and elderly people.

Even though many survivors related bits and pieces of information and rumours about the selection process for the Strasshof transports in the four entrainment centres, we actually know very little about it. However, we do know that as a result of this process, many large families with a great number of children together with elderly

19 Brief des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, an den Bürgermeister von Wien, SS-Brigadeführer Blaschke vom 30. Juni 1944, Dok. 3803-PS, in: Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof, Vol. XXXIII, Nuremberg 1947, 168-169.

20 Judit Molnár, Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók. Válogatott tanulmányok a magyar holokauszt történetéből [Gendarmes, Officials, and Jews. Selected Studies from the History of the Hungarian Holocaust], Szeged 2000, 194-197.

21 The data concerning the number of the deportees was provided by Edith Csillag, a deportee herself, who worked in the camp office (DEGOB testimony No. 3628), cited in: Kinga Frojimovics/Éva Kovács, Jews in a 'Judenrein' City. Hungarian Jewish Slave Laborers in Vienna (1944–1945), in: Hungarian Historical Review 4 (2015) 3, 706-736. On Szeged and the Strasshof deportation, see: Judit Molnár, Embermentés vagy árulás? A Kasztner-akció szegedi vonatkozásai [Rescue or Treason? The Kasztner Action as Seen from Szeged], in: Judit Molnár, Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók, 183-197, here 191-197. See also: Szabolcs Szita, Utak a pokolból. Magyar deportáltak az anektált Ausztriában, 1944–1945 [The Way Out of Hell. Hungarian Deportees in Annexed Austria, 1944–1945], Budapest 1991, 41-45.

family members were taken to Strasshof. Furthermore, unlike in the case of the overwhelming majority of Hungarian Jews who were deported to Auschwitz, the children and the elderly who had been deported to Strasshof stood a chance of surviving as there was no initial selection upon arrival in the Strasshof camp, and because in most cases the families arriving together were allowed to stay together and so the family members were able to help one another. Thanks to these circumstances, the majority of the Jews deported to Strasshof survived.

The majority of the Jews who had been deported to Strasshof from the Hungarian provinces learnt after the war at the latest how 'lucky' they had been compared to the overwhelming majority of the Jews from the Hungarian provinces who had been deported to Auschwitz.²² This effectively silenced the survivors of the Strasshof deportation for years and resulted in the story of the Strasshof deportation becoming marginal within the history of the Holocaust. This process was aided by the phenomenon that historians were not much interested in this topic for a long time as it did not primarily involve the most shocking features of the Holocaust: death camps and mass murder. The survivors' continued awareness of the marginality of the entire story of the Viennese forced labour also renders the testimonies as special test cases for historical analysis.

The stories the former child forced labourers of the Strasshof deportation told are unique partly because the survivors describe the ghettos and the entrainment centres of Hungary more emphatically and, in many cases, in more detail than the deportees who later arrived in Auschwitz did, as the horrors of the death camp did not cancel out for them the initial shocks of their first places of captivity.²³ Furthermore, the testimonies of Strasshof deportees focussed more on social issues arising between the deportees who had remained together, especially on the changing relationships among family members. They usually recounted, sometimes merely implied, the testifiers' changing feelings towards their mothers and siblings and the types of work as well as other tasks that each family member had to do in order to survive.

All of the features mentioned above characterise the testimony that I will analyse in depth in what follows.²⁴ A close reading of this testimony reveals the kinds of information one can gain from such a source and how testimonies of children and adolescents can often be extremely useful for historical research, in some cases precisely because of their foci of interest. I was able to claim many of my points through the analysis, because they resonate with a large number of other testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation, including the linguistically more conscious literary/artistic testimonies.

The testimony itself is not typical insofar as it is among the few testimonies that were given by child survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, in this case in the Aschau children's camp in which 23 teenage boys born between 1927 and 1932 wrote testimonies in the form of compositions. Most of the testimonies have uniform titles, but some were left untitled. The testimonies arrived in the archives of the Central Historical Commission of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Munich and are now stored in Yad Vashem.²⁵ Eight of these testimonies were given

22 Mária Ember, for example, emphasised this in many of her testimonial works and interviews.

23 This is the main reason why Mária Ember's memoir-novel was so influential after its publication in 1975: Gábor Gyáni, *Hungarian Memory of the Holocaust in Hungary*, in: Randolph L. Braham/András Kovács (ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Seventy Years Later*, Budapest 2016, 215-230, 227-228.

24 Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), M-1/E 162.

25 YVA, M-1/E 147-M-1/E 169.

in Hungarian and the rest in Yiddish. The boys from Kibbutz Atid wrote their accounts in Yiddish while seven boys belonging to Kibbutz She'ifa testified in Hungarian. There is an eighth testimony in Hungarian from a boy who belonged to Kibbutz Avoda. His testimony was presumably given separately, but the other seven boys writing in Hungarian wrote their compositions at the same time and in the same place, apparently in a classroom setting. This is suggested by the fact that it is possible to observe a certain group dynamic playing itself out within the testimonies.²⁶ Some of the boys (who were related to one another or lived in the same region before the Wehrmacht occupied Hungary) undoubtedly communicated with each other as they wrote the beginning of their testimonies. The boys probably discussed the project with one another at first as well as most likely with the respective authority figure: a teacher or youth group leader. Most of the testimonies began with the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht.

Certain pieces of information, especially the dates that are included in the beginning of the compositions, such as the date of the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht and the date of the decree about wearing the yellow star, are stated uniformly. It is easily conceivable that the information was discussed or even written on the blackboard.²⁷ Two boys made the same pun in similar sentences. Despite these similarities, however, we can observe a point in each of the testimonies after which the witnesses got sucked into their own story and stopped communicating with one another.

MLG's²⁸ testimony is long compared to the other testimonies written by the youngsters in the Aschau group. MLG's clear handwriting indicates that the testimony was written with much care. It is obvious that he took the assignment to write his testimony as a composition very seriously. He did not structure his composition using paragraphs, but utilised all the available space of the three pages, which he filled. I have translated the testimony from the original Hungarian into English. Since the analysis of the testimony focusses on its language usage, I took care to stay as close to the Hungarian original as possible. Therefore, wherever the text is awkward, strange, or grammatically incorrect in English, this is a deliberate reflection of the original Hungarian text. For example, in order to make the translation understandable, I had to insert some punctuation. However, when the punctuation is part of the original Hungarian text and it has a significance, I call attention to it. Naturally, the analyses are based on the Hungarian original.

From the heading we see that MLG was born at the end of November 1930, so he was thirteen and a half when ghettoised and deported. The Hebrew acronym "BH" [B'ezrat haShem, Hebrew for "with G-d's help"] written in the top right-hand corner of all three pages shows immediately that MLG was deeply religious.

26 Concerning the testimonies given in the Aschau Children Camp and for an in-depth analysis of three of them, see: Boaz Cohen/Rita Horváth, Young Witnesses in the DP camps. Children's Holocaust Testimony in Context, in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11 (2012) 1, 103-125, Rita Horváth/Katalin Zana, Trauma és szelf-narratíva. Gyerek holokauszt-túlélők tanúvallomásainak interdiszciplináris elemzése [Trauma and Self-Narrative. An Interdisciplinary Study of Child Survivors' Holocaust Testimonies], in: *Lélekelemzés* 2 (2013), 230-256, and Rita Horváth, Moving Forward or Being Trapped in Repetition. The DP Experience in Holocaust Child Survivors' Testimonies, in: Sabine Aschauer-Smolik/Mario Steidl (ed.), *Tamid Kadima – Heading Forward. Jewish Exodus out of Europe 1945–1948, Vienna 2010*, 317-325.

27 YVA, M-1/E 161: This is conceivable, even though some of the students got some of the data wrong. ML, for example, wrote April instead of March.

28 In this article, I refer to the testifiers by their initials.

“M1 E-162

1946

D.P. Camp. Aschau. U.N.R.R.A. Team 154.

Testifier: M. L. G.

Born: 21 November 1930

Education: eight classes of elementary school

From Szarvas (a small town in Hungary); his pre-war address is included.

How did I pull through the times of the German regime.

On 19 March 1944,²⁹ Sunday, in the late afternoon, the Germans occupied Hungary. From this moment on, we were terrified very much. They were always putting in effect new laws after new laws. On 5 April 1944, they issued the law about wearing the yellow star. On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?]³⁰ forced into ghettos. My Daddy was drafted for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not report for duty on the second day of Pesach, but only on the third day of Pesach. He was still able to observe the two Seder nights at home. When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad. The ghetto was very dirty. They took us to a chateau.³¹ It was possible to leave the ghetto very rarely. Later, we were concentrated [the official word of the contemporary Hungarian administration] into Jewish houses. Until 19 May 1944, I was in the ghetto. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, they wanted to tear away our [initially MLG wrote “my,” then he wrote “our” over it] Mummy from us. For the chief constable there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. Therefore th [this th(at) is crossed out] because we were relatively well-to-do. They wanted to tear away Mummy. But we, kids, started to cry and implore, and that gendarme sergeant who came for Mummy was a very good man. And they did not tear Mummy away from us. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. When we boarded the [cattle] car, the inhabitants of the town made the announcement that that there are no return trips. When we arrived in Szolnok in a shaken up state, then came a bunch of policemen. They made us disembark the [cattle] cars. Where we got out of the [cattle] cars. There was a large pit. And the policemen made the announcement that if they saw a torn banknote then they would shoot [the person] there into the pit. We carried the heavy baggage on our shoulders and the policemen were hitting us. When we arrived in that designated sugar factory, then we saw that they were throwing many corpses rolled in white [cloth] into a large pit. Then I was overcome by such a bad feeling that it is not even possible to record it. When we arrived there was a heavy rain and [a lot of] puddles. And just outside [under the open free sky], beside the latrines, there was room [for us] to settle

29 The following formulation of the date is closer to the original: On the 19th of the third month, 1944. However, I think that the small differences concerning the formulation of the dates do not carry discernible additional information. They are chiefly due to linguistic conventions, so I made their rendering uniform in my translation.

30 Because of the Hungarian grammar rules, in many places of the testimony it is impossible to know whether MLG was signifying himself alone or referring to an “us”.

31 This has been identified as the Bolzor chateau. On the ghetto in Szarvas and the entrainment centres in the area, see the relevant entries in: Guy Miron/Shlomit Shulhani (ed.), *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, Vols. I-II, Jerusalem 2009.

in. In Szolnok, they were hitting us constantly. We did not receive any food, we ate only what we brought with us from home and what we got by begging. When we were there for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two transports. The first is the more favourable one. We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been drafted, got into the more favourable transport. On a Saturday, we were seated in [cattle] cars and we went to Strasshof. We were disinfected in Strasshof, and after spending two days there, we left Strasshof [there is a mistake, as he wrote: into Strasshof]. From Strasshof, we were taken to Vienna and there we were handed over to a school janitor. We arrived in Sollenau on a Saturday. The mayor [of Sollenau] appointed a jup [sic, 'Jupo', from 'Judenpolizei', a Jewish policeman] from among us. When we arrived there, it was spring. On Monday, we already started to work. We were scraping bricks [made them reusable] for three months and we built houses. And we went to bring [roofing] tiles with automobiles. In the summer, we threshed. In the spring, the food was still bad [probably meaning not enough and of poor quality]. But when we went to the threshing machine, then the food was better. 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were five of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not work. Mummy, my younger brother and I worked. All three of us worked with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]. To a weaving factory owner named Richter. We were building a bunker for seven weeks. Then we went down to the cold weaving factory. Mummy and my sibling were assigned to a textile weaving machine. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. On the day near the liberation, he called the jup and showed him a pistol and bullets, and said that he had received this in order to shoot us. However, he will not shoot us, but we should flee to the woods. But we knew that he was saying this because he was afraid. [He was afraid] that we would betray how bad he was and that he stole the grub³² from us and hit us. In spite of the fact that he had told us (in connection to the revolver), we did not flee and since he saw this, he took us into the building of the village council. After being there for 2 days, on 2 April 1945, the Russians liberated us. We arrived in Hungary after much difficulty. My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, but unfortunately our Daddy was lost. When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement."

First of all, it is informative to pay attention to the distribution of emotionally charged words, phrases, and statements alongside the distribution of official words, by which I mean words that MLG borrowed from official contemporary terminology. MLG sometimes stated his emotions directly, through which he introduced a layer of evaluation into the text, but in many cases, the emotions are encoded into repetitions, qualifications (by adjectives and/or adverbs), time concepts, parallel

32 This is translated from a similar slang word in Hungarian: "kaja". In other places, MLG uses a nicer word belonging to a higher register: "koszt" to signify food. When he happily remembered enough food, he enumerated the types: milk, bread and fruits. In two places, he employed the verb "eat".

structures, opposites, and so on. In what follows, I did not mark the emotional words signifying MLG's parents, because they constitute a self-contained parallel structure. I will concentrate on that structure separately in the next section of this article. The use of some official terms, such as "ghetto" and "[cattle] car", seem inevitable, but even these terms are significant, as other terms that also seem inevitable, like "Lager" or "camp", are not used, even though Strasshof, the Wohnlager, and Theresienstadt were routinely named as such. In the following, I used UPPER CASE letters to designate emotional terms and *bold italics* to designate official terms. There are two sub-categories of EMOTIONAL TERMS, so I used BOLD UPPER CASE LETTERS to designate directly reported emotions introducing evaluation into the testimony and regular UPPER CASE LETTERS to designate the otherwise marked emotionally charged words.

"How did I pull through the times of the German regime."³³

On 19 March 1944, Sunday, in the late afternoon, the *Germans occupied Hungary*. FROM THIS MOMENT ON, WE WERE TERRIFIED VERY MUCH. They were ALWAYS *putting in effect NEW laws* after NEW laws.³⁴ On 5 April 1944, they *issued the law about wearing the yellow star*. On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?] FORCED INTO *ghettos*. My Daddy was *drafted* for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not *report for duty* on the second day of Pesach, BUT ONLY on the third day of Pesach.³⁵ He was STILL able to observe the two Seder nights at home. When on 15 April they took us [me?] to the *ghetto*. I BECAME VERY SAD. The *ghetto* was VERY dirty. They took us to a chateau. It was possible to leave the *ghetto* VERY rarely. Later, we were *concentrated* into Jewish houses. Until 19 May 1944, I was in the *ghetto*. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, they wanted to TEAR AWAY our [initially MLG wrote "my," then he wrote "our" over it] Mummy from us. For the *chief constable* there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. Therefore th [this th(at) is crossed out] because we were relatively well-to-do.³⁶ They wanted to TEAR AWAY Mummy. But we, kids, started to CRY and IMPLORE, and THAT *gendarme sergeant* who came for Mummy was A VERY GOOD man. And they did not TEAR Mummy AWAY from us. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. When we boarded the [cattle] *car*, the inhabitants of the town made the announcement that that there are no return trips. When we arrived in Szolnok IN A SHAKEN UP STATE, then came a bunch of policemen. They *made us*

33 It is a uniform title. Two other testimonies from the Aschau Hungarian-language testimonies have the same titles: M-1/E 163 and M-1/E 164. Two of them (M-1/E 161 and M-1/E 165) have no title, but exactly the same format as the three having the title: "How did I pull through the times of the German regime." Moreover, even though it is ungrammatical in Hungarian to place punctuation signs after titles, all three boys who used the uniform title did so. A boy who survived in Budapest ended the title with an exclamation mark (M-1/E 164) and two of the boys who had been deported to Strasshof ended the titles with a full stop (M-1/E 162 and M-1/E 163). Therefore, these unusual punctuation marks are emotionally significant.

34 The use of the word "always" and the repetition of the word "new" emphasises that there were many unexpected and unprecedented laws.

35 Emotion is obviously encoded into the repetition of the days of Pesach too. This refusal to shorten the sentence is a linguistic and psychological means to linger on the festive time during which the family was intact and the boy was still together with his father.

36 This full stop is completely ungrammatical and seems like an unconscious means to stop the threatening rush of emotions causing unbearable tension by artificial grammatical means.

*disembark*³⁷ the [cattle] *cars*. Where we got out [even though the word “disembark” is repeated here, in its active form it does not sound as official as in its causative form. That is why I have translated it with the less official “got out” in the second place] of the [cattle] *cars*. There was a LARGE PIT. And the policemen made the announcement that if they saw a torn banknote then they would shoot [the person] there into the PIT. We CARRIED [the connotation of the Hungarian word is that they carried the baggage with much difficulty] the HEAVY baggage on our shoulders and the policemen were hitting us. When we arrived in that *designated sugar factory*, then we saw that they were throwing many corpses rolled in white [cloth] into a LARGE PIT.³⁸ Then I WAS OVERCOME BY SUCH A BAD FEELING THAT IT IS NOT EVEN POSSIBLE TO RECORD IT. When we arrived there was a HEAVY rain and [a lot of] puddles. And JUST outside [under the open free sky], beside the latrines, was there room [for us] to settle in. In Szolnok, they were hitting us CONSTANTLY. We did not receive any food, we ate ONLY what we brought with us from home and what we got by BEGGING. When we were there for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two *transports*. The first is the more favourable one. We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been *drafted*, got into the more favourable *transport*. On a Saturday, we were seated in [cattle] *cars* and we went to Strasshof. We were *disinfected* in Strasshof, and after spending two days there, we left Strasshof [there is a mistake, as he wrote: into Strasshof]. From Strasshof, we were taken to Vienna and there we were handed over to a school janitor. We arrived in Sollenau on a Saturday. The mayor [of Sollenau] appointed a *jup* [sic, “Jupo”, from “Judenpolizei”, a Jewish policeman] from among us. When we arrived there, it was spring. On Monday, we ALREADY started to work. We were scraping bricks for [the duration of] three months³⁹ and we built houses. And we went to bring [roofing] tiles with automobiles. In the summer, we threshed. In the spring, the food was STILL bad [probably signifying not enough and of poor quality]. But when we went to the threshing machine, then the food was better. 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were 5 of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not WORK. Mummy, my younger brother, and I WORKED. All three of us WORKED with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken AWAY. TO TEREZIENSTADT. AND we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]. To a weaving factory owner named Richter. We were building a *bunker* for seven weeks. Then we went down to the COLD weaving factory. Mummy and my sibling were assigned to a textile weaving machine. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. On the day near *the liberation*, he called the *jup* and showed him a pistol and bullets, and said

37 This sounds more official than usual, but it is open to debate whether this represents a real official term or not.

38 I marked the word “pit” because it is repeated three times within six lines and twice it is qualified by the adjective “large”.

39 The phrase “for three months” appears twice in the testimony. However, in the first instance in the Hungarian, it is more emphatic than in the second: “for the duration of three months” versus “for three months”. The added stress can only be seen in the comparison.

that he had received this in order to shoot us. However, he will not shoot us, but we should flee to the woods. But we knew that he was saying this because he was afraid. [He was afraid] that we would betray how bad he was and that he stole the grub from us and hit us. In spite of the fact that he had told us (in connection to the revolver), we did not flee and since he saw this, he took us into the building of the *village council*. After being there for 2 days, on 2 April 1945, *the Russians liberated us*. We arrived in Hungary after MUCH DIFFICULTY. My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, but UNFORTUNATELY our Daddy was LOST. When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist Movement.”

Examining the phrases designated by UPPER CASE LETTERS and *bold italics*, we can observe that they are clustered together in the first part of the testimony. More precisely, the consciously evaluating emotional utterances together with indirectly emotionally charged words are clustered together with official phrases. This demonstrates that the main source of MLG’s overwhelming negative emotions (fear, anger, helplessness, and so on) springs from the official actions in Hungary and their consequences. Furthermore, the fact that he uses mainly words drawn from Hungarian official vocabulary rather than the German terminology indicates that he associates the main harm done to them officially with the Hungarian authorities. Therefore, official terms as MLG employed them in the testimony signify deep emotions as clearly as the otherwise emotionally charged words and phrases. In other words, official language use itself is emotionally strongly charged.

The distribution of the official words alongside the otherwise emotionally charged words and the fact that MLG used mostly the Hungarian official terms also indicate that the centre of his Holocaust trauma is Hungary. The most traumatic part of MLG’s Holocaust experience happened in Hungary and was perpetrated by Hungarian officials. This is a typical opinion among the Strasshof deportees.

As opposed to the first part of the testimony, in the second part, in which MLG related his experience as a forced labourer in Vienna and its vicinity, there are much fewer official words and the indirectly emotionally charged words are mainly related to food, work, and working conditions. However, the fact that the deportees lived in constant mortal dread is indicated by the fact that the ending of each phase of the experience as well as the liberation together with the consequences are again described using many emotional words.

Since both textual and psychological forces are complex, it is not possible to mark all the places in the testimony that carry extra emotional charge. Directly reported emotions introducing evaluation into the text are easy to mark, whereas it is harder to point out the significant emotional phrases that are otherwise signalled. In order to decide which ones to mark, I had to compare the carrier phrases to one another according to the intensity of the emotions they convey, the topic they are connected to, the method of carrying extra emotions, and their roles in the structural patterns of the text. Repetitions, for example, regularly carry extra emotional charge. Usually they interrupt the flow of the testimony by delaying the rushing of memories, sometimes they are employed as a means of stressing something of importance, and sometimes, repetitions are chiefly engaged in order to make sure that certain pieces of information are rendered precisely. These are merely a few typical possibilities.

There are also grammar mistakes carrying extra emotional charge, such as the grammatically incorrect placing of full stops. In MLG’s writing there are quite a few instances of that, such as: “When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad.”; “Where we got out of the [cattle] cars. There was a large pit.” The in-

sersion of the grammatically incorrect full stop indicates how much the testifier did not want to go on remembering. The Theresienstadt part is not actually grammatically incorrect in Hungarian, but the language is especially choppy, which also suggests emotional overcharge.⁴⁰

In addition, there are also unbearable emotions condensed into uneven parallel structures, such as “My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, **BUT UNFORTUNATELY** our Daddy was LOST.” The opposite of “remained alive” is “died” and not “was lost”. However, the youngster could not bring himself to write that down. Moreover, much emotion is encoded into the fact that in the penultimate sentence of the testimony, he showed himself as a part of a group of survivors (he included himself twice: first in the group of the four siblings and then in the group of the family consisting of the mother and the four siblings together) and opposed this with the loss of the father, who was lost alone. The last sentence then features him completely alone: “When *I arrived home*, after a few days of being home, *I joined* the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement.” [*Italics are mine for emphasis*] He portrayed himself alone, cut off from his family, like his father, but made a choice and joined a new community. It is telling, though, that his words do not emphasise the communal nature of this new community, but the “movement away from something” aspect is stressed. However, because textual signs and processes are complex and overdetermined, the fact that even the name of the religious Zionist movement is connected to being a son of a heroic and dead father figure makes the ending especially emotionally complex and torturous.

MLG’s decision to move actively away (from his former home to make Aliya) stands in stark opposition to the fact that he was previously the passive victim of being dragged away from his home. This comes moreover after portraying his father as a hero who resisted being passively dragged away (from the family home to forced labour) as long as it was meaningful in religious terms. Furthermore, his entry into the Bnei Akiba Movement, which led him away from his former home, is presented in opposition to the twice-mentioned word “home”, in which he was emphatically alone after his father’s death. The loss of his father amounted to loneliness, which the survival of the other members of his family did not alleviate.

MLG’s age, just over 13, and the fact that he should have been the religious leader of his family in the absence of his father according to the tradition he observed, alerts us to the existence of an only implicitly indicated, silent trauma centre in the text concerning power relationships and ideological conflicts within the family. In addition, it is also implied that leaving his family signified abandoning his religious duty towards his family. This is a silent trauma centre in the testimony; and it is presented in stark opposition to the actions of the father, who stayed with the family longer than was permitted in order to perform his religious duties.

In conclusion, the entire testimony is emotionally charged – in fact, it is flooded with emotions. A number of trauma centres emerge in the writing. Moreover, the differences in the levels of being overwhelmed by emotions and the various ways through which emotions and their intensity are encoded into the text reveal patterns registering information concerning the events about which the witness was testifying.

By focussing on two emotional centres of the testimony that are both connected to MLG’s parents, we learn much about the boy’s way of thinking and a crucial aspect

40 “Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau].” The full stop ending the title can signify multiple feelings. It can serve as a declaration of the seriousness of MLG’s attempt to commit his experiences to writing, it can have a calming effect, but it can also convey his reluctance to go on remembering.

of the long-term damage that the historical trauma of the Holocaust caused within the surviving family members. Typically of the Strasshof deportation, the relationship between the surviving mother and her teenage children became deeply scarred.⁴¹

One of the major organising themes of the testimony, i.e. his relationship with his parents, is connected to MLG's deep religiosity. He described with pride and much emotion his father's religious/spiritual resistance (*Amidah*).⁴² MLG presented his father's observance as a form of laudable resistance.⁴³

MLG wrote about his parents by setting up a parallel structure: by juxtaposing them. His father is shown as a heroically active saviour figure who offered resistance. The father was able to help his family even in his absence: "We, because there were four kids *and my Daddy had been drafted*, got into the more favourable transport." [*Italics are mine for emphasis*] By contrast, the mother is shown as a passively dependent figure in constant need of rescue.

Moreover, even though one of the major threats related by the testimony is the fear of separation from the mother, MLG closed his testimony by relating his decision to separate from his mother and family by leaving for Israel. All of these pieces of information signal a long-term traumatising affecting his relationship with his mother, which is typical of teenage survivors of the Strasshof deportation.⁴⁴

The parallel structure into which the text organises MLG's relationship to his parents needs to be observed together with the alternating passive and active voice and paying special attention to the use of possessive pronouns. In the following, I marked the presence or absence of possessive pronouns with *bold italics*. Whenever possessive pronouns were used in the text in connection to the parents, I marked them with *bold italics*, and whenever they were missing I marked their absence with *bold italics* for the letters or signs bordering the absence on each side. The use of *regular italics* designates text concerning MLG's father and UPPER CASE LETTERS mark text concerning his mother.

[...] On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?] forced into ghettos. *My Daddy was drafted for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not report for duty on the second day of Pesach, but only on the third day of Pesach. He was still able to observe the two Seder nights at home.* When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad. [...] Until 19 May 1944, I was in the ghetto. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, THEY WANTED TO TEAR AWAY *our* [*initially MLG wrote "my," then he wrote "our" over it*] MUMMY FROM US. For the chief constable there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. THEREFORE TH [THIS TH(AT) IS CROSSED OUT] BECAUSE WE WERE RELATIVELY WELL-TO-DO. THEY WANTED TO TEAR AWAY MUMMY. BUT WE, KIDS, STARTED TO CRY AND IMPLORE, AND THAT GENDARME SERGEANT

41 See this very emphatically in Mária Ember's memoir-novels: Ember, *Hajtúkanyar*, and *El a faluból* [Out of the Village], Budapest 2002.

42 Amos Goldberg analysed the historiographical importance of Yehuda Bauer's conceptualisation of "Amidah", see: Amos Goldberg, *The History of the Jews in the Ghettos. A Cultural Perspective*, in: Dan Stone (ed.), *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, New York 2012, 79-100, 84. Recently, researchers became especially interested in a special category of "Amidah", i.e. spiritual/religious resistance. On religious/spiritual resistance, see: Esther Farbstein/Dan Michman, "Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust" and its Meaning. Some Theoretical Observations, in: *Dapim. Leheker Tekufat Hashoa* 12 (1995), 7-41.

43 The only other kind of resistance mentioned in the testimony is the fact that mere days before the liberation, the group of forced labourers did not obey their civil superior who tried to trick them.

44 This is one of the most painfully dominant themes in Mária Ember's and Pál Bárdos's memoir-novels.

WHO CAME FOR MUMMY WAS A VERY GOOD MAN. AND THEY DID NOT TEAR MUMMY AWAY FROM US. [...] When we were there [in the entrainment centre in Szolnok] for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two transports. The first is the more favourable one. *We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been drafted, got into the more favourable transport.* [...] 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were five of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not work. MUMMY, MY YOUNGER BROTHER AND I WORKED. All three of us worked with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. [...] MUMMY AND MY SIBLING WERE ASSIGNED TO A TEXTILE WEAVING MACHINE. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. [...] We arrived in Hungary after much difficulty. *My MUMMY AND WE, THE FOUR SIBLINGS, REMAINED ALIVE, but unfortunately our Daddy was lost.* When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement.

In their testimonies, many child and young adolescent survivors of the Strasshof deportation talked or wrote about, or at least implied, a conflict mainly with their mothers, which was felt intensely and painfully in the post-war reality. This had much to do with the events and circumstances of the Strasshof deportation, specifically with the conditions of forced labour, the provision of food, and the social interactions between the deportees in the camps. Many of the testimonies – like the one I analysed above – present pieces of information implying conflict in those parts of the texts in which work, food provision, and the responsibilities of the forced labourer family members are described. Moreover, MLG's testimony as well as Mária Ember's memoir-novel emphatically connect the conflict with their mothers to the painful topic of resistance.

Since children's testimonies generally pay more attention to family dynamics than those of adults in the Holocaust and its aftermath, and because the story of the Viennese forced labour of Jews deported from Hungary include family dynamics as many families were able to stay together, we here have a chance to learn about this special issue within the history of the Holocaust.

Moreover, for a longer period than in most other theatres of the Holocaust, even though the circumstances endured by the deportees were extreme, the victims retained enough fragments of normalcy and familiarity (however minuscule) to establish a hermeneutic framework. This hermeneutic framework, even fragments of it, was needed for understanding and interpreting one's reality. This is certainly not true for every testifying Strasshof survivor, but more survivor children and adolescents of the Strasshof deportation experienced remaining fragments of orienting normalcy than did deportees who were transported to other places.

The testimony about the survival of the large Chassidic Berkowitz family during the Strasshof deportation that is included in Yaffa Eliach's *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust* epitomises exactly this crucial aspect of the experience of the Hungarian Jews of the Viennese forced labour in 1944/1945. *The Holy Book* is the only traditional Chassidic tale in the entire collection, in the sense that it perpetuates the traditional Chassidic values in an unchanged manner, as the Berkowitz family was able to observe their Chassidic tradition without fundamental changes due to the circumstances of the Strasshof deportation.

The tale about the Berkowitzes perpetuates traditional Chassidic patriarchal family structures and unchanged power relationships within the family unit. Furthermore, it even features a physical continuity in the form of the possession of a holy family heirloom. By contrast, in the overwhelming majority of the other Chassidic tales in Eliach's collection about the Holocaust, merely the memory or a mental image of significant religious objects assist the survival of individuals and help perpetuating basic Chassidic values. Whereas all the other testimonies in Eliach's collection demonstrate enormous changes in Chasidic society in every imaginable respect (such as the role of women, power relationships within the family and religious communities), the family depicted in *The Holy Book* remains not only alive but completely unchanged, as enough vestiges of normalcy were retained during the experience of the Strasshof deportation.

As an example of a fragment of normalcy resulting in the retention of intact pieces of a valid hermeneutic framework for the deportees, it is sufficient to call attention to MLG's emphasis on feeding the elderly people during their agricultural work in Sollenau. MLG mentioned old non-working people living with the workers. He wrote that, whenever possible, the workers provided food not only for their dependent family members, but also for other people, the elderly in this case, who could not work. He therefore implied that the minimum aim was to feed family members but, whenever possible, a wider social safety net was in place. These social activities together with larger family units being together were remaining fragments of the normal world allowing the survivors of the Strasshof deportation to understand and evaluate their experiences during and after the Holocaust.

In this respect, it is crucial that after writing about these particular vestiges of normalcy (the family unit, enough food, and helping other dependents), MLG had difficulties in reporting the end of that comparatively normal time period. He needed to report that many of the deportees, fourteen members of the group, were taken to Theresienstadt. The text shows that because of the relative normalcy of the period, MLG was tempted to use a normal, active term to denote leaving Sollenau. "There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]." MLG almost wrote down the active verb "went", but then he crossed that out and wrote the more accurate passive form: they "were taken away".

In addition, the passage describing the relatively normal period is full of delays signifying the terrible way it ended: 22 people, who had helped one another and made up a sort of a community, were deported to a truly dreadful place, Theresienstadt. First, the original number was repeated unnecessarily, then, MLG closed the sentence with "22 were taken away" and a full stop. After the full stop, he added the destination as a separate sentence. Even though sentences without verbs are grammatically correct in Hungarian, they make the text both choppy and laconic. It signi-

fies the witness's continuous awareness of the fact that compared to the fate of those people, MLG and his family had been extremely lucky once again.⁴⁵

The analyses of child testimonies including the above analysis concerning MLG's testimonial composition, thus far demonstrate that by contrast to the utter terror of the period of ghettoization and entrainment of the Jews in Hungary, the period of forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity contained vestiges of normalcy. For the majority of the children who gave testimonies, the period of the Viennese forced labour contained processable and interpretable information until near its end. Many testimonies, such as the one MLG wrote, reveal that terror ruled again in the final period as well as in the aftermath in the form of irrevocable losses.

Since children's testimonies concentrate on family dynamics more than those of adults, we can learn more about the facts concerning forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity and everything in connection to it by relying on the memories of children. MLG's testimony demonstrates clearly that the testimonies of child forced labourers are surprisingly rich sources of information.

⁴⁵ Obviously, MLG wrote his testimony knowing much more than the forced labourers actually knew during the experience. By the time he wrote his testimony, he knew about Theresienstadt, which became much worse as a consequence of being the destination of many deportees towards the end of the war. MLG wrote this part of the testimony knowing what Theresienstadt was, just as he wrote the entire testimony knowing about Auschwitz. The inevitable phenomenon of mixing contemporary and later knowledge while testifying is encoded in the especially sophisticated timelines, time schemes, and timeframes of memoir-novels, such as Kertész's *Fatelessness* (Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness*, New York 2004) and Ember's *Hairpin Bend*. Some of the delays in MLG's testimony reveal the knowledge received later about the meaning of being deported to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. The deportees must have been anxious also then about staying in Sollenau, where a relatively normal period occurred. It must have seemed safer than being "taken away", but certain knowledge about the other destination of deportation came later. In a memoir, the witness has to juggle and juxtapose all the layers of existing knowledge and the lack of it. According to Anna Menyhért, their special time scheme is one of the basic characteristics of trauma narratives: Menyhért, *Trauma Theory*, 173.

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Article

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Der ‚Judenkönig‘ der Edlgasse

Gustav Hauskrecht und die Verfolgung der Juden in
Bratislava 1944/1945¹

Abstract

The Holocaust in Slovakia was not only a result of the antisemitic policy of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party regime headed by the Catholic priest Joseph Tiso, but also an initiative by the lower parts of society – the local aggressors. After the occupation of the country by Nazi Germany in the late summer of 1944, this situation partly changed, with the ‚solution of the Jewish question‘ becoming one of the top priorities of the occupying power. However, without the help of local helpers, this would hardly have been successful. One such case was Gustav Hauskrecht, the head of the so-called ‚Judensammelstelle‘ in Bratislava. This convinced National Socialist and uncompromising antisemite contributed significantly to the persecution of Jews in the Slovak capital at the end of the war and bears a joint responsibility for their deportation to the Nazi concentration camps. This article is an attempt to biographically profile one of the main perpetrators responsible for Shoah in Slovakia.

Im Juni 1961 traf sich Simon Wiesenthal in Wien mit Samson Fischer. Fischer, gebürtiger Berliner, hatte den Holocaust in Bratislava überlebt, der Hauptstadt des ersten Satellitenstaates des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland in Europa, wohin seine Eltern bald nach seiner Geburt umgezogen waren.² Kurz nach der Zusammenkunft schrieb Fischer Wiesenthal, er habe vergessen, ihm über zwei in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland lebende „prominente Nazigrößen“ zu berichten. Einer von ihnen hieß Gustav Hauskrecht. Fischer zufolge sei dieser „der Chef der Gestapo in Pressburg-Bratislava Edlgasse Nr. 6“ gewesen und habe „die Deportierungen [...] in den Pressburger Häusern und Bunkern nach Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt usw. persönlich durchgeführt“.³ Im Februar 1962 leitete Wiesenthal diese Auskunft an die Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen (ZSL) in Ludwigsburg weiter, die wegen in Bratislava 1944/1945 begangenen NS-Verbrechen bereits seit Frühjahr 1960 ermittelte;⁴ bis dahin allerdings ohne nennenswerten Erfolg.

Wer war nun der von Fischer erwähnte Gustav Hauskrecht und was war in Bratislava, konkret in der Dienststelle in der Edlgasse, mit der Hauskrecht in Verbindung stand, geschehen? Wie kam es dazu, dass aus einem Menschen aus der bürgerlichen Mittelschicht ein Täter wurde? Was trug dazu bei?

1 Dieser Aufsatz ist zum Teil Ergebnis des Projekts VEGA Nr. 2/0110/16 „Werbung und Wehrdienst der Slowakeideutschen in der Waffen-SS 1939–1945. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Dienst und strafrechtliche Folgen nach 1945“.

2 Staatsarchiv (StA) München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835, Bd. 2, Bl. 269-275, Vernehmung Samson Fischer, 14. Jänner 1965.

3 Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien (VWI), Simon-Wiesenthal-Archiv (SWA), Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Brief Fischers an Wiesenthal, 7. Juni 1961.

4 VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Schreiben Wiesenthals an die ZSL, 13. Februar 1962 sowie Bundesarchiv (BArch) Ludwigsburg, B 162/1826, Bl. 298-320, Schlussvermerk der ZSL im Vorermittlungsverfahren 505 AR-Z 93/60, 9. November 1966.

Im Folgenden wird natürlich auch der Frage nachgegangen werden, ob Hauskrech später für seine Taten zur Rechenschaft gezogen wurde und wie die Verfahren endeten, welche gegen ihn in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit in der Tschechoslowakei und dann später in den 1960er- und 1970er-Jahren in der Bundesrepublik geführt wurden. Um diese Fragen beantworten zu können, wird der historisch-biographische Ansatz in Kombination mit den Ansätzen der neueren Täterforschung herangezogen.

Die genannte Täterforschung kristallisierte sich in den 1990er-Jahren als eine Unterdisziplin der Holocaustforschung heraus und setzte sich ambitioniert zum Ziel, „die Täter kurzschlüssig“ nicht „als verlängerten Arm ihrer Vorgesetzten, sondern als eigenständige Akteure des Vernichtungsprozesses“ zu verstehen.⁵ Seit nun fast 30 Jahren macht die Täterforschung spürbare Fortschritte. Dabei gab es selbstverständlich auch etliche kritische Stimmen, die ihr einen verengten Fokus vorwarfen, Anstoß nahmen, dass sie allzu sehr biographischen und generationellen Aspekten verhaftet sei, dass sie Täter und Gesellschaft allzu stark trenne und generell die forcierte „Brutalisierungsthese“ als Erklärungsansatz in Frage stellten.⁶ Darüber hinaus habe sich ihr Augenmerk zu lange hauptsächlich auf nationalsozialistische bzw. deutsche Akteure gerichtet. Ausländische Kollaborateure, darunter auch sog. Volksdeutsche, wurden trotz ständiger Verweise auf Nachholbedarf⁷ nur am Rande oder gar nicht thematisiert. Erst in den letzten Jahren konnte diese Forschungslücke z. T. mit Darstellungen von Carl Bethke,⁸ Eric C. Steinhart⁹ und Mirna Zakić¹⁰ über die Beteiligung der deutschen Minderheiten am Holocaust in ehemaligen Jugoslawien und Sowjetunion geschlossen werden. Die Arbeiten über die Partizipation der Volksdeutschen in der Slowakei an der Judenverfolgung bleiben mit wenigen Ausnahmen bis heute ein Desiderat. Ohne sie wäre die zweite Phase des Holocaust im nationalsozialistischen ‚Schutzstaat‘ Nr. 1 während der Besetzung 1944/1945 jedoch kaum möglich gewesen. Aus diesem wie auch anderen Gründen konzentriert sich meine Aufmerksamkeit auf Gustav Hauskrech als einen ‚volksdeutschen‘ Täter in der Slowakei.

Gustav Hauskrech wurde Mitte Juni 1913 als zweiter Sohn des Schneidermeisters Franz Hauskrech und seiner Frau Karoline geboren. Noch im selben Jahr zog die Familie von Sopron/Ödenburg nach Pozsony/Pressburg (ab Mitte März 1919 Bratislava) um. Gustav sowie seine sieben Geschwister (vier Schwestern und drei Brüder) erhielten eine katholische Erziehung.¹¹ Wie es der Familie in den Jahren des Ersten Weltkriegs erging, ist den zugänglichen Quellen nicht zu entnehmen. Zehn Monate nach Kriegsende wurde Gustav eingeschult. Im Gegensatz zu seinem vier Jahre älteren Bruder Karl besuchte er nur deutschsprachige Schulen. Ermöglicht wurde dies

5 Gerhard Paul/Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Sozialisation, Milieu und Gewalt. Fortschritte und Probleme der neueren Täterforschung, in: Dies. (Hg.), *Karrieren der Gewalt. Nationalsozialistische Täterbiographien*, Darmstadt 2004, 1-32, 4.

6 Stellvertretend für kritische Bemerkungen: Frank Bajohr, *Täterforschung: Ertrag, Probleme und Perspektiven eines Forschungsansatzes*, in: Ders./Andrea Löw (Hg.), *Der Holocaust. Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung*, Frankfurt am Main 2015, 167-185.

7 Klaus-Michael Mallmann, *Vom Fußvolk der „Endlösung“. Ordnungspolizei, Ostkrieg und Judenmord*, in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 26 (1997), 355-391, 385, 390. Paul/Mallmann, *Sozialisation, Milieu und Gewalt*, 22.

8 Carl Bethke, *(K)eine gemeinsame Sprache? Aspekte deutsch-jüdischer Beziehungsgeschichte in Slawonien, 1900–1945*, Berlin 2013, hier insbesondere 243-392.

9 Eric C. Steinhart, *The Holocaust and the Germanisation of Ukraine*, New York 2015.

10 Mirna Zakić, *Ethnic Germans and National Socialism in Yugoslavia in World War II*, Cambridge 2017, hier insbesondere 161-184.

11 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1825, Bl. 39-49, Vernehmungen Karl und Gustav Hauskrechts, 31. März und 6. April 1964.

durch die Gründung der Tschechoslowakei, auf die die deutschsprachige Bevölkerung (trotz ihres hohen Bevölkerungsanteils und trotz der Ende 1291 vom ungarischen König Andreas III. den *hospites theutonici* gewährten Privilegien) wenig Einfluss hatte: Und so standen die deutschsprachigen Bewohner Bratislavas diesem Staat ablehnend gegenüber.¹² Paradoxe Weise brachten die neuen Machtverhältnisse den Deutschsprachigen in der Slowakei das, was ihnen im ungarischen Teil der Habsburger Monarchie zuvor kaum möglich gewesen war: die Pflege des nationalen Bewusstseins, die Entfaltung eines eigenen Partei-, Vereins- und Schulwesens.¹³ Gustav Hauskrecht wurde gewissermaßen zum Produkt dieser Entwicklung. Nach Beendigung der Volksschule wechselte er auf das deutsche Staatsgymnasium in Bratislava. Als Gymnasiast trat Hauskrecht 1927 dem deutschnationalen Deutschen Turnverein bei,¹⁴ der unter Federführung der Sudetendeutschen bereits im Frühling 1921 in der Stadt ins Leben gerufen worden war.¹⁵ Nach seiner Matura 1929 begann Hauskrecht eine kaufmännische Lehre im Teppichhaus Böhler, einer florierenden Firma, deren Besitzer Juden waren. Zwei Jahre später wurde Hauskrecht bei der Firma als Verkäufer eingestellt. Hier entwickelte er sich, wie ihm sein früherer Arbeitgeber in den 1960er-Jahre attestierte, „zu einem tüchtigen Mitarbeiter“.¹⁶ Angesichts seiner kaufmännischen Qualitäten wurde Hauskrecht von den Geschäftsinhabern bevorzugt behandelt und zu deren besten Kunden, meist aus den jüdischen Kreisen der Stadt und der Umgebung, geschickt.¹⁷ Aus der Sicht seiner späteren Opfer erwies sich dies als verhängnisvoll.

Die Deutschsprachigen Bratislavas konnten sich mit ihrer Stellung als eine der drei nationalen Minderheiten der nun zur slowakischen Metropole avancierten Stadt nur schwer abfinden. Die sukzessive forcierte (Tschecho-)Slowakisierung der einst stark durch Deutschsprachige geprägten Stadt¹⁸ schon kurz nach 1918 (wie zum Beispiel die Umbenennung der Stadt in Bratislava, die Erklärung, dass dieser neue Name unübersetzbar sei, sowie eine ganze Reihe kleinlicher nationalistisch motivierter Schikanen der neuen Staatsgewalt) stieß auf Unwillen vieler deutschsprachiger Einwohner.¹⁹ Obwohl sie früher national eher indifferent eingestellt waren,²⁰ führten die Ängste vor wirtschaftlicher, sozialer und politischer Marginalisierung unter den neuen Verhältnissen zum plötzlichen Erwachen des bis dahin schlummernden Nationalbewusstseins. Zuerst suchten die Deutschsprachigen Bratislavas den Verbündeten durchaus logisch bei den ortsansässigen Ungarn. Seit den 1930er-Jahren, als die erste Generation die deutschsprachigen Schulen verließ und als Reaktion auf die Empfindung von den staatlichen Behörden als Bürger zweiter Klasse

12 Dazu ausführlicher Pieter van Duin, *Die Deutschen Bratislavas und ihre Einverleibung in die ČSR 1918–1919*, in: *Historické štúdie* 43 (2004), 167–181.

13 Dušan Kováč, *Nemecko a nemecká menšina na Slovensku 1871–1945* [Deutschland und die deutsche Minderheit in der Slowakei 1871–1945], Bratislava 1991, 59 f.

14 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1825, Bl. 44–49, Vernehmung Gustav Hauskrechts, 6. April 1964; Slovenský národný archív [Slowakisches Nationalarchiv] (SNA), 125-36-2/7, Abschrift der SS-Stammkarte von Gustav Hauskrecht.

15 Miroslav Bobřík, *Nemecká menšina na Slovensku a jej telovýchovné a športové aktivity v rokoch 1918–1945* [Deutsche Minderheit in der Slowakei und ihre Aktivitäten im Turnwesen und Sport in den Jahren 1918–1945], Bratislava 2006, 34.

16 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1867, Bl. 187–188, Zeugenaussage Artur Böhlers, 4. November 1965.

17 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1870, Bl. 248–250, Zeugenaussage E. F., 5. August 1968; VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Brief J. S. an Wiesenthal, 7. September 1994.

18 Zur (Tschecho-)Slowakisierung der Stadt vgl.: Iris Engemann, *Die Slowakisierung Bratislavas*. Universität, Theater und Kultusgemeinden 1918–1948, Wiesbaden 2012.

19 Egbert K. Jahn, *Die Deutschen in der Slowakei in den Jahren 1918–1929*. Ein Beitrag zur Nationalitätenpolitik, München 1971, 41 f.

20 Vgl.: Eleonóra Babejová, *Fin-de-Siècle Pressburg*. Conflict and Cultural Coexistence in Bratislava 1897–1914, Boulder CO 2003.

behandelt zu werden, die Unzufriedenheit wuchs,²¹ wandten sie ihre Blicke, vor allem nach Gründung der Sudetendeutschen Heimatfront im Herbst 1933, mehr und mehr den Deutschnationalen zu, die sich um die Karpatendeutschen Partei (KdP) scharten.²² Ziel dieser Gruppierung war die politische Vereinigung aller in der Slowakei lebenden Deutschen sowie die Schaffung einer gemeinsamen karpatendeutschen Identität.²³ Unter der deutschstämmigen Bevölkerung Bratislavas (1930 bekannten sich 32.801 Personen, d. h. 28,06 Prozent der Einwohner zur deutschen Nationalität)²⁴ fand diese unter dem Einfluss von Sudetendeutschen stehende Partei immer mehr politischen Rückhalt. In den Parlamentswahlen 1935 überzeugte sie fast 5.000 Wähler, drei Jahre später anlässlich der Gemeinderatswahlen schon mehr als 13.000. Zu dieser Zeit ließ sich die Partei zum Handlanger NS-Deutschlands machen. Nach dem ‚Anschluß‘ Österreichs erfuhr die KdP noch mehr Zulauf.²⁵ Eines der neuen Parteimitglieder wurde Mitte April 1938 auch Gustav Hauskrecht.²⁶ Die Partei war für ihn kein unbekanntes Terrain, da bereits drei Jahre zuvor sein älterer Bruder Karl der KdP beigetreten war.²⁷

Nach einem kurzem Verbot im Zuge der Krise während Verhandlungen zum Münchner Abkommen im September 1938, die ohne die Beteiligung der CSR stattgefunden hatten, und der Umbenennung in Deutsche Partei (DP) wurde sie in der bereits autonomen, ab März 1939 ‚selbstständigen‘ Slowakei die einzige genehmigte politische Vereinigung der Deutschsprachigen des Landes. Von Anfang an streng hierarchisch nach dem ‚Führerprinzip‘ ausgebaut, war die DP mit Segen der slowakischen Landesregierung offiziell die Trägerin der ‚nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung‘ mit allen sich daraus ergebenden Konsequenzen. Frühere politische Gegner wie konservative Christlichsoziale, proungarisch eingestellte Bürgerschichten, Sozialdemokraten und Kommunisten wurden bekämpft und mundtot gemacht. Auf den sich bis dahin politisch indifferent verhaltenden Teil der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerung übte die Partei einen nicht unerheblichen Druck aus, ihren Reihen beizutreten. Im Allgemeinen galt hier der Grundsatz, dass ein Mitgliedsausweis der DP gleichzeitig auch die Zugehörigkeit zur ‚deutschen Volksgruppe‘ belegte.²⁸ In der Führungsriege der Partei betrieb man nicht nur eine Politik der Inklusion, sondern auch der Exklusion. Der DP als einer Art der ‚Volksgemeinschaft‘ sollten keinesfalls deutschsprachige Juden, hochrangige Funktionäre der gegnerischen Parteien, Slowaken sowie Tschechen angehören. Allerdings im letztgenannten Fall verfuhr man recht ambivalent und nahm einige dutzende Tschechen, die plötzlich ihre deutschen Wurzeln wiedergefunden haben, in die Partei auf.

Leitende Parteiposten übertrug Volksgruppenführer Franz Karmasin, der aus dem mährischen Olomouc/Olmütz stammte, sowohl ihm vertrauten Sudetendeut-

21 Jahn, *Die Deutschen*, 43, 79.

22 Michal Schvarc, *Finis Preßburg. Die Deutschen in Bratislava 1918–1948*, in: Eduard Nížňanský (Hg.), *Stratené mesto – Lost City – Verlorene Stadt – Elvezsett város. Bratislava – Pozsony – Pressburg*, Bratislava 2011, 511–527, 519 f.

23 Mehr dazu siehe Kováč, *Nemecko a nemecká menšina*, 69–75 sowie Ján Kokorák, *Die deutsche Minderheit in der Slowakei 1918–1945. Die Parteienlandschaft im Spannungsfeld zwischen deutschungarischer Tradition und deutsch-national(sozialistischem) Gedankengut*, Hamburg 2013, 58–116.

24 Milan Zemko, *Občan, spoločnosť, národ v pohybe slovenských dejín* [Bürger, Gesellschaft, Nation in Bewegung in der slowakischen Geschichte], Bratislava 2010, 172.

25 Schvarc, *Finis Preßburg*, 520.

26 SNA, 125-36-2/7, Abschrift der SS-Stammkarte von Gustav Hauskrecht.

27 Štátny archív [Staatsarchiv] (ŠA) Bratislava, Ludový súd [Volksgericht] (LS) Bratislava 1948, Ls 283/1948, Vernehmungen Karl Hauskrechts, 6. Mai und 14. Juni 1947.

28 Jörg K. Hoensch, *Die Slowakei und Hitlers Ostpolitik. Hlinkas Slowakische Volkspartei zwischen Autonomie und Separation 1938/1939*, Köln/Graz 1965, 177.

schen als auch besonders verlässlichen Einheimischen. Zu diesen zählten auch die älteren Hausrecht-Brüder. Karl übernahm schon im Oktober 1938 die Leitung des Presse- und Propagandaamtes der DP sowie die Kreisleiterstelle in Bratislava. Ersteres Amt bekleidete er mit einer kleineren Unterbrechung bis Ende März 1945.²⁹ Gustav erhielt den Posten eines Nachbarschaftsleiters in Bratislava, schied aber schon nach einem Jahr aus.³⁰ Die Gründe dafür sind aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach in seinen Bestrebungen zu suchen, sich in der Textilbranche selbstständig zu machen. Allerdings blieb Gustav noch in der Freiwilligen Schutzstaffel (FS), einer paramilitärischen Organisation der Partei,³¹ aktiv. Ende August 1941 trat er in die Einsatztruppe (ET) ein,³² einer Elitegruppierung innerhalb der FS und zugleich einer Tarnformation und Ersatzeinheit der Waffen-SS,³³ in der sein jüngerer Bruder Anton bereits seit Juli 1941 diente.³⁴ Noch im Herbst 1941 stellte sich Gustav – wie die Mehrzahl seiner späteren Kumpanen – in der Edlgasse einer Musterung bei der Waffen-SS.³⁵ Vorerst blieb er jedoch zu Hause.

Im Mai 1942 konnte Gustav Hausrecht seine Ergebenheit gegenüber dem Nationalsozialismus schließlich im ‚Reich‘ selbst demonstrieren. Er wurde mit anderen ET-Angehörigen aus der Slowakei zu einem siebenwöchigen Lehrgang in das SS-Ausbildungslager im elsässischen Sennheim einberufen.³⁶ Dort überzeugte er seine Ausbildungsoffiziere vollends. Man bescheinigte Hausrecht „sicheres Auftreten“, „vielseitiges Wissen, selbständiges und kritisches Denken“. In weltanschaulicher Hinsicht wurde er als „einwandfreier Nationalsozialist“ und „Kämpfernatur“ beurteilt. Über die weitere Verwendbarkeit Hausrechts hatte der Leiter des Lehrganges keine Zweifel: „sehr guter Unterführer, für selbständige Aufgaben geeignet.“³⁷

Der Ausbildungskurs in Sennheim hat Gustav Hausrecht tief geprägt. Unter den Teilnehmern, insbesondere aus Bratislava, entstand ein starkes Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl. In seiner erhalten gebliebenen Korrespondenz aus den Jahren zwischen 1943 und 1945 hat Hausrecht mehrmals das Erlebnis von Sennheim heraufbeschworen. Zudem hielt er brieflich Kontakt zu seinem Ausbildungsoffizier, dem er ab und zu Kleinigkeiten wie Zigaretten, Lebensmittelkonserven, Kleidungsstücke usw. schickte.³⁸ Als im Februar 1945 der Ort von französischen Truppen befreit wurde, betrauerte dies Hausrecht in einem Schreiben mit den Wörtern „[wir] haben leider auch Sennheim verloren“.³⁹ Nach Sennheim engagierte er sich in der ET noch aktiver als vorher. Im Februar 1944 übernahm Hausrecht dann die Führung des durch die Abgänge zur Waffen-SS personell geschwächten ET-Sturms in Bratislava.⁴⁰ Im Sep-

29 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 283/1948, Vernehmungen Karl Hausrechts, 6. Mai und 14. Juni 1947.

30 SNA, 125-36-2/7, Abschrift der SS-Stammkarte von Gustav Hausrecht. ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Strafanzeige der Außenstelle der Staatssicherheit in Bratislava, 16. Juni 1948.

31 Zur FS siehe: Michal Schvarc, „Úderka a výchovný nástroj hnutia“ – Freiwillige Schutzstaffel – Dobrovoľné ochranné oddiely Deutsche Partei [„Kampftruppe und Erziehungsinstrument der Bewegung“ – Freiwillige Schutzstaffel der Deutschen Partei], in: *Vojenská história* 1 (2009), 44-66.

32 SNA, 125-36-2/7, Abschrift der SS-Stammkarte von Gustav Hausrecht.

33 Zur ET als Ersatzeinheit der Waffen-SS siehe ausführlich: Michal Schvarc, *Nábor slovenských Nemcov do Waffen-SS na prelome rokov 1942/1943 (súvislosti, predpoklady, priebeh a dôsledky)* [Die Anwerbung der Slowakeideutschen zur Waffen-SS um die Jahreswende 1942/1943 (Zusammenhänge, Voraussetzungen, Verlauf und Folgen)], in: Marian Uhrin (Hg.), *Slovensko v roku 1942. Politika – armáda – spoločnosť* [Die Slowakei im Jahr 1942. Politik – Armee – Gesellschaft], Banská Bystrica 2013, 133-152, 136 ff.

34 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SM-Akte Anton Hausrecht, Film F 77.

35 SNA, 125-35-5/1-101, Liste der für die Waffen-SS gemusterten Mitglieder der DP, FS und ET, undatiert.

36 SNA, 125-36-2/9, Schreiben Rieglers an die Direktion der Firma Philipp Haas u. Söhne in Wien, 20. April 1942.

37 SNA, 125-36-2/6, Beurteilung Gustav Hausrechts in Sennheim, undatiert.

38 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Brief Hausrechts an Kurt Wegner, 15. März 1944.

39 Ebd., Brief Hausrechts an Roman S., 22. März 1945.

40 Ebd., Brief Hausrechts an Ernst M., 17. März 1944.

tember 1944, nachdem die Slowakei wegen des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands gegen das autoritäre Regime Jozef Tisos⁴¹ durch die Einheiten der Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS und Sicherheitspolizei besetzt wurde, sorgte er dafür, dass der Rest seiner Männer zum Heimatschutz (HS) einrückte, einer neu aufgestellten Kampf- und Schutzformation der deutschsprachigen Minderheit.⁴² Der HS wurde ein wichtiges Instrument der neuen Besatzungsmacht, welches u. a. beim Aufspüren der sich versteckt gehaltenen Jüdinnen und Juden eingesetzt war. Und dadurch wurde auch Hausrecht direkt in die erneute Judenverfolgung im Lande involviert: freiwillig, nicht „notdienstverpflichtet“, wie er es in seinen späteren Vernehmungen immer bezeugte.

Für die jüdische Bevölkerung Bratislavas (1930 bekannten sich zur jüdischen Nationalität 4.747, aber zur mosaischen Religion sogar 14.882 Personen, d. h. zwölf Prozent der Einwohner)⁴³ bedeutete der Prozess der Auflösung der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1938/1939 zugleich das Ende der verhältnismäßig ruhigen Phase ihrer Koexistenz mit anderen Bevölkerungsgruppen der Stadt.⁴⁴ Mit der Erlangung des Autonomiestatus der Slowakei Anfang Oktober 1938 und der Gründung des unter der Schirmherrschaft von NS-Deutschland stehenden Slowakischen Staates Mitte März 1939 veränderte sich die Lage der Juden in der Metropole grundlegend. Gegen die Juden hetzten vor allem radikalisierte Teile der hiesigen deutschsprachigen Jugend, die in der FS organisiert waren. Dies verwundert keineswegs, da der Juden Hass unter der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerung der Stadt auch eine Tradition hatte. Schon im Revolutionsjahr 1848 hatte in Bratislava ein Pogrom stattgefunden und später galt die Stadt als eines der Bollwerke des politischen Antisemitismus in Ungarn.⁴⁵ Nach 20 Jahren Eindämmung tauchten der Hass und die Intoleranz wieder auf.⁴⁶ Zur ‚Lösung der Judenfrage‘ im Land wollte neben den Regierungsstellen auch die DP ein Wort mitsprechen. Sie agitierte für einen Boykott jüdischer Geschäfte in der Stadt und ein systematisches Vorgehen gegen die Juden nach nationalsozialistischem Beispiel. Wenn sie es für geboten hielt, veranstaltete sie heimlich Umzüge durch die Stadtviertel mit dem Ziel, entweder die Fensterscheiben jüdischer Läden zu zerstören oder die jüdischen Passanten auf den Straßen und sogar zu Hause zu terrorisieren.⁴⁷ Damit sollte nicht nur der Machtanspruch der Partei im Bereich der ‚Judenfrage‘ demonstriert werden, sondern auch ein gewisser Druck auf

41 Zu Tiso und dem Regime in der Slowakei 1939–1945 siehe: Ivan Kamenec, *Tragédia politika, kňaza a človeka. Dr. Jozef Tiso 1887–1947* [Tragödie des Politikers, Geistlichen und Menschen. Dr. Jozef Tiso 1887–1947], Bratislava 2013 und James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*, Ithaca NY 2013.

42 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Briefe Hausrechts an Roman S., 5. Oktober und an Franz A., 7. Oktober 1944.

43 Eduard Nižňanský, *Die Juden in Bratislava 1918–1948*, in: Ders. (Hg.), *Stratené mesto*, 529–553, 530.

44 Peter Salner, *Premeny židovskej komunity v Bratislave* [Die Wandlungen der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Bratislava] (1919–1969), in: Ders. (Hg.), *Židia v Bratislave* [Die Juden in Bratislava], Bratislava 1997, 53–70, hier 55 f.

45 Petra Rybářová, *Antisemitizmus v Uhorsku v 80. rokoch 19. storočia* [Der Antisemitismus im historischen Ungarn in den 80er-Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts], Bratislava 2010, 87. Miloslav Szabó, „Von Worten zu Taten“. Die slowakische Nationalbewegung und der Antisemitismus, 1875–1922, Berlin 2014, 52.

46 Allerdings knüpften zunächst die slowakischen Studenten nicht nur, aber vor allem aus dem Umfeld von Hlinkas Slowakischer Volkspartei an die Tradition des ungarischen Antisemitismus in Bratislava an. Vgl. dazu: Miloslav Szabó, *Die „Golem“-Demonstrationen in Bratislava von 1936*, in: Michael Kohlstruck/Stefanie Schüler-Springorum/Ulrich Wyrwa (Hg.), *Bilder kollektiver Gewalt – Kollektive Gewalt im Bild. Annäherungen an eine Ikonographie der Gewalt*. Für Werner Bergmann zum 65. Geburtstag, Berlin 2015, 147–155.

47 SNA, Krajský úrad [Landesamt] 1928–1939 (KÚ), Karton 319, Polizeiberichte über die Versammlungen der DP in Bratislava am 3. u. 10. Dezember 1938. Ebd. *Národný súd* [Nationalgerichtshof] 1945–1947 (NS), Mikrofilm II. A 876, Tn ľud 62/1945 – Verfahren gegen Imrich Vašina, Polizeibericht über die Ausschreitungen der FS in Bratislava, 13. März 1939; ebd. 203–403-5. Polizeiberichte über die antijüdischen Ausschreitungen der FS in Bratislava 18., 22. und 23. August 1939 sowie 3. und 4. September 1939.

die Regierung ausgeübt werden. Denn der Volksgruppenführung schien die Entrechtung und Ausgrenzung der jüdischen Bevölkerung zu schleppend, nicht radikal genug zu sein.

Ebenso im Bereich der Enteignung jüdischer Betriebe und Geschäfte, der sogenannten Arisierung, erarbeitete die DP eigene Vorschläge. Am Grundsatz festhaltend, „de[n] deutsche[n] Charakter der Stadt erhalten“⁴⁸ zu wollen, sollten die Deutschsprachigen die rentabelsten der als jüdisch bezeichneten Firmen übernehmen.⁴⁹ Bei der Umsetzung dieses Planes spielte auch Gustav Hauskrecht eine gewisse Rolle. Wie schon erwähnt, war er in einem der größten Teppichgeschäfte der Stadt angestellt, das einen beachtlichen Jahresumsatz von ungefähr zwei Millionen Kronen erzielte.⁵⁰ Die veränderten Machtverhältnisse boten Hauskrecht eine willkommene Möglichkeit, die Inhaber aus der Firma zu vertreiben. Als verbaler Druck und Drohungen nicht halfen, schickte er zu den Büchlers einige FS-Männer, die sie mehrmals verprügelten.⁵¹ Inzwischen hatte die Partei Hauskrecht als Regierungstreuhänder der Firma vorgeschlagen und auch schon amtlich eingetragen. Aber diese Maßnahme hatte nicht lange Bestand. Ende August 1939 erreichten die Gebrüder Büchler die Tilgung dieser Eintragung im Handelsregister⁵² und suchten nach einem/r anderen (Schein)Inhaber/in. Daraufhin habe Hauskrecht – so Artur Büchler in einer späteren Aussage – das Unternehmen im September 1939 „wütend“ verlassen.⁵³ Aus der Sicht der Büchlers wurde eine richtige Entscheidung getroffen. So konnten sie unter der neuen Inhaberin die erste Deportationswelle von 1942 überleben und sich nach Besetzung des Landes im Spätsommer 1944 in einem Versteck unbehelligt aufhalten. Für Hauskrecht bedeutete dies einen herben Rückschlag und er sann nach Rache.

Dieser Misserfolg radikalisierte Hauskrechts antisemitische Haltung. Obwohl er beruflich in der hier erst seit 1939 ansässigen Filiale des Teppich- und Möbelstoffherstellers Phillip Haas & Söhne rasch Fuß fasste und schnell zu ihrem Direktor avancierte,⁵⁴ konnte er die oben geschilderte Handlungsweise der früheren Arbeitgeber offenbar nicht vergessen. Seinen Hass gegen die Büchlers übertrug Hauskrecht auf das gesamte Judentum, forderte die völlige Ausschaltung der „jüdischen Parasi-

48 So Karmasin in seiner Vernehmung vom 1. Dezember 1969. Siehe: StA München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835, Bd. 6, Bl. 1320-1326. Zur sog. Arisierung in der Slowakei: Eduard Nižňanský/Ján Hlavinka (Hg.), *Arizácie* [Arisierung], Bratislava 2010. Dies. (Hg.), *Arizácie v regiónoch Slovenska* [Die Arisierung in den Regionen der Slowakei], Bratislava 2010. Ľudovít Hallon, *Arizácia na Slovensku 1939–1945* [Die Arisierung in der Slowakei 1939–1945], in: *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia* 15 (2005) 7, 148-159. Zur sog. Arisierung durch die Deutschen: Michal Švarc, *Arizácia židovských podnikov ako predmet sporu medzi Deutsche Partei a slovenskými štátnymi a straníckymi orgánmi na príklade vybraných dokumentov* [Die Arisierung jüdischer Unternehmen als Gegenstand des Konfliktes zwischen der Deutschen Partei und den slowakischen Staats- und Parteibehörden am Beispiel von ausgewählten Dokumenten], in: Nižňanský/Hlavinka, *Die Arisierung in den Regionen*, 172-195. Kokorák, *Die deutsche Minderheit*, 260-274. Barbara Hutzelmann, *Die deutsche Minderheit und die Enteignung der Juden in der Slowakei 1939 bis 1945*, in: Burkhard Olschowsky/Ingo Loose (Hg.), *Nationalsozialismus und Regionalbewusstsein im östlichen Europa*, München 2016, 229-248.

49 SNA, NS, Tn Iud 13/1946 – Verfahren gegen Otomar Kubala, Mikrofilm II. A 923, Vermerk der DP über die Ernennung von Regierungstreuhändern für jüdische Betriebe, undatiert.

50 SNA, Povereníctvo priemyslu a obchodu, VII. reštitučný odbor [Amt des Beauftragten für Industrie und Handel, VII. Restitutionsabteilung] (PPO, VII. RO), Karton 241, Zahl VII/2-6501, Schreiben des Finanzamts Bratislava an das städtische Notariatsamt in Bratislava, 4. September 1940.

51 Archiv bezpečnostních složek Praha [Archiv der Sicherheitsorgane Prag] (ABS), Z-10-903, Zeugenaussage Koloman Büchlers, 7. Mai 1945.

52 SNA, NS, Tn Iud 13/1946 – Verfahren gegen Otomar Kubala, Mikrofilm II. A 923, Verzeichnis der Regierungstreuhänder, undatiert. Ebd. PPO, VI. RO, Karton 241, Zahl VII/2-6501, Auszug aus dem Firmenregister, 29. April 1941.

53 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1867, Bl. 187-188, Zeugenaussage Artur Büchlers v. 4. November 1965. Vgl. ebd. B 162/1825, Bl. 44-49, Vernehmung Gustav Hauskrechts, 6. April 1964.

54 Ebd., B 162/1825, Bl. 44-49, Vernehmung Gustav Hauskrechts, 6. April 1964.

ten aus dem slowakischen Wirtschaftsleben“.⁵⁵ Er ging aber noch weiter: im Frühjahr 1944 verprügelte er auf offener Straße einen jüdischen Arzt, weil dieser den Davidstern hinter seiner Aktentasche verborgen hatte.⁵⁶ Als die Nationalsozialisten im März desselben Jahres Ungarn besetzt und mit Hilfe ungarischer Behörden in schnellem Tempo noch härtere antijüdische Maßnahmen ergriffen hatten, erschien dies Hausrecht angesichts der scheinbar stagnierenden antijüdischen Politik in der Slowakei als ein Vorbild. So bemerkte er nach einem Gespräch mit einem Angehörigen eines in Ungarn eingesetzten Sicherheitspolizei-Einsatzkommandos leicht resigniert in einem Brief: „Ausgeputzt wird auf alle Fälle dort und zwar ganz gross.“⁵⁷ Er konnte damals noch nicht ahnen, dass er knappe fünf Monate später dazu Gelegenheit bekommen würde.

Als das Land im Spätsommer 1944 im Zuge der steigenden Aktivität von Partisanengruppen und der anschließenden militärischen Erhebung von den Einheiten der Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS und der deutschen Polizei besetzt wurde, starteten die Kommandos der Einsatzgruppe H der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD in Kooperation mit den einheimischen Kräften die zweite Deportationswelle nach 1942. Im Rahmen der von den slowakischen Behörden durchgeführten Deportation wurden 1942 knapp 58.000 jüdischen Menschen in die Vernichtungsstätten im besetzten Polen verschleppt.⁵⁸ Die Partei war mit ihrer neuen Wehrorganisation, dem Heimatschutz, von Anfang an aktiv dabei. Schon gleich nach dem Einmarsch der deutschen Truppen in die Slowakei begannen die Besatzer mit der Jagd auf die noch im Land verbliebenen Personen, die den slowakischen Gesetzen zufolge als Juden galten. Laut statistischen Erhebungen des Innenministeriums vom Februar/März 1944 handelte es sich um 12.812 Menschen, meist geschützt durch verschiedene Ausnahmeverordnungen von Ministerien oder des Präsidenten.⁵⁹ Etwa 4.100 von ihnen, vorwiegend Männer, wurden in Arbeitslagern gefangen gehalten und zur Zwangsarbeit eingesetzt. Nur ein kleiner Teil konnte sich verstecken oder unter falscher Identität verhältnismäßig unbehelligt leben. Die so auf verschiedene Weise der ersten Deportationswelle im Jahr 1942 entkommenen Juden gerieten mit der Ankunft deutscher Streit- und Polizeikräfte in akute Lebensgefahr. Denn für die Besatzer spielte die „radikale Lösung der Judenfrage“ eine entscheidende Rolle.⁶⁰ Für diesen Plan fanden sie genügend eifrige einheimische Helfershelfer: seien sie Slowaken oder Volksdeutsche.

Am meisten hervor taten sich bei dieser Verfolgung von Juden in Bratislava und der Umgebung der HS und die DP. Auch Hausrecht selbst versuchte intensiv Juden zu finden, aufzuspüren. So zog er z. B. zwei Menschen aus einem Zug nach Bratislava heraus, nahm sie fest und übergab sie an die mobilen Einheiten der Einsatzgruppe.⁶¹ Als in der Nacht vom 28. zum 29. September 1944 eine Großrazzia gegen die noch 3.500 in Bratislava lebenden Juden unter Leitung von Alois Brunner, einem der „Eichmann-Männer“,⁶² stattfand, war Hausrecht mit seinen Männern im einige Dutzende Mann starken HS-Aufgebot dabei. Wie während des Holocaust üblich

55 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Brief Hausrechts an Ernst M., 27. Mai 1943.

56 ABS Praha, Z-10-903, Zeugenaussage Rudolf L., 10. Mai 1946.

57 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Brief Hausrechts an Albin K., 5. Mai 1944.

58 Ladislav Lipscher, *Die Juden im Slowakischen Staat 1939–1945*, München 1980, 120 f.

59 SNA, Bestand „S“, Karton 499, Band 2, Bl. 2, „Die Juden in der Slowakei aufgrund des Schutzes: Stand zum 1. Februar 1944“. Durch die in der Slowakei nach wie vor heftig diskutierten Präsidentenausnahmen wurden direkt 577 und indirekt 251, d. h. insgesamt 828 Personen geschützt.

60 Lenka Sindelářová, *Finale der Vernichtung. Die Einsatzgruppe in der Slowakei 1944/1945*, Darmstadt 2013, 82.

61 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1866, Bl. 92, Bericht Hofers, 15. September 1944.

62 Zu Brunner siehe: Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer*, Wien 1993.

wies diese Verfolgungsaktion alle wesentlichen Merkmale eines arbeitsteiligen Vorgangs auf: Brunner erteilte die allgemeinen Befehle, rund 600 HS- und Hlinka-Garde-Männer führten sie aus und holten die Gesuchten aus ihren Wohnungen oder Verstecken. Eine Kompanie der Luftwaffe wurde zu Straßensperren eingesetzt. Ca. 1.600 Menschen gerieten so ins Netz der Häscher. Die ausgestellten Ausnahmebescheinigungen, sogar ausländische Pässe wurden nun nicht mehr berücksichtigt. Wenige Stunden später wurden die Festgenommenen nach Sered überführt und von dort aus am 30. September bzw. 3. Oktober nach Auschwitz deportiert. Fast alle wurden in den Gaskammern ermordet.⁶³ Mit offensichtlicher Genugtuung schilderte Hauskrechtn zynisch den Verlauf der Aktion seinen in der Waffen-SS stehenden ET-Kameraden:

„Überraschend kam eines Abends der Befehl, um 20 Uhr in Uniform gestellt zu sein, höchste Bereitschaft und wir warteten nur auf den Moment des Befehls. Endlich erfuhren wir um 22.30 Uhr, aus dem Munde des Sturmbannführers Postl: ‚Heute nacht [sic!] wird die Judenfrage in Pressburg gelöst.‘ Einige Direktiven und indem um 23 Uhr niemand mehr auf der Gasse sein darf, ging es dann los. Nie werde ich den Anblick vergessen und jedem von Euch hätte ich das Bild vergönnt, als diese Mischpoche, die Spitze beim Andreasfriedhofe, durch die Mickwiecgasse [sic!] zurück über den Heumarkt, hinauf bis zum Präsidentenpalais sein Ende gefunden hat. Diesmal nicht nur die Armen, sondern schwere Bonzen, die, die sich die Hände gerieben haben, sich USA-Bürger genannt haben, mit X Ausnahmen und Taufscheinen versehen waren. Rücksichtslos packte hier die ET zu und nicht nur die ET, sondern auch der Heimatschutz und die neuaufgestellte HG. So haben wir täglich, stündlich oft und oft und meistens in der Nacht sehr viele Aufträge.“⁶⁴

Wie der letzte Satz des zitierten Briefpassus offenbart, war Hauskrechtn regelmäßig im Einsatz. Obwohl er wegen seiner Stellung als Direktor einer Firma, die immer mehr Militäraufträge bekam, vom Dienst in der Waffen-SS freigestellt wurde, wollte er mit Beteiligung an der Jagd gegen erklärte „Erzfeinde“ des Nationalsozialismus seine „Treue“ unbedingt beweisen. Zuerst wurde er mit seinen Leuten der Sicherheitsabteilung des HS-Hauptkommandos zugeteilt. Ab etwa Mitte Oktober 1944 betraute man ihn mit der Leitung der neu eingerichteten „Judensammelstelle“ in der Edlgasse Nr. 6,⁶⁵ am Sitz der kurz davor aufgelösten Judenzentrale (Ústredňa Židov), der bis dahin vom slowakischen Staat aufgezwungenen Organisation der jüdischen Bevölkerungsgruppe im Land.⁶⁶ Damit wurde Hauskrechtn Herr über Leben und Tod vieler Menschen.

Die Einordnung der Dienststelle in der Edlgasse in das Gefüge des Besatzungsapparats ist nicht völlig klar. Die Historikerin Lenka Šindelářová, die sich mit der Problematik der Einsatzgruppe H der Sipo und des SD auseinandergesetzt hat, kam

63 Ján Hlavinka/Eduard Nižňanský, *Pracovný a koncentračný tábor v Seredi 1941–1945* [Das Arbeits- und Konzentrationslager in Sered 1941–1945], Bratislava 2009, 105 und 119 f. Šindelářová, *Finale der Vernichtung*, 89 f. Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939–1945*, Hamburg 22008, 904 f., 910 f.

64 ŠA Bratislava, ES Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Briefe Hauskrechtns an Roman S., 5. Oktober 1944 und an Franz A., 7. Oktober 1944.

65 ŠA Bratislava, Okresný ľudový súd [Bezirksvolksgesicht] (OLS) Bratislava 1945–1947, T Iud 361/45, Vernehmungen Josef Pours, 24. September 1945 und 12. April 1946. Ebd.: T Iud 267/1945, Protokoll von der Hauptverhandlung in der Strafsache gegen Stefan Huber, 22. Mai 1946, Zeugenaussage Tibor Kovács. BArch Ludwigsb., B 162/1863, Bl. 176–194, Vernehmung Hauskrechtns, 25. Februar 1971.

66 Zur Judenzentrale siehe: Katarína Hradská (Hg.), *Holokaust na Slovensku 8. Ústredňa Židov (1940–1944). Dokumenty* [Der Holocaust in der Slowakei 8. Die Judenzentrale (1940–1944). Dokumente]. Bratislava 2008.

zwar zu keinem eindeutigen Schluss, vermutet aber zumindest eine Überwachung seitens der Einsatzgruppe.⁶⁷ Die vorhandenen Indizien sprechen dafür, dass die Dienststelle direkt der Volksgruppenführung unterstellt war. Hauskrech selbst hat in einem der zahlreichen Briefe an seine früheren ET-Mitstreiter geschrieben, er sei von Karmasin persönlich mit der Aufgabe beauftragt worden.⁶⁸ Auch Michal Gerö, eines der vielen Opfer Hauskrechts und der spätere Staatsanwalt der Anklagebehörde beim Nationalgerichtshof in Bratislava, der das Verfahren gegen Karmasin 1947/1948 leitete, bezeichnete die „Judensammelstelle“ als „eine Einrichtung der deutschen Volksgruppe.“⁶⁹ Dies unterstreicht auch das weitgehend selbständige Agieren von Hauskrechts Trupps und bestätigt ein eher loses Verhältnis zu Einsatzgruppe sowie ihren Einheiten. Eine Unterstellung der Dienststelle unter die SD-Männer Heinrich Hahn und einen gewissen Schebesta, scheint ein Teil von Hauskrechts Verteidigungsstrategie zu sein.

Die Wahl Hauskrechts zum Leiter der Dienststelle war keineswegs zufällig. Einerseits kannte er aus seiner Zeit beim Teppichhaus Büchler viele Jüdinnen und Juden, andererseits galt er als weltanschaulich besonders zuverlässig. Darüber hinaus war es kein Geheimnis, dass er eifrig nach seinen früheren Arbeitgebern suchte und für ihre Festnahme bzw. die Auskunft über ihr Versteck eine Geldprämie versprochen hatte.⁷⁰ Bei der Vernehmung von verhafteten Personen, lautete seine erste Frage in örtlicher Mundart oft: „Wo san die Büchler?“⁷¹ Aber seine Bemühungen waren nicht von Erfolg gekrönt.

Die Hauptaufgabe der „Judensammelstelle“ lag in Aufspürung und Verhaftung möglichst vieler Jüdinnen und Juden und in ihrer anschließenden Überführung ins Konzentrationslager Sereď, von wo aus sie in die noch im Betrieb befindlichen nationalsozialistischen Vernichtungs- und Konzentrationslager deportiert wurden. Dazu hat Hauskrech mit seinen Männern (etwa 17 Deutsche aus Bratislava) ein Netz von Konfidenten bedient, welche die illegalen Aufenthaltsorte an zuständige Partei- und HS-Dienststellen verrieten.⁷² Wenn ein oder mehrere Verstecke gemeldet wurden, kam der Befehl zum Einsatz. Dies geschah in der Regel in der Nacht und kleine Trupps von etwa drei Mann griffen durch. Wenn sich der Hinweis von Spitzeln als richtig erwies, wurden die Menschen gefasst. Dann erfolgte der Transport vom Festnahmeort bis zur „Judensammelstelle“ oft mit dem Taxi. Die Rechnung für die Fahrt mussten üblicherweise die Opfer selbst bezahlen.⁷³ Auch Hauskrech selbst war oft bei der Festnahme von Menschen dabei, so z. B. im Fall des eingangs erwähnten Samson Fischer im Januar 1945.⁷⁴

Gleich bei ihrer Einlieferung in die Edlgasse, beraubte man die Opfer ihres Geldes und ihrer Wertsachen. Dann folgte ein Verhör. Meist wurde es von Hauskrech oder seinen Stellvertretern Hans Seilinger bzw. Robert Schwanzer, seltener vom SD-Mann Hahn geführt. Zuerst fragte man die Festgenommenen, falls die betroffene Person unter falschen Papieren lebte, nach ihrer jüdischen Herkunft, dann nach Verstecken von Familienangehörigen, Verwandten und Bekannten. Wenn keine oder

67 Šinderlářová, *Finale der Vernichtung*, 93.

68 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Brief Hauskrechts an Roman S., 22. März 1945.

69 VWI, SWA, Mapped „Karmasin, Franz“, Zeugenvernehmung Michal Gerös im Verfahren gegen Karmasin durch die Staatsanwaltschaft München II, 6. November 1968.

70 ABS Praha, Z-10-903, Zeugenaussage Koloman Büchler, 7. Mai 1945.

71 StA München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835, Bd. 3, Bl. 573-578, Zeugenvernehmung H. W., 15. Oktober 1965.

72 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/28760, Bl. 85-94, Denkschrift der Tschechoslowakischen Regierungskommission für die Verfolgung von NS-Kriegsverbrechern im Verfahren gegen Hauskrech, 12. September 1970.

73 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1864, Bl. 81-91, Vernehmung Er. S., 21. September 1967.

74 Ebd.: B 162/1826, Bl. 347-353, Zeugenvernehmung Samson Fischers, 21. Februar 1967.

eine nicht gewünschte Antwort fiel, ging das anwesende Personal der Edlgasse auf Weisung des Vernehmenden zum Schlägen über. Das Opfer wurde von mindestens zwei Männern über einen Fauteuil gelegt und festgehalten. Ein anderer Mann würgte es mit einem Schal oder Strick. Dabei wurde die verhörte Person von den Peinigern ständig geprügelt, meist mit Stöcken sowie Ochsenziemern, getreten bis man eine dienliche Information von ihr herausgepresst hatte.⁷⁵ Wenn das Schlägen aus Sicht der Täter zu keinem Ergebnis führte, setzten sie noch brutalere Methoden ein. Einem Überlebenden wurden die Zähne mit einem Meißel herausgeschlagen, einem anderem seine Ohrmuschel angeschnitten.⁷⁶ Es kam in manchen Fällen vor, dass die Opfer auch nach dieser furchtbaren Misshandlung die Auskünfte nicht preisgeben wollten oder konnten. Dann wurden sie stundenlang im Keller eingesperrt gehalten und wiederholt zu einem Verhör gebracht.⁷⁷ So zugerichtet überführte man sie nach Sereď und von dort in die nationalsozialistischen KZ. Aufgrund physischer Schwäche und zugefügter Verletzungen überlebten viele diese Strapazen nicht.

Das Personal der Edlgasse misshandelte eingelieferte Menschen nicht nur, sondern tötete sie auch in mindestens zehn Fällen.⁷⁸ Entweder wurden sie totgeprügelt oder heimtückisch ermordet. Im letztgenannten Fall handelte es sich um lästige Zeugen, die wegen ihres Wissens einfach beseitigt werden mussten. Bezeichnend dafür ist der Mord an einer jüdischen Zuträgerin Anfang März 1945. Diese Frau, spürte, um ihr Leben zu retten, die Verstecke ihrer Leidensgenossen auf und leitete nützliche Tipps an die Dienststelle in der Edlgasse weiter. Als sich die Rote Armee der Stadt näherte, wurde sie von den Tätern als unangenehme Last empfunden. Deshalb soll Hauskrecht den Befehl gegeben haben, sie zu beseitigen. Sie wurde zuerst von den Edlgasse-Männern betrunken gemacht, dann um Mitternacht in ein Auto gepresst und dort ermordet. Die Leiche warfen die Täter in die Donau. Dasselbe geschah in dieser Nacht auch mit einem Mann, der seine bereits vom Personal der „Judensammelstelle“ getötete Mutter suchte. Er wurde mit einer eisernen Spirale am Kopf geschlagen und später ebenfalls in den Fluss gestoßen. Im März 1945 folgten noch zwei weitere Morde: an einem Mann und einer jungen Frau.⁷⁹

Hauskrecht schreckte mit seinem „Bandl“⁸⁰ nicht davor zurück, die den verfolgten Jüdinnen und Juden Hilfe leistenden Menschen zu terrorisieren. So wurde z. B. eine Frau, welche in ihrer Wohnung mehrere Personen verbarg, mit ihnen verhaftet, in die Edlgasse geschleppt und dort misshandelt. Erst nach Versprechen, dass sie in Zukunft Jüdinnen und Juden anzeigen werde, setzte man sie auf freien Fuß.⁸¹ Auch einen in der Edlgasse diensttuenden HS-Mann, der einige Festgenommenen fliehen bzw. die Menschen von bevorstehenden Verhaftungen informieren ließ, sperrten Hauskrecht und seine Mitstreiter im Keller ein und erwirkten seine Versetzung zu einer anderen

75 Dušan Halaj/Stanišlav Mičev/Ján Stanišlav/Jozef Rodák, Fašistické represálie na Slovensku [Faschistische Repressalien in der Slowakei], Bratislava 1990, 97. Šinderlářová, Finale der Vernichtung, 95.

76 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (AT-OeStA/AdR), BMI, Abt. 18, Zahl 54.457-18/70, Zeugenvernehmung A. B. v. 15. Oktober 1969. BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1829, Bl. 866-871, Zeugenvernehmung E. V. v. 5. Jänner 1970.

77 StA München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835, Bd. 3, Bl. 598-606, Zeugenvernehmung H. S. v. 22. Oktober 1965.

78 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/28760, Bl. 85-94, Denkschrift der Tschechoslowakischen Regierungskommission für die Verfolgung von NS-Kriegsverbrechern im Verfahren gegen Hauskrecht, 12. September 1970.

79 ŠA Bratislava, OLS Bratislava 1945-1947, T Iud 349/1947, Vernehmung Gustav Schwanzer, 6. August 1945. Ebd. T Iud 361/45, Vernehmung Josef Pours, 12. April 1946. BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/28760, Bl. 85-94, Denkschrift der Tschechoslowakischen Regierungskommission für die Verfolgung von NS-Kriegsverbrechern im Verfahren gegen Hauskrecht, 12. September 1970.

80 So Hauskrecht in seinem Brief an Roman S., 22. März 1945. ŠA Bratislava, IS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948.

81 ABS Praha, H-529, Vermerk über ein Gespräch mit K. K., 4. Juli 1967. Ebd.: H-529, Bd. 1, Zeugenvernehmung K. K., 25. November 1968.

HS-Einheit.⁸² Selbst den in Rettung der bedrohten Reste des slowakischen Judentums involvierten Vertreter des Internationalen Komitees des Roten Kreuzes in Bratislava, George Dunand,⁸³ nahmen Hausrechts Männer ins Visier. Mitte März 1945 verhafteten sie zwei seiner Verbindungspersonen und brachen in ihre Wohnung ein. Dabei konnte Hausrecht „einige Hundert Exemplare von Blankostaatsbürgerschaften [sic!], Taufscheinen, Heimatscheinen u. dgl.“ beschlagnahmen.⁸⁴ Dies und sein „restloser Einsatz bei Judenaktionen“ fanden ein Gehör bei den Vorgesetzten, als er zur Verleihung des Kriegsverdienstkreuzes II Klasse vorgeschlagen wurde.⁸⁵

Mit dem Herannahen der Front ließ die Tätigkeit der Dienststelle in der Edlgasse nach, Ende März 1945 wurde die „Judensammelstelle“ aufgelöst. Hausrecht war jedoch fest davon überzeugt, dass dies nur vorübergehend sei, da er fester „an den Sieg, als je zuvor“⁸⁶ glaubte. Aber er und seine Kumpanen waren sich auch sehr wohl dessen bewusst, was ihnen bevorstehen würde, wenn sie in die Hände der neuen Machthaber fielen. Zuerst ließen sie ihre Familien sowohl nach Österreich als auch ins Sudetenland evakuieren, um ihnen Ende März zu folgen. Aber noch vor Verlassen der Stadt vernichtete das Personal der Edlgasse alle Unterlagen. Man spielte auch mit dem Gedanken, das ganze Gebäude in die Luft zu sprengen, allein die Brandgefahr war zu hoch und so nahm man davon Abstand.⁸⁷ Hausrecht ging zu seiner Familie nach Bad Aussee, wo er sich am 2. April 1945 polizeilich anmeldete.⁸⁸ Gebrüder Seilinger evakuierten zu ihren Eltern nach Linz.⁸⁹ August Leinwather, der sich beim Schlagen von Inhaftierten besonders hervorgetan hatte (und daher den Spitznamen „Luzifer“ bekam), ließ sich in Nordböhmen nieder. Die anderen in der Gegend von Karlsbad.⁹⁰

Nicht allen Tätern gelang die Flucht. Einige von ihnen spürten die tschechoslowakischen Sicherheitsorgane kurz nach Kriegsende auf und übergaben sie den zuständigen Volksgerichten. So wurden Stefan Huber, Josef Pour und die Brüder Schwanzers vor das Bezirksgericht in Bratislava gestellt. Huber, der von Mitte Oktober bis Mitte Dezember 1944 den Dienst in der Edlgasse verrichtet hatte, wurde zu einem Jahr verurteilt.⁹¹ Pour und Robert Schwanzer bekamen wegen der Teilnahme an Misshandlung und Tötung eingelieferter Jüdinnen und Juden die Höchststrafe, Tod durch den Strang.⁹² Alle drei Verurteilten wie auch Gustav Schwanzer belasteten Hausrecht enorm. Sie sagten aus, dass Hausrecht der Leiter der „Judensammelstelle“ gewesen sei und er die Befehle zur Verhaftungen erteilt habe. Darüber hinaus behaupteten Pour und Gustav Schwanzer, auf dessen Weisung festgenommene Menschen totgeprügelt oder lästige Zeugen beseitigt zu haben.⁹³

82 ŠA Bratislava, OLS Bratislava 1945–1947, T Iud 267/1945, Vernehmung Stefan Hubers, 28. März 1946; BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1828, Vernehmung Stefan Hubers, 12. Februar 1969.

83 Zu seiner Bratislavaer Mission siehe Stephan Parak, *Die Schweiz und der Slowakische Staat 1939–1945. Politisch-wirtschaftliche Beziehungen zweier Kleinstaaten*, Bern/Frankfurt a. M./New York/Paris 1987, 191–202.

84 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1869, Bl. 724–727, Bericht Seilingers, 19. März 1945.

85 ABS Praha, Z-10-903, „Vorschläge für das KVK II“, undatiert.

86 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Brief Hausrechts an Roman S., 22. März 1945.

87 StA München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835, Bd. 4, Bl. 996–1011, Zeugenvernehmung K. B., 24. Juli 1968.

88 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1828, Bl. 771–772, Schreiben des österreichischen BMI an die Staatsanwaltschaft Stuttgart, 8. Juli 1971.

89 AT-OeStA/AdR, BMI, Abt. 18, Zahl 54.670-18/68, Vernehmung Johann Seilingers, 23. Juli 1968, Vernehmung Alois Seilingers, 2. September 1968.

90 ŠA Bratislava, OLS Bratislava 1945–1947, T Iud 349/1947, Vernehmung Gustav Schwanzer, 6. August 1945.

91 ŠA Bratislava, OLS Bratislava 1945–1947, T Iud 267/1945, Urteil vom 22. Mai 1946.

92 Šinderlářová, *Finale der Vernichtung*, 250.

93 ŠA Bratislava, OLS Bratislava 1945–1947, T Iud 267/1945, Vernehmungen Hubers, 5. September 1945 und 28. März 1946. Ebd.: T Iud 361/45, Vernehmungen Josef Pours, 24. September 1945 und 12. April 1946. Ebd.: T Iud 349/1947, Vernehmung Gustav Schwanzer, 6. August 1945 sowie Vernehmung Robert Schwanzer, 11. April 1947.

Aufgrund solcher Aussagen ermittelten tschechoslowakische Behörden eifrig gegen Gustav Hauskrecht, jedoch ohne nennenswerten Erfolg. Sie wussten zwar, dass er sich in Österreich aufgehalten hatte, von den Amerikanern in Salzburg interniert und wieder freigelassen worden war, fassen konnten sie ihn dennoch nicht.⁹⁴ Im Herbst 1947 wurde Hauskrecht in die Kriegsverbrecherliste eingetragen und nach ihm intensiv gefahndet. Ein paar Monate später, Mitte Juni 1948, leitete das Volksgericht in Bratislava gegen ihn ein Verfahren in Abwesenheit ein. Merkwürdigerweise wurden bei den Ermittlungen die Aussagen Schwanzers, Pours, Hubers sowie seines Bruders Karl, der in einem der Verhöre gestand, Gustav sei Leiter der Dienststelle in der Edlgasse 6 gewesen,⁹⁵ nicht herangezogen. Am 1. Dezember 1948 verurteilte das Gericht Gustav Hauskrecht wegen seiner Tätigkeit in der „Judensammelstelle“ zu fünf Jahren Haftstrafe. Allerdings konnte das Urteil nicht vollstreckt werden, da der tschechoslowakischen Justiz sein Aufenthalt nicht bekannt war. Auch der gegen Hauskrecht ausgestellte Haftbefehl konnte daran nichts ändern: Die Annahme, der Verurteilte hielte sich in Österreich auf, erwies sich als falsch.⁹⁶

Zu dieser Zeit hatte Hauskrecht Österreich nämlich längst verlassen. Im Juni 1947 war er mit seiner Familie nach Deutschland, in die US-amerikanische Besatzungszone übersiedelt. Er ließ sich zuerst im württembergischen Nürtingen nieder, später zog er nach Stuttgart. Dort lebte er als kaufmännischer Angestellter verschiedener Firmen der Teppichhandelsbranche unbehelligt weiter.⁹⁷ Erst 1956 tauchte sein Name im Zusammenhang mit der Judenverfolgung in der slowakischen Hauptstadt in dem in Tel Aviv erschienenen Buch Oskar Neumanns *Im Schatten des Todes* wieder auf.⁹⁸ Es vergingen weitere vier Jahre, bis aufgrund Neumanns Angaben die bundesdeutschen Justizbehörden gegen Hauskrecht zu ermitteln begannen.⁹⁹ Aber die Vorermittlungen gingen nur schleppend voran. 1962 schaltete sich in das Verfahren, wie schon eingangs erwähnt, Simon Wiesenthal ein.¹⁰⁰ Erst durch seine Initiative konnte Hauskrecht schließlich aufgespürt werden. Anfang April 1964 wurde er zum ersten Mal, vorerst als Zeuge vernommen. Wie üblich, spielte Hauskrecht seine Tätigkeit in der Edlgasse herunter. Er sei „bei der Judensammelstelle [...] als Schreiber verwendet“ worden. Das habe er täglich zwei bis drei Stunden gemacht. Von Misshandlung der eingelieferten Personen habe er nichts gesehen und gehört.¹⁰¹ Obwohl sich die Ermittler auf mehrere Zeugenaussagen sowie eidesstattliche Erklärungen aus Israel stützen konnten, war ihnen „die Rolle des Gustav Hauskrecht in der Judensammelstelle [...] noch reichlich unklar.“¹⁰² Schließlich gelang es der ZSL, im November 1966 die Vorermittlungen abzuschließen und an die zuständige Stuttgarter Staatsanwaltschaft abzugeben.¹⁰³ Nach einem knap-

94 ABS Praha, H-529, Amtsvermerk des „Office of the Czechoslovak representative on the United Nations Commission for Investigation of war crimes“ in Salzburg, 16. November 1946.

95 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 283/1948, Vernehmung Karl Hauskrechts, 14. Juni 1948.

96 ŠA Bratislava, LS Bratislava 1948, Ls 438/1948, Urteil vom 1. Dezember 1948, Haftbefehle, 4. Juni 1949 und 3. April 1953.

97 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1825, Bl. 44-49, Vernehmung Gustav Hauskrechts, 6. April 1964. Ebd.: B 162/1863, Bl. 176-194, Vernehmung Hauskrechts, 25. Februar 1971.

98 Jirnejahu Oskar Neumann, *Im Schatten des Todes*. Ein Tatsachenbericht über vom Schicksalskampf des slowakischen Judentums, Tel-Aviv 1956, 242.

99 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1826, Bl. 298-320, Schlussvermerk der ZSL im Vorermittlungsverfahren 505 AR-Z 93/60, 9. November 1966.

100 VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Schreiben Wiesenthals an die ZSL, 13. Februar 1962.

101 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1825, Bl. 44-49, Vernehmung Gustav Hauskrechts, 6. April 1964.

102 VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Schreiben der ZSL an Wiesenthal, 25. Juli 1965.

103 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1826, Bl. 298-320, Schlussvermerk der ZSL im Vorermittlungsverfahren 505 AR-Z 93/60, 9. November 1966.

pen Jahr erweiterte die Staatsanwaltschaft den Kreis der Beschuldigten um vier Personen.¹⁰⁴ Dabei bediente sie sich weiterhin der Hilfe von Wiesenthals Dokumentationszentrum in Wien. In der zweiten Septemberhälfte 1967 stellte sie den Antrag auf Eröffnung der gerichtlichen Voruntersuchung, dem Anfang Oktober das Landgericht Stuttgart stattgab. Hauskrecht wurde der Beihilfe zum Mord in mindestens 5.000 Fällen und des Mordes in elf Einzelfällen beschuldigt. Mit ihm noch sein Untergebener Robert Kersten.¹⁰⁵

Bei den Ermittlungen wandten sich die bundesdeutschen Justizbehörden neben der israelischen Polizei und Wiesenthals Büro mit der Bitte um Rechtshilfe auch an tschechoslowakische Organe. Daraufhin begann das tschechoslowakische Innenministerium mit seiner eigenen Untersuchung unter dem Decknamen „Orol“ (Der Adler). Ziel dieses Unternehmens war, „in diesem Fall die Fühlung mit bundesdeutschen Justizorganen zu halten, ihr Interesse um unsere Erkenntnisse zu wecken, um damit die Möglichkeit einer eventuellen Verfahrenseinstellung mangels Beweise [...] zu beschränken“.¹⁰⁶ Im Sommer 1970 wurden die Ermittlungen abgeschlossen und ihre Ergebnisse an die ZSL in Ludwigsburg weitergeleitet.¹⁰⁷ Darunter der sämtliche überlieferte Briefwechsel Hauskrechts aus den Akten des gegen ihn gerichteten Volksgerichtsprozesses in Bratislava, die Vernehmungen Pours, der Gebrüder Schwanzler sowie Zeugenvernehmungen aus den Jahren von 1968 bis 1970.¹⁰⁸ Aber im Endeffekt half das alles nichts: Das Gericht konnte Hauskrecht keine direkte Teilnahme an elf Mordfällen nachweisen ebensowenig den Vorwurf der Beihilfe am Mord von 5.000 Menschen. Obwohl Hauskrechts Einlassungen dem Stuttgarter Landgericht „teilweise unglaublich“ schienen, waren sie „nach dem Ergebnis der Ermittlungen nicht zu widerlegen“. Somit wurden Hauskrecht und zwei andere Beschuldigten „ausser Verfolgung gesetzt“.¹⁰⁹ Der Versuch in der zweiten Hälfte der 1990er-Jahre, gegen ihn ein neues Verfahren zu initiieren, scheiterte aufgrund unzureichender neuer Tatvorwürfe.¹¹⁰ Bis zu seinem Tod wurde Gustav Hauskrecht nie mehr von der Justiz belangt.

Gustav Hauskrecht verkörperte eine Mischung eines Überzeugungs-, Initiativ- und Exzesstäters. Seine Sozialisation im deutschnationalen Turnverein und spätere Mitgliedschaft in der nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Partei sowie aktive Betätigung in der Freiwilligen Schutzstaffel bzw. Einsatztruppe der FS schufen Voraussetzungen dafür, dass von einem Bürger aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft ein Täter der Shoah wurde. Wenn man noch dazu Scheitern bei der ‚Arisierung‘ des Geschäfts seiner früheren Arbeitgeber und daraus resultierenden wüsten Juden Hass hinzurechnet, erscheint seine auf freier Entscheidung beruhende Teilnahme an der Judenverfolgung in Bratislava 1944/1945 nahe liegend. Ohne solche Tätertypen wäre der Holocaust in den von NS-Deutschland in der letzten Kriegsphase besetzten verbündeten Ländern kaum möglich gewesen. Nach dem Krieg konnte Hauskrecht wie viele Täter der Shoah untertauchen und eine normale bürgerliche Karriere ein-

104 VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Schreiben der ZSL an Wiesenthal, 8. Juli 1967.

105 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1869, Bl. 556-561, Antrag der Staatsanwaltschaft Stuttgart, 20. September 1967. ABS Praha, 325-90-4, Verfügung des Landgerichts Stuttgart, 4. Oktober 1967.

106 ABS Praha, H-529/2, Vermerk der II. Sektion des Hauptstabs der Staatssicherheit, 27. Februar 1968.

107 Ebd., H-529, Abschlussbericht des slowakischen Innenministeriums, 7. Oktober 1970.

108 Siehe: BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1824-1878.

109 Slovenské národné múzeum – Múzeum kultúry karpatských Nemcov [Slowakisches Nationalmuseum – Museum der Kultur der Karpatendeutschen], pozostalost' Rudolfa Melzera [Nachlass von Rudolf Melzer], Ordner 198, Verfügung des Landgerichts Stuttgart, 25. September 1972.

110 VWI, SWA, Mappe „Hauskrecht, Gustav“, Korrespondenz zwischen J.S und Wiesenthal, 24. Februar, 12. März und 18. März 1998.

schlagen. Obwohl er in der Tschechoslowakei zu einer Haftstrafe verurteilt wurde, lebte er einige Jahre unbehelligt in der Bundesrepublik. Erst mit der Errichtung der Ludwigsburger Zentralen Stelle geriet Hausrecht ins Visier der Ermittler. Das gegen ihn anhängige Verfahren zog sich zwölf Jahre hinaus bis es mangels Tatverdachts eingestellt wurde. Für seine Taten musste er, wie viele andere Holocausttäter, nie büßen.

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Article

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“That’s for harboring Jews!”

Post-Liberation Violence against Holocaust Rescuers in
Poland, 1944–1948

Abstract

This article explores post-war violence against ethnic Poles who had assisted Jews during the Holocaust. Officially praised as representative of the entire nation’s compassionate and generous attitude, they faced ostracism, robbery, and murder by their home communities. Their neighbours envied them the ‘Jewish gold’ they had allegedly received for their assistance, while the right-wing, anti-communist armed underground considered them traitors who had impaired the nationalist ideal of a Poland without Jews. Drawing on early Jewish testimonies, letters sent by helpers to the Jewish Committees, and their testimonies from the 1960s, this article examines the consequences of their wartime actions that rescuers faced in the first years after liberation.

In the final scene of Agnieszka Holland’s film *In Darkness* (2011), a group of Jews who survived the war concealed in the city sewers emerge from their hideout in the middle of a busy street, in broad daylight. Their Polish helper announces triumphantly to the astonished passers-by: “These are my Jews! I did it!” While testimonies confirm the veracity of Leopold Socha’s reaction, this iconic episode remains exceptional.¹ Typically, Poles who sheltered Jews urged them to leave under cover of night and swore them to secrecy. Some implored the survivors to never get in touch again. During the war, helpers hid their actions from their neighbours, friends, and sometimes even family members for fear of denunciation. After liberation, acutely aware of their communities’ lack of approval, they often continued to keep their actions a secret.

Those who, like Socha, decided to share their joy and satisfaction in having saved lives with their neighbours faced unexpected consequences. “After liberation, this proud woman told everyone what a good thing she had done, that for three years a human was hidden in her house and no one knew about it”, related a survivor about his helper. “But people poured cold water on her happiness, telling her that what she had done was wrong, that they would kill her. Even her own husband reproached her for having kept me without pay.”² The survivor asked the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP) to award his rescuer, “to make her happy, but also so people in her village, including her husband, know that what she did was good after all”.³

In this article, I analyse a phenomenon of post-war intercommunity violence against Poles who helped Jews to survive the Holocaust that occurred in the period

1 See: Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Jewish Historical Institute Archive, JHIA), Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/2352, testimony of Krystyna Chiger, 1947. Krystyna, who was ten years old at the time, remembered compassionate reactions: “People pitied us; one lady bought us some gooseberries.”

2 JHIA, Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich (Central Committee of Polish Jews, CKŻP), Social Welfare Department, 303/VIII/225, 137, letter from Abram Gruenbaum from Gąbina to the CKŻP regarding Helena Grabkowska.

3 JHIA, 303/VIII/225, 137-138.

between liberation (1944/1945) and the stabilisation of the Soviet-imposed communist regime (1948). Recently, historiography of social life in German-occupied Poland has shed light on the precarious position of rescuers, fearful of both Germans and their own communities, who did not approve of their actions.⁴ While the Nazis threatened to punish any assistance to Jews with death and indeed frequently meted out draconian punishment, including killing entire families with small children, very often those tragic consequences followed a denunciation by a fellow Pole.

My goal is to examine the situation of rescuers during a tumultuous time considered by scholars as a civil war with elements of ethnic cleansing.⁵ When Jews emerged from their hideouts, what happened to their helpers? I probe whether the condemnation and hostility against rescuers continued even though the risk of German collective reprisal was no longer a factor. What role did the new political situation play? Who were the perpetrators of attacks on helpers and what motivated them? I trace the connection between aggression toward rescuers and post-war violence against Jews in Poland. Whom did rescuers turn to for help and how did the situation shape their relationship with the survivors? Finally, I examine how the post-war fear of rescuers is narrated and explained in today's Polish collective memory which, for the last two decades, has been increasingly eulogising "the righteous" as national heroes and portraying them as representative of Polish responses to the Holocaust.

I here draw primarily on early post-war Jewish testimonies collected by the Jewish Historical Commissions, as well as materials (letters and affidavits) gathered by the CKŻP's special commissions tasked with the protection of the physical safety of survivor communities in Poland. These documents mention the instances of violence against Polish helpers but do not elaborate on their experiences. I supplement them with later testimonies of Polish rescuers recorded at Yad Vashem in the 1960s during reunions with their former charges in Israel. Recorded primarily for laudatory purposes and in celebratory circumstances, these accounts, understandably, present helpers' motivations as entirely altruistic and did not reveal any ambiguous or problematic aspects of relationships between Poles and the Jews they assisted. Self-aggrandisement and self-promotion, however, was in most cases prevented or limited by the presence of survivors. Moreover, in any case, local communities did not

4 This phenomenon was first analysed by Jan Tomasz Gross, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej ale go nie lubię* [He is My Fellow Countryman, But I Do Not Like Him], in: idem, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje na temat wzajemnych relacji między Polakami, Żydami, Niemcami i komunistami w latach 1939–1948* [Ghastly Decade: Three Essays on the Theme of Relations among Jews, Poles, Germans, and Communists, 1939–1948], Krakow 2001, 25–60. On the conditions of rescue in German-occupied Poland, see also: Jan Tomasz Gross/Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest. Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*, New York 2012; Gunnard S. Paulsson, *Secret City. The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*, New Haven/London 2002; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*, Bloomington 2013; Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie. Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* [Rescue. Stories of Poles and Jews], Krakow 2010; Anna Bikont, *Sendlerowa. W ukryciu* [Sendlerowa. In Secret], Wołowiec 2018; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1946* [Pogrom Cries. Sketches in Polish Historical Anthropology 1939–1946], Wołowiec 2012; Wojciech Józef Burszta/Barbara Engelking/Jan Grabowski (ed.), *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec Zagłady Żydów 1942–1945* [Landscape Outline. A Polish Village in the Face of the Holocaust of the Jews 1942–1945], Warsaw 2011; Barbara Engelking/Jan Grabowski (ed.), *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* [It is Still Night. The Fate of Jews in Selected Powiats of Occupied Poland], Vols. 1–2, Warsaw 2018; Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny ... Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* [There is Such a Beautiful Sunny ... The Fate of Jews Seeking Help in the Polish Countryside 1942–1945], Warsaw 2011; and Joshua D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945*, Cambridge 2017.

5 See: Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, New York/Princeton 2006; Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* [Great Fear. Poland 1944–1947. People's Responses to the Crisis], Krakow 2012; and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* [Under the Curse. A Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom], Vols. 1–2, Warsaw 2018.

differentiate the treatment of the rescuers based on their motivations. On the other hand, in Israel rescuers were more likely to speak freely about the persecution they suffered at the hands of their fellow Poles. More problematic are letters sent after the war to the CKŻP and later to the Jewish Historical Institute by individuals who identified themselves as rescuers and sought material reward for their wartime solidarity. While some were trustworthy, others attempted to extort money or honours by exaggerating their assistance or through completely false claims.

“I do not want people to laugh at me for hiding Jews”, declared Zdzisław Krzeczowski to a group he had harboured in his Warsaw flat for almost two years.⁶ Some rescuers had indeed faced mockery. In their neighbours’ eyes, helping Jews, especially without significant reward, amounted to gullibility at best. Adhering to deeply entrenched antisemitic clichés, villagers often perceived rescue as yet another instance of a cunning Jew tricking a credulous Polish peasant into doing something against his own interest. One rescuer, awaiting in vain a visit from a survivor who promised to remunerate her after the war, was jeered at by her friends and family for her naiveté. As the embittered woman insinuated in a letter to the Jewish committee, they were proved right, since the survivor left the country.⁷ “Today, people who know about what I did laugh at me, asking what good being a Jewish father brought me”, is how another rescuer substantiated his request for a reward. “It does not discourage me because I am proud of it”, he assured the CKŻP. Still, he considered himself aggrieved by the people he helped. “The Jewish nation caused me such harm that I will not forget it as long as I live, and I will be asking God for revenge”, he lamented.⁸

“People here cannot comprehend that we acted selflessly”, explained the Kobylec family in January 1947. During the war, they operated an underground bunker which served as a transit point for Jewish resistance members en route to Slovakia and Hungary. After someone denounced them, the German authorities shipped them to Auschwitz. “Their sneering does not bother us because we are proud of what we did”, declared the Kobylecs.⁹ A survivor who moved to Chicago comforted his rescuer: “As for Poles from Żelechów who laugh at you [for helping Jews], let them. We will see who has the last laugh”, he declared, promising to return and settle the scores with Poles who had assisted Germans in murdering Jews.¹⁰

Yet rescuers often faced consequences far graver than ridicule. A suspicion that they had been handsomely rewarded exposed them to envy and robberies. The Jasło Jewish committee and religious congregation reported to Warsaw in February 1947 about the fate of a local rescuer: “After the Red Army’s entry, Adolf Jachym was punished for his love of his fellow man with severe beating and robbery. In the middle of the night, he was assaulted by a band of unidentified thugs who [...] accused him of harbouring Jews and demanded he hand over the remuneration he had received. When they did not find any of the money they had expected, they robbed him and his family utterly, taking their clothes, shoes, and food supplies.”¹¹ Contrary to the *żydokomuna* conspiracy theory, which posited a sinister alliance between Jews and

6 Marian Berland, *Dni długie jak wieki* [Days Long as Centuries], Warsaw 1994, 454. See also: Jacek Leociak, “Nie chcę ludziom na śmiech się pokazać, że Żydów u siebie chowałem...” *Sprawa Zdzisława i Haliny Krzyczkowskich* [“I Do Not Want People to Laugh at Me Because I Hid Jews ... The Case of Zdzisław and Halina Krzyczkowska”], in: *Zagłada Żydów 4* (2008), 324-366.

7 JHIA, 303/VIII/228, 84, letter from Maria Kit from Wrocław, 1947.

8 JHIA, 303/VIII/230, 82, letter from Jan Kulpa from Biała Krakowska, 1948.

9 A copy of the letter is displayed in the “Post-War Years” gallery in the core exhibition of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

10 JHIA, 303/VIII/228, 31, letter from Leo Weiss to Teresa Kaliszek, 1948.

11 JHIA, 303/VIII/227, 36.

communists, the presence of the Soviets did not guarantee the safety of either the survivors or their helpers. The perpetrators' belief in the existence of 'Jewish gold' turned out to be equally fallacious.

Anti-Jewish harassment sometimes spilled over and affected rescuers.¹² A Jewish committee in Lublin complained to the authorities about a series of evictions targeting Jewish families. "To top it all off, citizen Sobolowska (a Pole), who was given a flat in a Jewish house [...] for her selfless help to Jews during the occupation, was ousted out of the apartment while being mocked: 'you were in prison because of Jews, now let the Jews find you a flat!'"¹³

Antisemitic sentiments on the street turned against the helpers as well. In June 1945, a rumour about a ritual murder of a Polish girl galvanised the residents of Rzeszów. People who gathered in the squares and markets "praised the actions of the Hitlerites, who exterminated Jews as well as Poles hiding Jews", reported a communist security agent.¹⁴ A trope of Jewish ingratitude also appeared: "We were feeding and hiding them, and in return they are murdering our children",¹⁵ stated a woman in the main square, claiming credit for the rescuers' actions for herself and the Poles as a whole.¹⁶

Often, violence against rescuers was intimately connected to murders of Jewish survivors. The Białystok committee reported in April 1947 about the recent murder of Chaim Finkelstein, who had been rescued by Zofia Puchalska only to be killed by "NSZ [National Armed Forces] bandits". Soon after, the perpetrators showed up on Puchalska's farm, took away her cart and horses, and warned her that if she went to the authorities she would meet the same fate as the Jews she had helped.¹⁷ She could not count on her neighbours' support or protection since the whole village disapproved of her assistance to Jews hiding in the local forest.¹⁸ After two of the survivors who had moved back to Janów Podlaski and operated a mill belonging to one of their families were murdered in March 1946, the Misiejuk family who had assisted them during the war fled the village and scattered throughout Poland.¹⁹

Violence that befell rescuers constituted both an extension of anti-Jewish violence and part of settling of accounts among Poles in what, according to scholars of the period, amounted to a civil war with elements of ethnic cleansing. This hostility against helpers sheds light on attitudes toward survivors and vice versa. Scholarship driven by current politics of history often downplays post-war anti-Jewish violence as common crime. The widespread myth of Jews' fabulous wealth, particularly in conditions of abject poverty, might have made rescuers the victims of their neighbours' envy and greed. Their association with Jews, who in the Poles' eyes had not shed their wartime pariah status, turned them into fair game for anyone, in a period

12 On anti-Jewish violence in post-war Poland, see: Gross, *Fear*; David Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence, 1944–1946*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998), 43–85.

13 JHIA, CKŻP, Legal Department, 303/XVI/153, letter from the Lublin Jewish Committee to the Special Housing Commission of the Council of Ministers' Presidium, 1947.

14 Meldunek specjalny kierownika Sekcji VII Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Rzeszowie o eskalacji nastrojów antysemitycznych w tym mieście [Voivodship Public Security Office in Rzeszów Section VIII Head Special Report about the Escalation of the Antisemitic Atmosphere in the City], 12 April 1945, cited in: Dariusz Iwaneczko/Zbigniew Nawrocki (ed.), *Rok pierwszy. Powstanie i działalność aparatu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego na Rzeszowszczyźnie (sierpień 1944 – lipiec 1945)* [The First Year. Founding and Activity of the Public Security Apparatus in Rzeszowszczyzna (August 1944–July 1945)], Rzeszów 2005, 600.

15 *Ibid.*, 591.

16 Beatings and robbing ensued. The quick reaction by the authorities and the evacuation of Jews from the city stopped the pogrom in its tracks and prevented casualties.

17 JHIA, 303/VIII/236, 36. See also: JHIA, 301/2952.

18 JHIA, 303/VIII/236, 37.

19 JHIA, 301/1871, testimony of Grzegorz Misiejuk, 1946.

marked by an increase in interpersonal violence and violent crime.²⁰ Social acceptance for assaulting Jews extended to their helpers.

Robbery served as a punishment for those who were deemed turncoats. Violence against rescuers was narrated by all actors – perpetrators, victims, and Jewish survivors who reported about it – as retribution. It was enacted as soon as Poles regained control. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, it was revealed that Helena Korzeniewska had sheltered Jews in her flat. Her neighbours reacted with indignation. “The janitor spat at me: ‘Such a decent young lady, I thought, and she was hiding Jews’”, she recounted. The building residents swiftly informed a military unit passing through the neighbourhood “what a ‘disloyal Pole’ I was.”²¹ The insurgents ransacked Korzeniewska’s apartment and threatened to come back and kill her.

In some cases, the perpetrators framed their crimes as a form of serving justice. An underground anti-communist organisation in Rzeszów took it upon itself to punish Tadeusz Wiatr for the help he had offered to the Langsam siblings. “It turned out that I had received a death sentence [...] for aiding and cooperating with the Jews”, Wiatr related in his 1966 Yad Vashem testimony.²² The intervention of an acquaintance who was influential in the organisation kept him safe. “Nevertheless, I stopped going to Rzeszów and until today I do not visit”, he confessed. Following the Langsams’ lead, he moved to Wrocław and made a point of avoiding his hometown. Another rescuer related: “After [...] Samuel Celnikier emerged from the hideout, people’s fury turned against me [...]. Partisans, there were many of them in the forest here, passed a death sentence on those who sheltered Jews. I was counted among them and they would have executed me if not for one acquaintance who warned me. Since then, I had to hide, could not sleep at home, and my wife and children had to tremble with fear and buy [the partisans] off with foodstuffs.”²³

Violence against rescuers not only continued but even increased after liberation, when wartime secrets were revealed and scores settled. When the Red Army reached the Lublin area in July 1944, three Jews emerged from a hideout in the Misiejuk family barn. “Only then did the neighbours learn about it; they were astonished that we had taken such a risk.” Repercussions followed at once. “Immediately [...] they started persecuting us: In December 1944, a gang of some twenty men robbed us utterly. It was revenge for hiding Jews. Later, they often stopped by and threatened us.”²⁴ In one case, partisans suspected a local family of providing food to three Jewish brothers in hiding and threatened them with death. Yet the men remained undiscovered and survived until liberation. “But the band did not forget me”, related a rescuer. “One night they assaulted us and robbed us completely. They even took the shoes off our feet. My husband died a couple weeks later out of shock and fear.”²⁵

Both Poles and Jews interpreted such assaults as punishment. One rescuer, who voiced his dissatisfaction at the lack of gratitude and reward from the survivors, related: “What is worse, when they left [...] a forest band raided our house [...] they left us practically naked. On their way out, they said: That is for keeping Jews. A year later they robbed us again. [...] In 1946, they robbed us for the third time [...] and they

20 The post-war atmosphere was generally hostile towards Jews, who were the most common target of assaults, not only by partisans but also by groups of disabled veterans or youth gangs.

21 Yad Vashem Archive (YVA), O.3/2518, testimony of Helena Korzeniewska, 1963.

22 YVA, O.3/2981, testimony of Tadeusz Wiatr, 1963.

23 JHIA, 303/VIII/227, 113.

24 JHIA, 301/1871, testimony of Grzegorz Misiejuk, 1946.

25 JHIA, 303/VIII/223, 8.

said the same thing, that is for helping Jews.” “For sheltering Jews during the occupation my house and all my belongings were burned down”, related Józef Znój from the Krasnystaw area, in a statement supported by two survivors he had assisted, in February 1947. “Because I sheltered Jews, forest bands destroyed my farm, took away two horses, a cart, and pigs. They visited me nine times”, wrote Helena Sadowska from the village of Miastkowo near Łomża in May 1947, asking the Jewish congregation in Warsaw for assistance.²⁶ The Lublin committee reported about an incident when “after liberation, a group of bandits showed up in a village [...] accusing the Kalbarczyks of helping Jews; they murdered Maria Kalbarczyk’s husband.”²⁷

Agnieszka Budny-Wiederschall believed that the death of her daughter was an act of vengeance. She had sheltered six people in her small apartment in Siedlce, including her future husband. To conceal their presence, she took up raising rabbits, which helped to explain any sounds coming from the flat. Still, the prying eyes of her neighbours cost her several close calls. Thanks to her resourcefulness and nerves of steel, her beneficiaries survived. After the war, she moved to Legnica in Lower Silesia, a major area of Jewish post-war settlement. Thanks to the local Jewish committee, her actions became known. “I had a daughter, Belunia [...]. She went to school with Polish children and they took her [to play] near the railway tracks. One girl, an anti-semitite, pushed her in front of the train [...] out of revenge, for sure.”²⁸ Whether it was indeed an antisemitic act, or merely a tragic accident, it is clear that Wiederschall fully expected retribution from her fellow Poles. Soon after, in 1958, she left Poland and settled in Israel.

The notion of revenge evoked by rescuers when reporting about the attacks illuminates how the act of help was perceived in their communities. According to right-wing nationalistic propaganda as well as Catholic Church teachings, Jews were enemies of Poland and Christianity, and intruders to be extirpated from the country. Most of the armed underground, adhering to an ethnocentric ideal of the Polish nation, influenced also by racial theories, favoured a Poland without Jews. In areas with a Ukrainian majority, rescuers were punished by Ukrainian nationalists who rebelled against Polish nationalism but shared its idea of Jews as detrimental to their own nation’s greatness and prosperity.²⁹ With time, as the lines between anti-communist resistance and common criminality blurred, ideological and criminal motivations probably overlapped.

However, even if helping Jews served as a pretext for robbery, it fit soundly within the ideology of a mono-ethnic nation state and a firm belief in *żydokomuna*. Assisting Jews hurt the national cause of a Poland free of Jews, a long-held ideal of the nationalist right, which had conveniently been carried out almost to completion by the Germans. Consequently, rescuers were blamed for the communist takeover of the Polish state. The fact that Jews could only seek protection from the authorities turned this myth into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Branded ‘Jewish lackeys’, rescuers became an ideological target.

In village communities, social norms valuing the safety of the collective over the individual encouraged denunciation over rescue.³⁰ Helpers were identified as ‘Jewish

26 JHIA, 303/VIII/238, 2.

27 JHIA, 303/VIII/228, 25, letter from the Lublin Jewish Committee to the CKŻP, April 1946.

28 YVA, O.3/2555, testimony of Agnieszka Budny-Wiederschall, 1964.

29 JHIA, 303/VIII/119, 91. See also: YVA, O.3/3049, testimony of Ignacy Ustianowski, 1968, 6.

30 Sometimes it happened that rescuers, rather than being denounced to the Germans, were warned and pressured by the community to get rid of Jews. See for example: JHIA, 301/579, testimony of Karolina Sapetowa, 1945.

uncles' and 'aunts'. After liberation, as Janina Ciszewska related, "[the Jews] stayed with me for another week and a half. In town, people learned that I rescued them and I was nicknamed 'a Jewish mother'".³¹ These monikers, signalling the rescuers' affinity with Jews, branded them as outsiders, if not pariahs of the community. "We are persecuted by people, we have become outcasts of the society", is how the daughter of rescuers summed up their post-war situation in June 1947.³²

Rescuers, noted anthropologist Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, were seen as betraying their families as well as communal, patriotic, and religious obligations.³³ "Are you, a Catholic, not ashamed to have sheltered a Jew?" is what partisans rhetorically asked a rescuer in October 1945.³⁴ "Two weeks ago, a band of native fascists broke into my house and smashed everything to pieces. They beat and kicked me and cut my wife's and daughters' hair, shouting: 'that is for the Jewish child'", reported Stanisław Chęć, the rescuer of a Jewish infant, in a letter to the CKŻP in April 1947.³⁵ Forced shaving, a gendered punishment for fraternising with the enemy, testifies to the optics of help as treason.

Their neighbours' hostility spurred many rescuers to flee their hometowns. Following the pattern of Jewish migration, rescuers moved to the former German territories in the west or left Poland. "We refer to you citizen Franciszek Kwaśny", a Jewish committee in Dzierżoniów wrote to their Wrocław branch in June 1947, "who during the occupation sheltered Jews and is now being persecuted by reactionary elements. Because of this he had to move. We hope you will take an interest in his situation, find him an apartment, and help him settle in the Lower Silesia."³⁶ Antonina Wyrzykowska, a rescuer from Jedwabne, who was robbed and brutally beaten by her neighbours, escaped Poland with the Jews she had sheltered, and found herself in a displaced persons camp in Linz, Austria.³⁷ Later, she divided her time between Poland and the United States, but never returned to her home village.

Contemporaneous accounts describe the attackers in the ideologically coloured language of the time. "On March 17, two Home Army bandits attacked the apartment of a Jew named Sztejman in Brianišk, Białystok County. They killed two Jewish women and a housekeeper, a Pole, who tried to save them", reported the Jewish Press Agency Bulletin in a note entitled *Murder by Fifth Column Agents*.³⁸ Particularly survivors, unaware of local political divisions, often referred to all partisans as Home Army members (*akowcy*).³⁹

Antisemitism and hostility towards rescuers were not limited to anti-government forces. Just like during the war, partisans of different political affiliations committed anti-Jewish crimes, including – though much more rarely – the peasant movement Bataliony Chłopskie or even pro-communist Armia Ludowa and Gwardia Ludowa. Members of the communist state apparatus, in the popular imagination controlled

31 JHIA, 301/2514, testimony of Janina Ciszewska, undated.

32 JHIA, 303/VIII/241, 12, letter from Zofia Węclawska (Skorzyce, Kraśnik County), June 1947.

33 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *The Unrighteous Righteous and the Righteous Unrighteous*, in: *Dapim. Studies on the Holocaust* 24 (2010) 1, 11-63.

34 JHIA, 301/3535, testimony of Szmul Garber, 1945.

35 JHIA, 303/VIII/223, 100, letter from Stanisław Chęć, 1947.

36 JHIA, 303/VIII/230, 106.

37 Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence. A Quest for the Truth of a Wartime Massacre*, London 2016, 375. See also: JHIA, 301/5825, testimony of Aleksander Wyrzykowski, 1962.

38 *Mordy agentów piątej kolumny* [The "Fifth Column" Agents' Murders], in: *Biuletyn Żydowskiej Agencji Prasowej*, 17 April 1945.

39 "After some time, already after the war, news about Kowalczyk's assistance to us reached an AK unit prowling the area. They burst into Mr. Kowalczyk's house, dragged him out of bed, and beat him unconscious [...] He soon died following great suffering", wrote a group of survivors in a letter from Israel in 1966. JHIA, 301/6242.

by Jews, were not free of antisemitism, either. In fact, many individuals implicated in anti-Jewish crimes during the war joined the communist police and security forces. Andrysiewicz, who hid Jews in the village of Trofimówka, suffered harassment after the war by a local people's militia unit.⁴⁰ Its chief, who had been involved in killing Jews during the occupation, assisted locals in getting rid of returning survivors who could have claimed their right to properties that had been taken over by Poles.⁴¹

Regardless of their political orientation, perpetrators usually belonged to the same communities, not anonymous but familiar faces. "In May 1945, my mother-in-law's neighbour, Jan Czerech, informed a forest gang that the Dębowski [his in-laws] were hiding Jews. One night, they were attacked: My father-in-law, Krzysztof Dębowski, was killed in his own bed, while the rest of the family managed to escape. All of the livestock was taken. My mother-in-law is sick until this day, she simply shakes with fear. After the murder of my father-in-law, the neighbour, Czerech Jan, [...] did not stop harassing us. He keeps saying that I am a Jewish lackey and will die the way Jews died", lamented Alojzy Konopka.⁴²

Stanisław Wasilewski's parents sheltered three Jews in the village of Trzciannie near Białystok. After liberation, one of them, 21-year old Maska Fiszko, moved into a room in her family home, now occupied by a Polish family. She visited the Wasilewskis daily and had her meals with them. One day in April, on her way to the Wasilewskis, a local unit of Bataliony Chłopskie murdered her, most likely in connection with her property. Soon afterwards, the Wasilewskis were assaulted, beaten, and robbed. "They shouted: 'This is for feeding the Jews'", recounted a son, Kazmierz Wasilewski.⁴³ They returned several times. Men in the family took to spending nights outside the house. In August, when they slept in a barn, partisans returned, raping and killing their mother, Anna Wasilewska. It happened shortly after she revealed to a local priest that she had recognised one of the attackers. The priest refused to accompany her coffin. Instead he admonished the family: "It was not smart to recognise them."⁴⁴

Like survivors, rescuers made inconvenient witnesses. As historian Jan Gross stated: "The future Righteous' wartime behaviour broke the socially approved norm, demonstrating that they were different from everybody else, and therefore, a danger to the community. They were a threat to others because, potentially, they could bear witness. They could tell what had happened to local Jews because they were not – whether by their deeds or by their reluctance to act – bonded into a community of silence over this matter."⁴⁵ Thus, the community had to terrorise them into secrecy.

This strategy proved successful: Most rescuers insisted on remaining anonymous. "The witness asks for his name not to be published, because he is afraid of armed gangs roaming the area where he lives", noted the Jewish Historical Commission clerk. "Even now, I do not have peace. Because I kept a Jewish child, I was robbed by a band three times already", is how Zygmunt Ulman explained his request.⁴⁶ Józef Kida, who sheltered the eight-person Gerstner family, felt compelled to destroy a thank you letter he received in 1945 from the Lublin Jewish committee lest his as-

40 JHIA, 301/1260, testimony of Abram Lipcer, 1946.

41 People involved in anti-Jewish crimes often joined the communist apparatus of repression. See: Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*.

42 JHIA, 301/2966, testimony of Alojzy Konopka, 1947.

43 Łukasz Konopa, *Trzciannie. Studium przypadku [Trzciannie. A Case Study]*, in: *Studia Litteraria and Historica* 5 (2016), 16.

44 *Ibid.*, 19.

45 Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, Princeton 2001, 238.

46 JHIA, 301/2983, testimony of Zygmunt Ulman, 1947.

sistance be discovered by partisans.⁴⁷ Before the Gerstners left Poland, Kida asked them not to send him any letters. Survivors seeking welfare for their helpers often alerted the Jewish committees not to expose them. “Because of the harassment the Kisiel family would face if assistance is sent directly to their address, we ask you to inform us first. We will let them know and come together with them to Warsaw”, is how a survivor residing in Łódź instructed the CKŻP, mindful of his rescuers’ safety.⁴⁸ “In case you grant my heartfelt plea, please notify me first, since the Zalewskis, because of the turbulent atmosphere in the Białystok area, wish to remain incognito”, requested the survivor Felicja Raszkin-Nowak in March 1947.⁴⁹

Once the communists had tightened their grip on power and pacified the areas with strong partisan activity around 1948, the direct violence subsided. Rescuers, however, remained in a precarious position, subjected to their communities’ pressure not to break the conspiracy of silence. Rachela Finkelstein, the sole survivor of the 1941 pogrom in Radziłów, married her rescuer, Stanisław Ramotowski, and, now known as Marianna Ramotowska, lived among the murderers of her family. When the couple tried to buy back a dresser, her family heirloom, from one of the neighbours, a local NSZ unit threatened them with death. “Somebody did not like it. We found a piece of paper stuck to our house door saying that we were sentenced to death. At that time the NSZ gave out a lot of such sentences in our area”,⁵⁰ related Ramotowski. Through his contacts in the Home Army, he was able to keep them both safe, but the couple had learned their lesson. In a 1949 trial against the pogrom perpetrators, Marianna testified on their behalf – a price that allowed Stanisław to remain an accepted community member. She remained fearful of talking about the past until she passed away in 2001.⁵¹ The Wasilewski family kept silent both about the murder of the Jewish survivors and their mother. When they were visited by a prosecutor, they refused to testify, uneasy about the presence of the driver and pressured to remain silent by a younger generation.⁵²

While rescuers kept silent, their neighbours continued to talk. “In 1945, a band descended on Sobczak’s farm and robbed him of everything, including a horse, a cart, and pigs, saying that it was for hiding Jews”, testified Szmul Majer, whom Sobczak had sheltered together with eleven other Jews for two years on his farm in Frampol.⁵³ Sobczak’s neighbours killed six of them on the eve of liberation. “Until today, the neighbours reproach him for it”, added another survivor, Ela Aszenberg. In 1986, Sobczak’s daughter wrote to the Jewish Historical Institute: “Even today, I feel threatened because some of these people live in Frampol and they remind me that if I talk about it, they will retaliate.”⁵⁴ Rescuer Jan Adamczuk related in 1994: “After the war, we were often reproached for keeping Jews and until today, everyone in the area knows about it. Bad people often say that I am getting money for it.”⁵⁵

Post-war contacts with survivors came under neighbourly scrutiny. In small localities, letters and packages from abroad amounted to nothing less than a sensation. When a survivor living in Israel sent the Kozanecki family a box of oranges, their

47 JHIA, 303/VIII/228, 54.

48 JHIA, 303/VIII/228, 81.

49 JHIA, 303/VIII/242, 9.

50 Nieporzadnych bylo wiecej [There Were More Bad Ones] Interview with Stanisław Ramotowski, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 April 2001 <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,205401.html> [Access: 30 October 2019].

51 See: Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*.

52 Konopa, *Trzciannie*, 7.

53 JHIA, 301/6310, testimony of Szmul Maler, 1949.

54 JHIA, 301/6310, letter from Kazimiera Korczak to the Jewish Historical Institute, 1986.

55 YVA, *The Righteous Among the Nations Department*, M.31/8705, letter from Jan Adamczuk, 1994.

village erupted in gossip. “They started saying: ‘Look, they have a house, they get oranges, they must have kept Jews.’”⁵⁶ Indeed, some Poles were given property by the survivors, either as payment or as a token of gratitude. Yet, for envious neighbours, who believed that helping Jews necessarily meant enriching oneself, the poverty in which many rescuers lived proved nothing.

In the early 2000, the Lublin based non-profit organisation Brama Grodzka created an online database of testimonies of the Righteous from the region. Out of 21 individuals they contacted, not a single one agreed to appear under their real name.⁵⁷ Awardees honoured by the Israeli Embassy in 2005 in Biała Podlaska requested that the event be closed to journalists. They admitted that they feared people’s reactions. It took a lot of convincing to persuade one distant relative of rescuers who lived in another city to be named in the newspaper.⁵⁸ In Białystok in 2006, the ceremony did not take place at all. The families decided that they could not ensure it would remain a secret and requested that the medals be sent by mail.⁵⁹ Several people declined a prestigious state award from President Lech Kaczyński in 2008, not wanting their families to find out.⁶⁰

Today, however, most rescuers, or rather their families readily agree to make their names public. Both local and national press informs extensively about new Righteous medals being awarded to Poles, listing their personal details and the circumstances of the help they provided. Increasingly, rescuers are being commemorated with monuments or memorial plaques in the places in which they had lived, including small localities, with local officials and clergy participating. Yet the recognition granted to rescuers, in most cases posthumously, comes at the price of becoming a symbolic representation of a community that used to threaten and persecute them. This hostility is neither acknowledged nor reckoned with. On the contrary, the dominant narrative of rescue claims the existence of a communist-imposed silence. While the communist regime treated rescuers instrumentally, no ban on commemorating rescue ever existed. However, the dominant narrative today conventionally claims that rescuers kept silent out of fear out the communist security organs rather than their own neighbours. This makes possible the concomitant commemoration of rescuers and their persecutors.

While communist propaganda lumped together its political opponents with criminals and branded them ‘fascist bands’, today’s centrally-powered ‘politics of history’ glorifies all of them as ‘accursed soldiers’ (*żołnierze wyklęci*), heroic fighters for Poland’s freedom. In March 1945, in Sokoły in Wysokie Mazowieckie County, a unit led by Kazimierz “Huzar” Kamiński, formerly of the Home Army, together with NSZ unit “Zemsta” murdered twelve Jews and four Poles who were helping them.⁶¹ In 2007, President Lech Kaczyński posthumously awarded Kamiński one of the highest Polish state medals for “extraordinary merits for Polish independence”.

56 Paweł Reszka, *Lęk Sprawiedliwych* [The Fear of the Righteous], in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Duży Format, 13 February 2006, 3.

57 Reszka, *Lęk Sprawiedliwych*, 3.

58 Marek Pietrzala, *Zyda uratować nie grzech, ale wstyd* [It Is Not a Sin to Save a Jew, But It Is a Disgrace], in: *Dziennik Wschodni*, 28 September 2005. <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/biala-podlaska/zyda-uratowanie-grzech-ale-wstyd,n.1000040808.html> [Access: 30 October 2019].

59 Reszka, *Lęk Sprawiedliwych*, 2.

60 Ewa Ziomecka, statement during a public discussion “O Sprawiedliwych – nie pomnikowo” (About the Righteous, Unmonumentally), Polin Museum, Warsaw, 7 March 2015.

61 Alina Cała, *Ochrona bezpieczeństwa fizycznego Żydów w Polsce*. Komisje Specjalne przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów w Polsce [The Protection of the Physical Security of Jews in Poland. Special Commissions at the Central Committee of Polish Jews], Warsaw 2014, 17. See also: Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 346.

In a letter to the editor published in the *Gazeta Lubelska* in November 1944, an anonymous reader called for an honest reckoning with Poles' behaviour towards Jews during the war. He drew attention to the circumstances of individuals who helped them, often with the most selfless generosity. "Sadly, today in many cases these people are afraid to admit to their sacrifices", he concluded. "Instead of admiration and respect, they often face hatred and contempt. According to a part of society, people who hid Jews – those who bring honour to the Polish nation – are traitors."⁶²

The anonymous reader's voice remained an exception. As claims of selfless and mass-scale assistance, enjoying the support of the entire population, became an inherent part of the dominant Polish narrative of the war, the treatment of rescuers by their neighbours was left out. Indeed, nothing challenges the idealised image of Polish attitudes toward Jews more deeply than post-war revenge on their helpers. Today, the whitewashed story of the past, turned by the right-wing nationalist government into officially binding state policy, points to the fear of collective punishment by Germans as the only possible reason for Polish lack of support for rescue activities. The absence of that danger after the end of the occupation reveals the much more complex motivations of Polish treatment of Jewish fugitives and their helpers: demoralisation and brutalisation brought about by the war, but also homegrown anti-Jewish nationalism.

62 R.K., *Drażliwa sprawa* [A Sensitive Issue], in: *Gazeta Lubelska*, 1 November 1944, 3. Cited in: Feliks Tych, *Zapomniane świadectwo*, in: idem, *Długi cień Zagłady. Szkice historyczne* [The Long Shadow of the Holocaust. Historical Essays], Warsaw 1999.

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Article

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An Essay on Archival Sources to Study the Soviet Army's Response to the Holocaust

Abstract

This essay reflects on the sources that are available for the study of the Red Army's encounter with the Holocaust. It discusses the accessibility of various archives in Russia and focusses on informational reports, a type of intelligence documents that the Soviet armed forces produced about the newly occupied territories.

Archives

There are two principal depositories for the Soviet Union's Red Army: the Tsentral'nyy arkhiv Ministerstva oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii (TsAMO RF) (Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation) in Podolsk, just outside Moscow, and the Rossiiskii Gosudarstvenni Voennyi Arkhiv (RGVA) (Russian State Military Archive) in the capital city.¹ The Red Army documents from the 'Great Patriotic War', as the Axis-Soviet war was known in the Soviet Union, are held at TsAMO, as are all post-war military materials.

TsAMO remains under the jurisdiction of Russia's conservative Ministry of Defence, which is usually not open to working with foreigners. In addition, the Ministry of Defence has a strong interest in defending the Red Army's supposedly heroic wartime role. For these two reasons, foreigners have not been allowed to work in TsAMO, although there have been a few exceptions.² Russian historians, by contrast, are allowed access to TsAMO. However, they require recommendations from well-established Russian historians. It is important to note that according to Russian historians who have worked in TsAMO, parts of the archive are fully inaccessible to all researchers, including records from military tribunals responsible for the suppression of deserters and criminals in the ranks.³

Historians usually seek to overcome restrictions on research in TsAMO by relying on published documents. The only booklet based on TsAMO documents de-

- 1 The Central Military-Naval Archive, which contains documents from the wartime Soviet sea and river fleets, is a subsidiary of TsAMO, and thus it is also part of the Ministry of Defence.
- 2 British military historian Antony Beevor was given access to TsAMO for his books *Stalingrad*, published in New York 1998, and *Berlin. The Downfall*, published in London 2002. Beevor's fascinating account of how he obtained permission to work in TsAMO and the military authorities' attempts to control his research is available online: The National Archives, Writer of the Month. Stalingrad and Berlin. Researching the Reality of War, <https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/stalingrad-and-berlin-researching-the-reality-of-war/> (10 August 2019).
- 3 Aleksey Timofejev, *Rusi i drugi svetski rat u Jugoslaviji. Uticaj SSSR-a i ruskih emigranata na događaje u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945* [Russians and the Second World War in Yugoslavia. The Influence of the USSR and Russian Émigrés on Events in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945], Belgrade 2011, 221.

voted solely to the Holocaust, at 130 pages, is rather thin.⁴ The most notable general collection of documents is the Ministry of Defence's ongoing project *Russkii Arkhiv. Velikaia Otechestvennaia* (Russian Archive. The Great Patriotic War), which currently encompasses twelve volumes comprising 24 books and over 5,000 pages. In this large mass of documents, there are a handful references to the Soviet army's response to the Holocaust.⁵

Additionally, TsAMO copied some of its materials and shared these with other institutions and archives around the world. For instance, TsAMO transferred a large number of documents about the liberation of Ukraine from 1943 and 1944 to the Ukrainian Communist Party after the war, and these documents are now available in the Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy (TsDAHO) (Central State Archives of Public Organisations of Ukraine), the former archive of the Communist Party, along with other Ukrainian Communist Party records.⁶ Similarly, TsAMO shared with the Yugoslav People's Army some of its documents about the Red Army's operation in Yugoslavia in 1944 and 1945. These materials are now held in the Vojni Arhiv Srbije (Military Archive of Serbia) in Belgrade.⁷ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, TsAMO also shared some of its Holocaust-related materials with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC and Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem. USHMM holds documents from the Red Army War Crime Commissions (many of which focus on Jewish victims) and numerous Soviet reports on the Holocaust, including informational reports.⁸ Although I has not worked in the Yad Vashem Archives, their collections from TsAMO appear to be even more voluminous and also include informational reports.⁹ It is very likely that other archives across the former Soviet bloc also hold some documents from TsAMO, although I have not personally verified this.

Russia's second Soviet-era military archive, RGVA, holds all military documents dating before 'Operation Barbarossa', including from the Soviet-Finnish Winter War. Especially relevant for the study of the Holocaust is the fact that RGVA also holds documents from the so-called internal troops (*vnutrennie voiska*), under the control of the Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (NKVD) (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), for the entire period of the Soviet Union's existence, including the Second World War. As part of this collection, RGVA has documents generated by the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Red Army (the NKVD Army) during the Second World War, which were under the joint control of the Red Army and the NKVD.¹⁰ The NKVD Army also received many regular Red Army documents, especially orders from the fronts and the high command

4 F. F. (ed.), *Dokumenty obviniaiat. Kholokost: svidetel'stva Krasnoi Armii* [Documents Accuse. The Holocaust: Red Army Testimonials], Moscow 1996.

5 V. A. Zolotarev et al. (ed.), *Russkii Arkhiv. Velikaia Otechestvennaia* [Russian Archive. The Great Patriotic War], Moscow 1993–2001.

6 See for instance: TsDAGO, fund 57, opis 4, delo 96, copies of reports, memoranda, briefs and witness testimonies of Ukrainian Fronts on the state and repairs of railroads, roads, and bridges in the liberated parts of Ukraine and the process of mobilisation in the liberated parts of Ukraine.

7 Vojni Arhiv Srbije, fund NOVJ, kutija 96.

8 These are only some of the collections from TsAMO held at USHMM, for example Military Commissions of the Red Army RG 22.016 and Records Relating to Auschwitz and other camps, RG 22.0008. USHMM also has a much larger collection of documents from the Communist Party and the state archives, but these are distinct from the Red Army documents.

9 See for instance the following description by the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Description of Yad Vashem TsAMO collections, https://portal.ehri-project.eu/units/il-002798-m_40-map (10 August 2019).

10 For a more detailed discussion of the NKVD Army's relationship to the regular Red Army, see below.

in Moscow. RGVA, in contrast to TsAMO, is under the jurisdiction of the civilian Federal Archival Agency. As such, RGVA materials are easily available to scholars.

The NKVD Army

Given the inaccessibility of TsAMO, my research has been based mostly on sources from RGVA and the NKVD Army, in addition to materials found in Belgrade, Washington DC, and Kiev. It should be noted that my research has focused on the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts (army groups), a rather small fraction of the total of ten fronts that the Red Army deployed in Europe (three Baltic Fronts, three Belorussian Fronts, and four Ukrainian Fronts) in the last year of the war. Consequently, the author did not work with the majority of NKVD Army documents, including informational reports produced by the NKVD Armies which belonged to eight other army groups in Europe.

To contextualise the discussion surrounding the informational reports produced by the NKVD Army, a brief discussion of the NKVD Army itself is necessary. The Kremlin created the NKVD Army during the war by combining various forces of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs, including border guards, railroad troops, and internal security troops. The NKVD Army followed the regular military in the rear and carried out a wide range of sensitive and important tasks, providing intelligence, handling prisoners of war, enforcing discipline, combatting Axis partisans, and occasionally fighting on the frontlines. The NKVD Army was under the Red Army's operational control, meaning that the army leadership on the fronts could assign it specific tasks, but it had a separate chain of command. It was subordinate to the Chief of the Main Directorate of the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Red Army headed by Lieutenant-General Gorbatiuk.¹¹ Gorbatiuk's boss was Lavrenti Beria, the wartime NKVD leader and one of Stalin's most trusted and powerful deputies.

Informational Reports

The following discussion of informational reports is based on RGVA fund 3900 (The NKVD Army for the Protection of the Third Ukrainian Front), file (*delo*) 458, which is called state of the cities (*sostianee gorodov*). File 458 contains dozens of informational reports from 1944 and 1945. Thus, the discussion will focus on informational reports generated by the NKVD Army of the Third Ukrainian Front.

Informational reports – whether produced by the NKVD Army or the regular army – were part of the Soviet army's standard intelligence gathering in the territories that it occupied. The reports recorded the local population's attitude towards the Red Army, the ethnic and social make-up of residents, the local political parties, recent history, and important industrial enterprises. Only a small proportion of the informational reports discussed the fate of wartime Jews and, when they did, it was usually in the context of recent history. The information gathered in the reports was sent up the ranks, all the way from the regimental level to Moscow.

¹¹ RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d.172, l. 21.

Soviet officers penned these documents about cities, regions, and sometimes even entire countries within weeks of the Red Army's arrival. The authors of the informational reports seemed to have held the rank of major and higher. They hailed from different branches of the armed forces; among the authors were political officers, unit commanders, and intelligence officers. Although officers did not report their sources, they were presumably based on information obtained from local sources.

I did not find specific guidelines that officers were required to follow in their reports, although they certainly existed. When officers wrote inadequate reports, they were criticised. For instance, Major Mishin, head of the political department of the 25th Border Guard Regiment, wrote an informational report about the city of Belgrade on 12 December 1944. The report was terse and lacked any interesting details. Mishin's boss, Lieutenant-Colonel Naneishvili, the head of the political department of the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Third Ukrainian Front, wrote in red crayon on the document: "Well! Very, very vague! One can find more information in an encyclopaedia."¹²

Mishin, evidently, took the criticism seriously. His subsequent informational report on the Hungarian city of Kaposvár was more detailed. It included a discussion of the city's population, its ethnic and class makeup, the city's industrial and economic development, the state of communications and transport, and the political background of the local police force (which was controlled by the Red Army), among other things.¹³ Mishin also went into a detailed discussion of the political parties that were active in Kaposvár prior to the Red Army's arrival, in which he also focussed on the Holocaust. He outlined how the Arrow Cross Party, headed by Ferenc Szálasi, was established in 1938 and argued that the party's main aims included: "Overthrow of the existing order and the establishment in Hungary of a National Socialist order based on the principles of German fascism." The document went on to enumerate the Arrow Cross' main policies, including, "expulsion and destruction of the Jewish population living in the territory of Hungary".¹⁴ It is noteworthy that his superior underlined the sentence on Arrow Cross policies towards Jews, indicating that for him this was an important piece of information.

Lieutenant-Colonel A. Sokolov, deputy commander of the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Third Ukrainian Front, also submitted an informational report on Hungary to Naneishvili on 26 December 1944.¹⁵ This was a detailed report, including a discussion of Hungarian post-First World War revisionism towards Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, Budapest's role in the Axis war against the Soviet Union, economic ties between Germany and Hungary, the administrative division of Hungary, its social, political and economic situation on the eve of the Soviet invasion, the prevailing mood in the Hungarian army, and much more. The report was ten pages long, and Sokolov devoted about half a page to the wartime fate of the Jews. This is what he had to say on the topic:

"The Jewish national question arose in Hungary after laws against Jews were introduced in 1938 and 1939 upon Hitler's demand. Jews' electoral and economic rights were restricted. Jewish capitalists were able to evade these restrictions, but as far as poorer layers of Jewry and the intelligentsia are concerned, their opportunities for at least a bearable existence were gradually diminished. After the occupation of the country, Hitlerites carried out mass

¹² RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 458, l. 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ll. 28-30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-65.

arrests and punishments against Jews, forcing thousands of Jews into concentration camps, confiscating their property, and, according to the Hitlerite method, creating ghettos. In 1944, laws against Jews expanded to include spouses of Jews, as well as children of mixed marriages up to the third generation. Therefore, the total number of victims of persecution under that 'law' exceeded one million people. The Hungarian rulers applied Hitler's trusted method – 'antisemitic poison.'¹⁶

From the perspective of twenty-first century historians, Sokolov's analysis had some flaws. He perhaps overemphasised Hitler's role while minimising the antisemitic attitudes and policies of successive Hungarian governments. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Sokolov stressed the gradual progression of measures against Jews from legal restrictions to mass murder and how these policies impacted various strata of Jewish society in different ways. Overall, his analysis was impressive, given that when Sokolov wrote the report the Red Army had occupied only parts of southern and eastern Hungary. Thus, it was unlikely that Sokolov had comprehensive information on what was happening to Hungarian Jewry in Budapest and other parts of the country.

Informational reports are insufficiently rich in detail to be used as historical sources for the study of the Holocaust itself. Only some informational reports discussed what happened to Jews during the war. Even then, as evident in Mishkin and Sokolov's reports, the topic was addressed rather briefly, in several paragraphs at most. Even though the author has seen only a minority of all the NKVD Army's informational reports (but almost all available reports by the NKVD Armies of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts), it is extremely unlikely that any contain information that cannot be learned from the archives of perpetrator countries or personal accounts from victims, bystanders, or perpetrators. However, informational reports are a useful source for understanding the Red Army's relationship to the Holocaust – which is how I use the informational reports in my research. Informational reports can illuminate how much the Red Army knew about the Holocaust and how the Soviets viewed and responded to the mass murder of Jews.

According to several scholars of the Soviet armed forces, there was an increase in popular antisemitism in the Red Army during the war.¹⁷ There were two different reasons for the upsurge in anti-Jewish attitudes. As contemporary Jewish Soviet intellectuals noted – Ilya Ehrenburg (the most prominent wartime Soviet military journalist) and Boris Slutsky (a well-known post-war poet who served in the army during the war), the Nazi propaganda and Russo-centric nationalism bred popular anti-Jewish attitudes.¹⁸ However, there is no real evidence that the Soviet state initiated antisemitic policies, at least not until well after the war in the late 1940s. It is difficult to determine to what degree, if at all, the wave of Russian nationalism from below shaped the Soviet officers' informational reports about European countries. However, Soviet officers, if they discussed the Axis' treatment of Jews at all, always condemned their enemies' antisemitism and their crimes against Jews. At the same time, officers in the majority of informational reports omitted any mention of Jews, indicating that for most of these officers, the Holocaust was not an important issue.

¹⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷ Il'ia Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti. Kholokost v SSSR 1941–1945gg* [Victims of Hatred. The Holocaust in the USSR 1941–1945], Moscow 2002, 405–408; Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War. Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945*, London 2005, 152–153.

¹⁸ On Ehrenburg, see: Mordechai Altshuler, *Jewish Combatants of the Red Army Confront the Holocaust*, in: Harriet Murav/Gennady Estraiikh (ed.), *Soviet Jews in World War II. Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering*, Boston 2014, 30; on Slutsky, see: Boris Slutsky, *Zapiski o Voine. Stikhotvorenniia i ballady* [Notes on the War. Poetry and Ballads], St. Petersburg 2000, 149 and 154.

Conclusion

The Red Army's responses to the Axis genocide against Jews is an understudied topic, especially considering the intense interest in how the Western armies responded to the Holocaust.¹⁹ One of the reasons why there is little information on the Soviet armed forces' response to the genocide is the fact that TsAMO, the Red Army's main wartime archive, is inaccessible to foreign researchers. Historians working on the Red Army usually overcome this challenge by seeking information relating to the Red Army in other Soviet or foreign archives. My solution has been to concentrate on the NKVD Army documents in RGVA while also looking for military documents in different archives. The informational reports offer insights into how the Red Army made sense of the territories falling under its control and, in this context, the informational reports also illuminate the Soviet military's relationship to the Holocaust.

¹⁹ There are numerous books on this topic, the most recent being Mark Celinscak, *Distance From the Belsen Heap. Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp*, Toronto 2015.

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Essay

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„Helf uns lieber Gott ...“

Zur Entdeckung eines einzigartigen Holocaustdenkmals am Wiener Zentralfriedhof

Abstract

This essay recounts a journey of scholarly discovery in a brief and freely anecdotal form relating to a unique but hitherto almost completely unnoticed Holocaust memorial at Vienna's Central Cemetery – a rabbinical graveyard that is covered in ‚petitions‘ by Viennese Jews from the period of the Shoah. The essay aims thereby not least of all to showcase the largely neglected and sometimes extremely difficult study of gravestones as historiographic sources. It offers a brief excursion into the Chassidic practice of leaving written petitions at rabbinical graves as an attempt to account for the origins of the ‚graffiti‘ at this particular graveyard, aiming finally thereby to garner greater public attention for this unique Holocaust memorial as well as for the largely still unrealised potential of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries to serve as cultural and sociohistorical archives.

Noch zu Beginn meines Promotionsstudiums, als ich bereits entschieden hatte, zur Geschichte der Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfe zu dissertieren, vertiefte ich mich auch in meiner ‚Freizeit‘ in die jüdische Geschichte Wiens – so auch durch weniger akademische Quellen wie etwa Dokumentarfilme, die online leicht zugänglich waren und gerade abends, beispielsweise beim Kochen, einen im doppeldeutigen Sinne ‚hands-off‘-Zugang zur Erweiterung meines Allgemeinwissens boten. So geschah es an einem verregneten Frühlingsabend an meiner Alma Mater in Lancaster im Nordwesten Englands, dass neben mir gerade eine Folge von Guido Knopps inzwischen älteren, weithin bekannten und nicht unumstrittenen Serie *Hitlers Helfer* lief, nämlich *Eichmann. Der Vernichter* (1998). Plötzlich fesselte die Erzählung meine Aufmerksamkeit: „Wer bleibt, lebt weiter in Angst“, bekundet eine Stimme vor unheilvollen Tönen – eine dissonante Klaviermelodie begleitet von einem Cello. „Der jüdische Friedhof in Wien – Dokumente der Verzweiflung.“ Ich blicke zum Bildschirm: Die Kamera schweift über ein mit Bäumen umringtes Gräberfeld, alte Stelen ragen empor, von manchen bleibt wiederum nur der Sockel übrig. Das Bild blendet über in die Nahaufnahme von handgeschriebenen Zeilen: „... Frieden für uns Juden“, lese ich zuerst. Die nächste Zeile liest der Erzähler auch vor: „Helf [sic] uns lieber Gott ...“. Es erscheint ein Datum in gespenstisch archaischer Handschrift: „7/VIII 1938“ – der 7. August 1938. Dann eine Rückblende auf den Friedhof, das Bild geht über in Dunkelheit. Die gesamte Szene dauert gerade mal 18 Sekunden.¹

Wie verlockend, doch frustrierend vage: Es gab also einen oder mehrere Grabsteine, auf denen verfolgte WienerInnen während der Shoah ihre Todesängste dokumentierten. Doch auf welchem Friedhof? Nur „der jüdische Friedhof in Wien“ wurde erwähnt, in Wien gibt es aber mehrere jüdische Friedhöfe. Aufgrund der ge-

¹ Guido Knopp, *Hitlers Helfer. Eichmann: Der Vernichter*, ZDF (1996–1998). Die Szene findet ungefähr in der Zeitspanne 12:22–12:40 statt.

zeigten Bilder sowie des historischen Kontextes bin ich davon ausgegangen, dass es sich um den jüngsten jüdischen Friedhof beim IV. Tor des Zentralfriedhofs handeln müsste, der seit 1917 Hauptfriedhof der Wiener jüdischen Gemeinde war und der während der Shoah zudem eine zentrale Rolle im Leben der zunehmend dezimierten jüdischen Bevölkerung spielte. Eine Stelle im Buch zur Serie von Guido Knopp lieferte etwas mehr Informationen:

„Bis heute sind die Spuren seiner [Eichmanns] Verfolgungsjagd sichtbar geblieben. Auf dem Grabstein eines Rabbiners auf dem Wiener Zentralfriedhof finden sich, deutlich lesbar, mit Bleistift gekritzelte Hilferufe – erschütternde Dokumente der Verzweiflung: ‚Bet‘ für uns, guter Rabbi. Der liebe Gott soll uns helfen und ein Wunder geschehen lassen.“²

Um welchen Rabbiner handelte es sich hier? Wo lag sein Grabstein? Wer hat diese verzweifelte Botschaften (mit Bleistift? vielleicht auch mit Kohlestift?) geschrieben, und wie haben diese gekritzelten Bittschriften so viele Jahrzehnte überdauern können – darüber hinaus offensichtlich in zahlreichen historiografischen Werken zu den jüdischen Friedhöfen sowie allgemein zur Shoah in Wien völlig unbeachtet? Woher hatte Knopp, ein deutscher Journalist, diese Information und wieso hat er nur so zurückhaltend darüber berichtet? In den Jahren danach hielt ich bei meinen vielen Besuchen am Wiener Zentralfriedhof, wo ich während meines Doktorats tausende Grabsteine dokumentiert hatte, stets Ausschau nach diesen ‚Graffiti‘ aus der Zeit der Shoah – doch vergeblich. In der fertiggestellten Dissertation zitierte ich dann lediglich die Buchversion von *Hitlers Helfer* mit ihren vagen Informationen.

Erst einige Jahre später, als ich tiefere Nachforschungen für meine Monographie über die Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfe betrieb, stieß ich in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek auf ein neues Indiz, wodurch es mir schließlich gelang, diesen Grabstein – eigentlich ein rabbinisches Grabhäuschen – ausfindig zu machen. Im Folgenden erzähle ich kurz und frei anekdotisch diese wissenschaftliche Entdeckungsreise nach, nicht zuletzt, um die weitgehend vernachlässigte und manchmal durchaus schwierige Erforschung von Grabsteinen als historiografische Quellen darzulegen. Danach biete ich einen kurzen Exkurs zur chassidischen Praxis der Bittschrift am Rabbinergrab als Versuch, die Entstehung der ‚Graffiti‘ an diesem spezifischen Grabhäuschen zu erörtern. Schließlich bezwecke ich damit, eine breitere Aufmerksamkeit auf dieses einzigartige Holocaustdenkmal am Wiener Zentralfriedhof zu lenken sowie auf das noch weitgehend unerschlossene Erkenntnispotential der Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfe als kulturelle und sozialhistorische Archive.

Als ich 2017 weiterführende Literatur in der Nationalbibliothek zur Wiener Sepulkralgeschichte suchte, stieß ich im Katalog auf ein polnischsprachiges Werk mit dem Titel *Lapidarium*.³ Wie sich herausstellte, handelte es sich dabei um ein essayistisch angesetztes Werk über die ältere jüdische Abteilung beim I. Tor des Zentralfriedhofs. Der Verfasser, Andrzej Skrzypczak, ist Priester in der katholischen Pfarrkirche St. Lukas in der Anton-Steinböck-Gasse, die direkt hinter dem alten jüdischen Friedhof liegt. In knappen Kapiteln von jeweils nur ein paar Seiten wurden hier alle möglichen Facetten des Friedhofs beschrieben, frei wie sie dem Priester bei seinen Friedhofsbesuchen aufgefallen waren, so beispielsweise das Kapitel *Kamyki* (Steine), über die Grabsteine selbst sowie über den bekannten jüdischen Brauch, beim Besuch des Friedhofs kleine Steinchen auf dem Grabdenkmal zu hinterlassen, oder *Wulkan & Neubrunn* (S. 23-24) über die so genannte Steinmetzfirma, die vor

² Guido Knopp, *Hitlers Helfer*, München 1998, o.S, Kapitel: „Der Vernichter“.

³ Andrzej Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, Krakau 2006.

der Shoah viele der Grabsteine für die jüdischen Friedhöfe Wiens anfertigte und deren Name noch überall auf den Grabdenkmälern zu finden ist.

Auffällig war das Buch ohnehin schon als Beispiel für die breite gesellschaftliche Rezeption der Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfe – eine von einem katholischen Priester in polnischer Sprache verfasste Sammlung von Eindrücken über einen jüdischen Friedhof. Als ich aber weiterblätterte und mich vorerst, da ich Polnisch nicht verstehe, auf die vielen Schwarzweißfotos konzentrierte, stockte mir auf einmal der Atem: In den Abbildungen zu einem Abschnitt mit dem Titel *Napisy* (S. 142-144) erschienen sie mir wieder, die gespenstischen Handschriften: „Lass bald Frieden für uns Juden kommen [...]“; „Behüte u. beschütze uns lieber Gott, lass uns alle beinander [sic], helfe uns.“ Mit Hilfe von Online-Übersetzungssoftware und mit viel Geduld fing ich gleich an, die dazugehörigen Passagen mühsam (und freilich nicht besonders elegant) zu transkribieren und zu übersetzen. Gleich lernte ich, dass *Napisy* so was wie „Aufschriften“ bedeutet. Bald verstand ich auch, dass sich das vorhergehende Kapitel (S. 140-141) schon auf diesen Grabstein bezog und nach dem hier bestatteten Rabbiner benannt war: Samuel Frommer. Nun wusste ich endlich seinen Namen und konnte ihn sofort in der Friedhofsdatenbank der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde ausfindig machen: „Geburtsname: Frommer Samuel. Alter: 68. Gest.: 19.06.1911. Beerdigt: 21.06.1911. Sterbeort: Wien. Friedhof: Zentralfriedhof I. Tor. Gruppe 50, Reihe 52, Grab 3.“⁴

Andrzej Skrzypczak, der Verfasser von *Lapidarium*, hatte es nicht so einfach, da zur Zeit seiner Recherchen die Datenbank noch nicht online zugänglich war. „Das Grab ist das erste auf einem der wichtigsten Wege“, fing er an (hier mit Google Translate aus dem Polnischen schlecht übersetzt und mit etwas dichterischer Freiheit verschönert). „Es ist leicht zu finden aufgrund seines Erscheinungsbildes als Häuschen“, doch es ist nur ein kleines „Häuschen“: „Die Innenfläche dieses Hauses beträgt höchstens einen Quadratmeter.“ Skrzypczak war selbstverständlich „fasziniert“ von den gekritzelten Bittschriften auf der Marmortafel, die er im Inneren des Grabhäuschens erblickte, da aber die „Inscription auf dem Gewölbe“ ausschließlich hebräischsprachig war, konnte er den hier Bestatteten nicht namentlich identifizieren. Aufgrund der relativen Monumentalität des Denkmals schloss er aber richtig, dass es sich um einen Rabbiner handeln musste. Skrzypczak beschrieb dann den mühseligen Weg, auf dem er anhand des erhalten gebliebenen handschriftlichen Totenverzeichnisses der Friedhofsverwaltung der Kultusgemeinde seinen Rabbiner identifizierte – die Friedhofsverwaltung gab ihm nämlich gleich zu verstehen, dass in der Gruppe 50 über 160 Rabbiner begraben liegen. Schließlich gelang ihm aber die Identifikation aufgrund der Lage des Grabes, inklusive des Sterbeorts (und somit vermutlich auch des Wohnorts) des Rabbiners: „Das letzte Grab in der 52. Reihe.“ Laut Totenverzeichnis liegt hier „Szmuel Aron Frommer. [...] Und der Sterbeort: der zweite (jüdische) Bezirk Wiens, Nickelgasse 3.“⁵

Im Kapitel *Napisy* kam Skrzypczak ausführlicher auf die gekritzelten Bittschriften im Grabhäuschen des Rabbiners zurück: „Wie ich schon erwähnte, faszinierten mich die Aufschriften am Grab. So etwas fand ich nur am Grab dieses Rabbiners.“⁶ Da hatte er wohl recht: Ich habe bis auf eine Ausnahme, auf die ich später zurückkomme, noch nie etwas Derartiges auf einem Grabstein in Wien entdeckt. Skrzypczak vermutete, die Verfasser hätten einen Kopierstift, also einen Stift mit un-

4 Friedhofs-Datenbank, online zugänglich und nach Namen und weitere Kriterien durchsuchbar: <https://secure.ikg-wien.at/Db/Fh/> (27. Juli 2019).

5 Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, 140-141. Diese und alle folgenden Übersetzungen ins Deutsche – wenn nicht anders angeführt – durch den Verfasser.

6 Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, 143.

löscharer Mine, verwendet (was angesichts ihrer Dauerhaftigkeit wohl eher zutrifft als Knopps Behauptung, die Bittschriften wären mit Bleistift geschrieben worden):

„Die ältesten Inschriften verblassten mit der Zeit und schafften Raum für die nächsten. Aufgrund des begrenzten Platzes wurden einige Texte vertikal oder diagonal aufgetragen. Sie sind größtenteils auf Deutsch verfasst, aber auch auf Jiddisch und Hebräisch. In den deutschen Texten sehe ich viele Rechtschreibfehler, aufgrund derer ich vermutete, dass die Verfasser diese Sprache nicht zu Hause benutzten. Nur einige Aufschriften sind in ihrer Gesamtheit klar und verständlich. Wahrscheinlich baten sie Rabbi Frommer um Fürsprache bei Gott.“⁷

Der Priester wusste offensichtlich nicht recht, wie solche Bitten um Fürsprache zu deuten waren und fragte sich infolge: „Ist es angebracht, sie zu lesen, und dürfen sie zitiert werden?“ Er bejahte seine eigene Frage, denn schließlich seien diese Aufschriften an einem öffentlichen Ort angebracht, und überhaupt sei das Schreiben an sich eine Form der Kommunikation: „Die Autoren der Aufschriften hätten nicht davon ausgehen können, dass nur ihr Rabbi sie lesen würde.“ Skrzypczak führte hier einige der interessantesten Beispiele an, auf die ich gleich zurückkommen werde. Er schloss mit dem Gedanken: „Ich hoffe, dass Rabbi Frommer die Inschriften auf seinem eigenen Grab gelesen hat und dass er, wo immer er jetzt nach seiner irdischen Tätigkeit ist, immer noch für seine Eigenen betet, für diejenigen, die ihn darum baten.“⁸ Nebenbei gesagt war an anderer Stelle im *Lapidarium*, wie ich feststellte, auch der daneben gelegene Grabstein von Frommers Frau Hadassa abgebildet, die Tochter der Nicha Lea, gestorben am 13. Siwan 5681 (19. Juni 1921), die allerdings nicht in der Friedhofsdatenbank der Kultusgemeinde aufscheint – eine von tausenden hier bestatteten Personen, deren Name mit Ausnahme ihres Grabsteins dem historischen Gedächtnis entfallen sind.⁹



Abb. 1: Grabhäuschen des Rabbiners Samuel Frommer (1842/43–1911), Zentralfriedhof I. Tor, Gruppe 50, Reihe 52, Grabstelle 3. Rechts davor der Grabstein seiner 1921 verstorbenen Frau Hadassa. © Autor

7 Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, 143.

8 Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, 143-144.

9 Skrzypczak, *Lapidarium*, 20.

Als bald – im Sommer 2017 – machte ich mich am Zentralfriedhof auf die Suche nach dem Grab. An der südlichen Ecke der Gruppe 50, an der Kreuzung der Hauptwege (auf den meist nach Südwesten ausgerichteten Plänen des Zentralfriedhofs ist das die obere linke Ecke der Gruppe 50), fand ich dann tatsächlich das Grabhäuschen. Mir fiel sofort auf, dass ich das schlanke, aber doch in seiner Umgebung recht herausstechende Grabhäuschen mehrmals über die Jahre passiert hatte, aber niemals daran gedacht hatte, einen Blick hineinzuworfen – von mehr als Dutzend chassidischen Grabhäuschen in den jüdischen Abteilungen des Wiener Zentralfriedhofs ist dieses eines der kleinsten und unauffälligsten, genauso wie Samuel Frommer selbst ein vergleichsweise recht unbekannter Rabbiner war. Beim Grabhäuschen handelt es sich um eine nach Südosten ausgerichtete Miniatur eines Mausoleums, mit sechs Säulen und einem Giebeldach. Auf dem Architrav ist eine weiße Inschriftentafel angebracht, die auf Hebräisch verkündet: „Zeichen [hebräisch: *tzijun*, im Sinne „Grabdenkmal“] unseres Lehrers und großen Rabbiners, der Rabbiner Shmuel Aharon, sein seliges Andenken sei ein Segen, Frommer“. Diese recht formelhafte und eigentlich wenig aussagekräftige Inschrift ist charakteristisch für die Sprache der chassidischen Grabinschriften: Diese werden ausschließlich in hebräischer Sprache gehalten (manchmal auch mit aramäischen und jiddischen Einsprengseln); sie sind reduziert auf wenige, formelhafte rabbinische Ehrenbezeichnungen samt Patronymen (etwa „unser Lehrer und Rabbiner ... Sohn von ...“); sie nennen bloß synagogale Namen (hebräische Namen, die sich manchmal vom bürgerlichen Namen unterscheiden, wie hier Samuel/Shmuel, wobei in diesem Beispiel die gesonderte Nennung des bürgerlichen Familiennamens „Frommer“ schon eine Ausnahme bildet); und sie nennen ausschließlich Sterbedaten im jüdischen Kalender aber keine Geburtsdaten (das Geburtsjahr 1842 oder 1843 geht bei Frommer aus der Nennung seines Sterbealters in der Friedhofsdatenbank der Kultusgemeinde hervor).

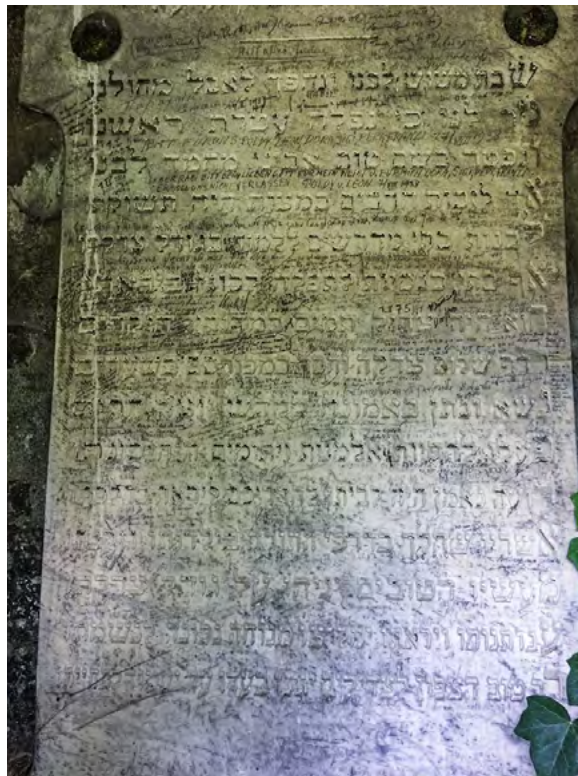


Abb. 2: Die mit Bittschriften übersäte Inschriftentafel aus weißem Marmor im Innenraum des Grabhäuschens. © Autor

Auf der Hinterwand des schmalen Innenraums, der tatsächlich kaum Platz für mehr als ein oder zwei Personen bietet, hängt eine Inschriftentafel aus weißem Marmor, der vorzüglich zur Anbringung der Bittschriften mit schwarzer Mine geeignet war. Diese Bittschriften reichen bis in die jüngste Zeit. Dieses Grabhäuschen dürfte folglich heute noch von religiösen Jüdinnen und Juden besucht werden. Doch die ältesten, ergreifendsten und aus historiografischer Sicht interessantesten dieser Schriften sind natürlich jene aus der NS-Zeit. Diese datieren bereits auf Juni 1938 zurück, also wenige Monate nach dem ‚Anschluß‘ Österreichs an das ‚Dritte Reich‘, und sind vielfach auch mit Vornamen unterschrieben. Aus Ton und Stil wie auch den grammatikalischen Unstimmigkeiten zu schließen, handelte es sich hier vorwiegend um jugendliche Bittsteller, und nicht wie Andrzej Skrzypczak vermutete um Menschen mit mangelnden Deutschkenntnissen. Dies geht auch eindeutig aus dem historischen Kontext hervor: Die jüdischen Teile des Zentralfriedhofs dienten nämlich schon bald nach dem ‚Anschluß‘ der auf einmal gesellschaftlich völlig ausgestoßenen jüdischen Bevölkerung Wiens, insbesondere der Jugend, als Erholungsgebiet, zeitweilig auch als Fluchtort und Versteck, vor allem ab 1941, als die Deportationen in den Osten begannen.¹⁰ Diese hingekritzeltten Bittschriften an den Rabbiner sind demnach einzigartige in Stein verewigte Dokumentationen der Verzweiflung und Todesangst der Wiener Jüdinnen und Juden während der Shoah.

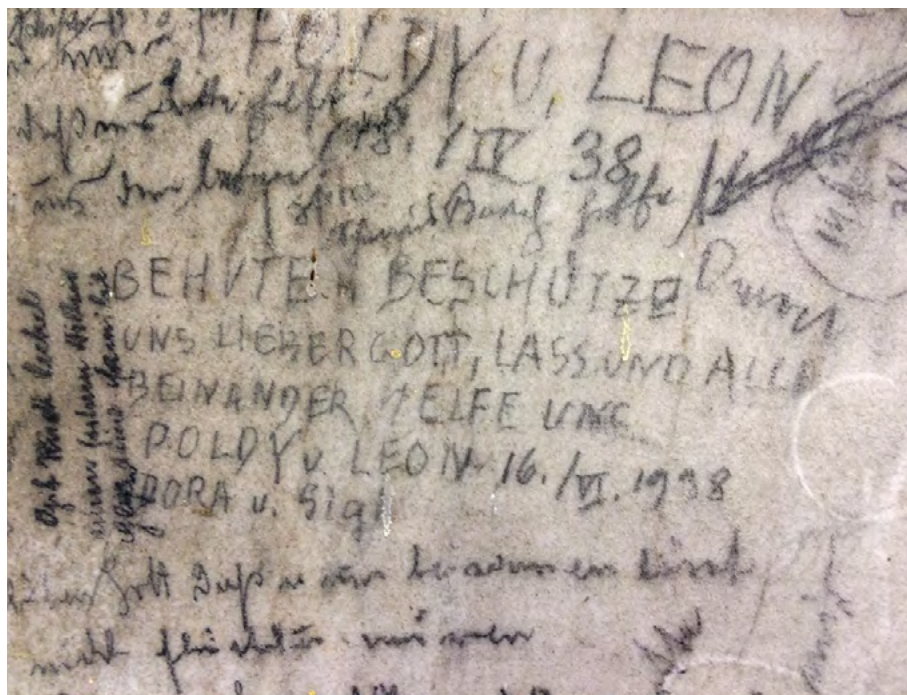


Abb. 3: Nahaufnahme einer Bittschrift vom 16. Juni 1938. © Autor

Der blanke Sockel ist mit Bittschriften übersät: „Behüte u. beschütze uns lieber Gott, lass uns alle beinander [sic], helfe [sic] uns. Poldy u. Leon 16. VI 1938, Dora u. Sigi“, steht beispielsweise auf der linken Oberseite des Sockels. An verschiedenen Stellen erscheint die gleiche Bitte: „Bete für uns! Poldy u. Leon“. Es sind oft dieselben Namen, die hier erscheinen, so: „Hilf uns! Dora, Sigi, Poldy, Leon, Peop, Franzi 14. VIII 1938“ und „Bitt [sic] für uns Poldy, Leon, Dora, Sigi, Pepi, Franzi 27. VIII

¹⁰ Vgl. Dieter Hecht/Eleonore Lappin-Eppel/Michaela Raggam-Blesch, Topographie der Shoah. Gedächtnisorte des zerstörten jüdischen Wien, Wien 2015, insb. 308-321 sowie 515-516.

1938“. Des Weiteren finden sich auf der Inschriftentafel selbst zwischen den eingravierten Zeilen der hebräischsprachigen Grabinschrift Samuel Frommers folgende Bittschriften: „Bete für uns guter Rabi [sic] der I. [liebe] Gott soll uns helfen und ein Wunder geschehen lassen. Poldy u. Leon 7. VII 38“; „Lieber Rabi [sic] bitt [sic] beim lieben Gott für mein Weibi u. für mich Dora, Sigi, Pepi, Franz. Er soll uns nicht verlassen. Poldy u. Leon 7. VIII 1938“; sowie die von Guido Knopp verfilmte Zeile „Lass bald Frieden für uns Juden kommen“. An manchen Stellen stehen nur Namen und Daten, wie gewöhnliche Graffiti, wie sie überall in der Welt auf Denkmälern zu finden sind, jedoch hier mit geschichtsträchtigen Daten: „Trude, Paul, 1. 7. 38“; „Hermine, Paul 14. 3. 39“; „Trude, Paul, 2. 4. 39“. Auch finden sich hier Zeilen in hebräischer Kursivschrift, bei denen es mir aufgrund der Handschrift allerdings schwerfällt, sie zu entziffern.

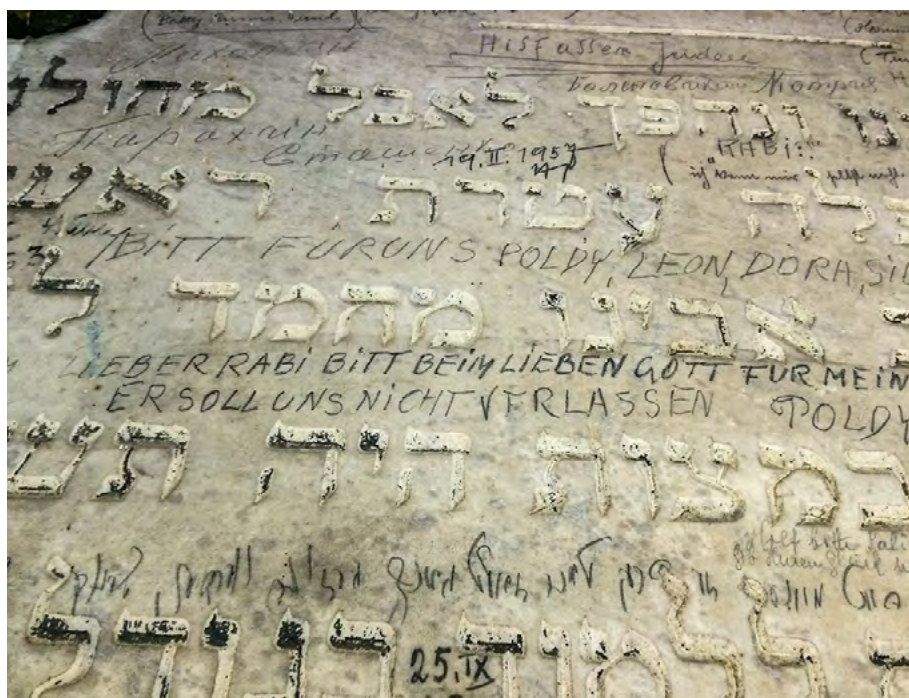


Abb. 4: Nahaufnahme der Inschriftentafel samt diverser Bittschriften. © Autor

Auch aus der Nachkriegszeit finden sich wiederholt solche Bittschriften oder wenigstens Signaturen, so beispielsweise vom 19. Oktober 1959, vom 2. Jänner 1966, vom 1. Jänner 1975, und so weiter. Eine ergreifende Bittschrift aus jüngster Zeit findet sich am Sockel unten links, der zwar nicht mehr Verfolgung und Todesängsten bekundet, sondern eine eher ‚klassische‘ Bittschrift – mehr dazu gleich – aus persönlicher Verzweiflung von einer religiösen Jüdin an den Rabbiner darstellt: „Wien, 31. 7. 2004, Rabbi, kümmer Dich bitte um meine beiden Kinder, Ruth (1991) und Philipp (2004) die durch Abtreibung ums Leben gekommen sind. Verzeihe mir meine Schuld!“ So erstaunlich dieses ‚Denkmal‘ mit den Bittschriften ist, die teilweise schon fast ein Jahrhundert von der Umwelt wie auch von der historischen Forschung größtenteils unbemerkt überdauert haben, fallen sie an manchen Stellen langsam der Verwitterung zum Opfer.

Der allgemeine Hintergrund zur religiösen und kulturellen Praxis von Bittschriften, die an den Grabstellen verstorbener Rabbiner hinterlassen werden, ist frei nachvollziehbar: Es handelt sich um eine Praxis, die zuerst im 19. Jahrhundert innerhalb des Chassidismus entstand, und die als Ausdruck des spezifisch chassidischen Glau-

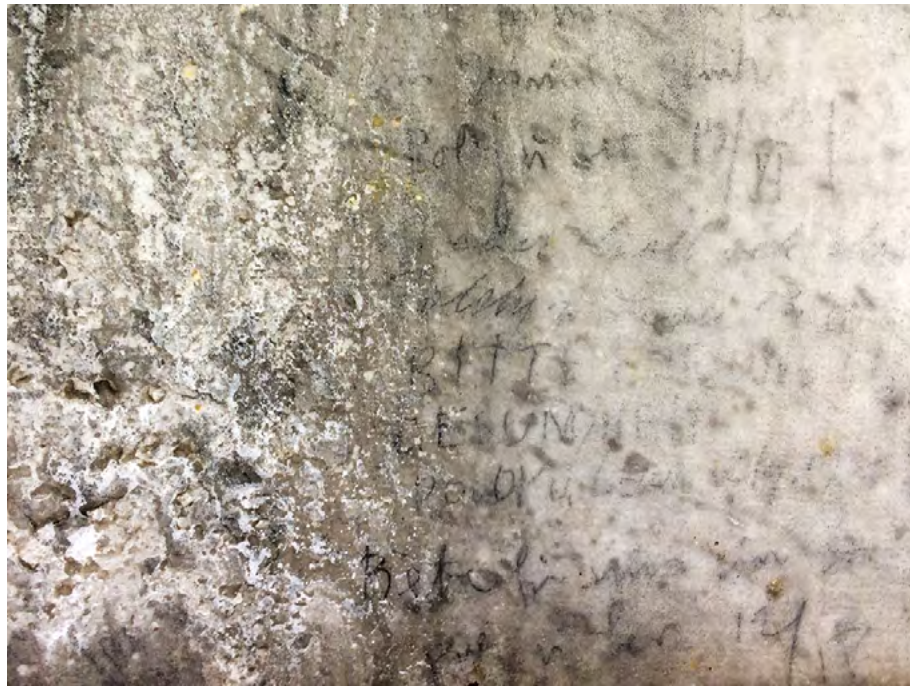


Abb. 5: Verwitterung der Inschriftentafel. © Autor

bens an die Autorität und die mystischen Kräfte des Rabbiners durch dessen jeweiligen Gefolgschaft zu verstehen ist. Im Folgenden skizziere ich die Entstehung und Bedeutung dieser chassidischen Praxis sowie die Verbreitung dieser ursprünglich osteuropäischen Bewegung innerhalb des Judentums nach Wien im frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Nach diesen kurzen Ausführungen wende ich mich wieder dem Mysterium des Grabhäuschens Samuel Frommers zu.

Der Chassidismus entwickelte sich im Kontext der modernen Orthodoxie um die sogenannten *tzadikim* (Gerechten), wie die chassidischen ‚Wunderrabbiner‘, Anhänger der jüdischen Mystik, zuerst bekannt waren. Geographisch beschränkte sich die Bewegung vorerst größtenteils auf das Gebiet der heutigen Ukraine, breitete sich jedoch mit der Zeit immer mehr aus und erreichte schließlich auch die Habsburgermonarchie, vornehmlich Galizien und die Bukowina. Bis in das 19. Jahrhundert hatte sich hieraus eine patriarchalisch-dynastische Nachfolgeregelung entwickelt, wonach bestimmte Familien über Generationen hinweg und in Konkurrenz zueinander von ihren ‚Höfen‘ aus – ihren Wohnsitzen samt Synagogen – nicht nur eine geistliche, sondern auch gewissermaßen eine weltliche Macht über ihre Anhängerschaft ausübten. Die Bezeichnung *chassidim* (sprichwörtlich: Fromme) wurde schnell zum Inbegriff für die Anhängerschaft, die von weit her zu ihren ‚Wunderrabbinern‘ an ihre Höfe pilgerten, um deren Rat zu suchen. Der Begriff *Wunderrabbiner* bezieht sich wiederum auf die magischen Kräfte, die diesen mystisch gelehrten Anführern nachgesagt werden: Sie gelten bis heute noch als „Vermittler zwischen ihren chassidim und Gott“.¹¹ Als Grundlage insbesondere der letzteren Anschauung wird eine Geschichte aus 2. Könige 13,20-21 zitiert, in der ein Toter wieder zum Leben erweckt wurde, als seine Leiche in Berührung mit den Gebeinen des Propheten Elisa kam. Aus diesem Glauben an die Heilkräfte und Vermittlerrolle der ‚Wunderrabbiner‘ entwickelte sich der chassidische Brauch, am Todestag einen *jom hillula* (Feiertag) am Grab des verstorbenen *tzadik* zu feiern, der sich vom sonst üblichen *jahrzeit*

¹¹ Vgl. David Biale et al., *Hasidism. A New History*, Princeton 2018, 1.

(Todestag) erstens durch Ausmaß und Feierlichkeit, aber wichtiger noch durch das Stattfinden am Friedhof unterscheidet. Hieraus entwickelte sich wiederum der Brauch, ein kleines Bauwerk – aus dem Hebräischen *ohel* (Zelt) genannt – über das Grab zu errichten, das bei jedem Wetter mehrere Leute, bestenfalls einen *minjan* (Quorum), unterbringen kann.¹²

David Assaf, einer der federführenden Historiker zum Chassidismus, behauptete, dass dieser spezifisch chassidische Brauch des Grabbesuchs

„die normative Einstellung gegenüber Gräbern und Grüften in der aschkenasisch-jüdischen Tradition bei Weitem übersteigert [...]. Vor der zweiten Generation der Chassidim [inmitten des 19. Jahrhunderts] gibt es keine Information zur Verehrung von Grüften in Europa – sogar nicht bei den ausgewiesenen Gelehrten der Tora oder der Kabbala.“¹³

Tatsächlich wurde dieser unter den Chassidim entstehende Brauch von breiten Teilen des Judentums zuerst verunglimpft.¹⁴ Ein Eintrag in der *Jewish Encyclopedia* aus dem Jahre 1906 bemerkte beispielsweise noch, dass der Friedhof traditionell als „Objekt der Angst und des Aberglaubens“ fungierte, „da er als Bleibe von Geistern und Dämonen angesehen wurde“.¹⁵ Interessanterweise verwies dieser Artikel dabei übrigens nicht nur auf Jesaja 65,4 – ein Paradebeispiel der rituellen Unreinheit sowie der Unheimlichkeit der Grabstätten im biblischen Judentum – sondern auch auf Matthäus 8,28, womit eine Verbindung zu einer vergleichbaren Ansicht im Christentum hergestellt wurde. Doch der Historiker Avriel Bar-Levav zitierte in seiner Arbeit zu jüdischen Friedhöfen wiederum verschiedene Stellen im Talmud, wo der Friedhof bereits vor dem Mittelalter „als Kommunikationsraum“ vorgeführt wurde, als „Ort, wo Information von der jenseitigen Welt erlangt werden kann“, ein Ort, der „als Verbindung“ dient „um Bitten an den Himmel weiterzuleiten“.¹⁶ Auch der Historiker Simon Schwarzfuchs verwies auf die im Mittelalter übliche Praxis der Friedhofsbesuche für Bittgebete an die Toten, die sich der Lebenden wegen einsetzen sollten.¹⁷

Ob der Besuch von Gräbern zum Zwecke der Bittstellung an Gott nun als etablierter oder doch als abtrünniger Brauch im vormodernen Judentum zu betrachten ist: Unter dem Einfluss des Chassidismus erfuhren jüdische Friedhöfe jedenfalls in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten eine allmähliche Umwertung von unreinen und unheimlichen Orten in „geweihte Erde“, wodurch sich „das Verhältnis von Judenheiten auf der gesamten Welt zu den Grabstellen der Toten“ nachhaltig wandelte. Freilich befestigte der chassidische Glaube, dass der Geist des *tzadik* „über das Grab schwebt“, zugleich die dynastische Legitimation und somit auch die weltliche Souveränität der Rabbinerfamilien.¹⁸ Insofern spiegelt die Wallfahrt zu ihren Gräbern, die in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten zunehmend zu einem allgemeinen Brauch anwuchs, den längst bestehenden Brauch der Wallfahrt zum ‚Hofe‘ des lebenden *tzadik*.

Verbunden mit dieser Wallfahrt entwickelte sich eben die Praxis, dem ‚Wunderrabbiner‘ als Art Bekenntnis seiner höchsten geistlichen Autorität seitens seiner An-

12 Vgl. David Assaf, *The Regal Way. The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*, Stanford 2002, 321-322.

13 Assaf, *The Regal Way*, 322.

14 Vgl. auch: Biale et al., *Hasidism*, 426-428.

15 Executive Committee of the Editorial Board/Kaufmann Kohler, *Cemetery*, in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906, online zugänglich: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4168-cemetery> (27. Juli 2019).

16 Avriel Bar-Levav, *We Are Where We Are Not. The Cemetery in Jewish Culture*, in: *Jewish Studies* 41 (2002), 27.

17 Simon Schwarzfuchs, *The Medieval Jewish Cemetery*, in: Karlheinz Müller/Simon Schwarzfuchs/Abraham Reiner (Hg.), *Die Grabsteine vom jüdischen Friedhof in Würzburg aus der Zeit vor dem Schwarzen Tod (1147–1346)*, Bd. 1, Würzburg 2011, 172-173.

18 Biale et al., *Hasidism*, 199-201.

hängerschaft kleine Zettel, sogenannte *kwitl*, zu überreichen. Mit der Zeit wandelten sich diese *kwitl* in eine Art Bittschrift für himmlische Intervention. Als sich der Brauch des Rabbinerbesuchs auch auf den Tod, also auf seine Grabstätte ausweitete, wuchs parallel der Brauch an, die *kwitl* auch am Grab zu hinterlassen: „Das *kwitl* galt als exklusiver Kommunikationskanal, der die absolute Loyalität des Chassiden gegenüber ‚seinem‘ *tzadik* ausdrückte sowie seine Überzeugung, dass nur sein *rebbe* [jiddisch: Rabbiner, häufig im Chassidismus verwendet] ihm helfen konnte“. An dieser Stelle muss betont werden, wie David Assaf auch feststellte, dass es sich beim Hinterlassen dieser *kwitl* um eine ausschließlich chassidische, dazu noch in der Moderne entstandene Praxis handelt und nicht, wie manchmal fälschlicherweise in der Literatur zur jüdischen Trauerkultur dargestellt wird, um eine allgemein orthodoxe oder insgesamt ‚jüdische‘, geschweige denn altüberlieferte Praxis.¹⁹ Der chassidische Brauch des Grabbesuchs besteht heute noch, hat nach der Wende 1989/1990 in den ehemaligen Herkunftsländern des Chassidismus wie der Ukraine sogar erneut stark eingesetzt: Inzwischen pilgern aus der ganzen Welt alljährlich zehntausende Chassidim zu Rosh Hashana nach Uman zum wiederhergestellten Grab des Rabbi Nachman von Brazlaw, einem Nachkommen des Baal Shem Tow, der im Nachhinein als Begründer der chassidischen Bewegung stilisiert wurde.

Im Zuge der massiven Fluchtbewegung galizischer Jüdinnen und Juden während des Ersten Weltkriegs wanderten auch etliche chassidische Gemeinschaften in die österreichische Hauptstadt ein – Anhänger der osteuropäischen ‚Wunderrabbiner‘, von denen Dutzende infolge im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit ihre ‚Höfe‘ betrieben. Viele von ihnen verstarben noch vor der Shoah in Wien und wurden somit am Zentralfriedhof begraben, was das Erscheinen von mehreren chassidischen *ohelim* (Grabhäuschen) erklärt. Diese *ohelim* bilden somit eine zutiefst eigenartige Kuriosität in der Wiener jüdischen Sepulkralkultur, ein Ausdruck einer spezifischen osteuropäisch-jüdischen Subkultur, die in Wien nicht beheimatet war, jedoch im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit ein kurzlebiges Aufblühen erlebte, bevor auch diese in der Shoah weitgehend vernichtet wurde. Heute bilden auch die Wiener Grabhäuschen der im frühen 20. Jahrhundert eingewanderten ‚Wunderrabbiner‘ Pilgerstätten für international anreisende Chassidim sowie vermutlich inzwischen auch für einen breiteren Kreis orthodoxer Jüdinnen und Juden.

An dieser Stelle vertieft sich das Mysterium der Grabbesuche, die während der Shoah am *ohel* des Samuel Frommer an der alten jüdischen Abteilung beim I. Tor des Zentralfriedhofs stattfanden, denn im Vergleich zu vielen der am Zentralfriedhof bestatteten chassidischen Rabbiner ragt sein Name in der Erinnerung nicht heraus. Das wohl prominenteste chassidische *ohel* in Wien, das im neuen jüdischen Friedhof beim IV. Tor liegt, gehört dem bereits vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg nach Wien eingewanderten und 1933 dort verstorbenen ‚Wunderrabbiner‘ Israel von Czortkóv (Tschortkiw, Ukraine), einem Mitbegründer der transnationalen orthodoxen Vereinigung Agudat Israel und Nachfolger eines der bedeutendsten und weitest verzweigten chassidischen Dynastien, die auf den Rabbiner Israel von Ruzhin (Ruschyn, Ukraine) zurückgeht.²⁰ Bei seiner Beerdigung am 3. Dezember 1933 fanden sich tausende schwarz bekleidete orthodoxe Männer in der Leopoldstädter Heinestraße ein, wo sich sein ‚Hof‘ befand – ein beeindruckend selbstbewusstes Bekenntnis im öffen-

¹⁹ Vgl. Assaf, *The Regal Way*, 310, 316–317.

²⁰ Vgl. Jacob Heshel, *The History of Hassidism in Austria*, in: Fraenkel, Josef (Hg.), *The Jews of Austria. Essays on Their Life, History and Destruction*, London 1967, 354, sowie allgemeiner: David Assaf, *Yisra'el of Ruzhin*, in: Gershon Hundert (Hg.), *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Bd. 2, New Haven 2008, 2087–2088.

tlichen Raum der inzwischen so beträchtlich gewachsenen chassidischen Subkultur Wiens in der Zwischenkriegszeit, und ein Bild, wie es der Publizist Joachim Riedl beschrieb, „wie man es heute höchstens aus den chassidischen Vierteln in Brooklyn oder aus Mea Sharim, der Hochburg der Orthodoxie in Jerusalem, zu kennen meint“.²¹ Das *ohel* Israel Friedmanns, wie er mit bürgerlichem Namen hieß, befindet sich inmitten der „Schomre Schabbos Abteilung“, der Abteilung für „Fromme“ (also streng Orthodoxe) am Friedhof beim IV. Tor, in der Gruppe 21, Reihe 16, Grabstelle 30. In dieses *ohel*, in dessen Innenraum sich ein Sessel und Schränke für Gebetbücher befinden, stehen oft brennende Kerzen, was auf ein heute noch regelmäßiges Besuchen des ‚Wunderrabbiners‘ durch seine Anhängerschaft deutet. Auch wurden Betende bei diesem Grabhäuschen in bereits veröffentlichten Fotografien festgehalten.²²

Wer aber war Samuel Frommer? Wieso wurde ausgerechnet sein Grabhäuschen – das so klein ist, dass es fast nicht als *ohel* bezeichnet werden kann – ein solcher Anziehungspunkt für verzweifelte Jüdinnen und Juden, um während der Shoah ihren Ängsten vor Verfolgung Ausdruck zu verleihen? Und wieso haben letztere ihre Bittschriften sozusagen auf Ewigkeit auf die Inschriftentafel selbst eingeschrieben, statt wie eher üblich in Form von papierenen *kwitl* zu hinterlassen? Wer waren überhaupt diese Menschen, die wiederholt auf der Inschriftentafel des Samuel Frommer ihre Namen verewigten? Wenigstens zur letzten Frage gibt es Indizien. In einem (für ihn typisch lakonischen) Eintrag in seinem Tagebuch vom 13. August 1941 schrieb der damals siebzehnjährige Kurt Mezei: „Nach 5 h [Uhr] gehe zu Bäck, wo Auto der Sucher-Partie mit Poldi, Sigi etc.“ – Poldi (Poldy) und Sigi zählen zu den meist genannten Namen, offensichtlich Kosenamen, die im *ohel* des Samuel Frommer erscheinen.²³ Kurt Mezei zählte zu ebenjenen oben erwähnten Jugendlichen, die über die Jahre der Shoah – gerade auch im August 1941 – viel Zeit am Zentralfriedhof verbrachten. Es liegt also nahe, dass sie, oder andere Jugendliche wie sie, die Urheber der handgeschriebenen Bittschriften am Grab des Rabbiners Samuel Frommer waren. Der Name „Franzi“ erinnert zudem an Franziska – Franzi – Danneberg-Löw, eine wohlbekannte Fürsorgerin der Kultusgemeinde, die eine prominente Rolle im jüdischen Gemeindeleben während der Shoah spielte, die allerdings zum Zeitpunkt dieser Schriften (frühestens um 1938) bereits über 20 Jahre alt war.

Doch diese Jugendlichen hielten sich nachweislich meist am Friedhof beim IV. Tor, nicht beim I. Tor auf. Wieso wären sie dann wiederholt zum Grabhäuschen des Samuel Frommer beim I. Tor gepilgert? Zudem war keine dieser Personen – wenn sie tatsächlich für diese Schriften verantwortlich waren – Mitglied der streng orthodoxen chassidischen Gemeinschaft. Ohne weitere Anhaltspunkte liegt es nahe, dass es sich hier um die Aneignung und Abänderung eines erkennbar chassidischen Brauchtums handelt, wodurch sich diese jüdischen Jugendlichen mit der Realität ihrer Verfolgung eben als Juden auseinandersetzten und ihre Todesängste unter diesen Umständen in bewusst religiöser Sprache kundtaten. Die frühesten Hinweise auf ihre Aufenthalte am Zentralfriedhof stammen aus dem Jahr 1940, es ist also durchaus möglich, dass sie sich schon früher am älteren Friedhof beim I. Tor aufhielten und dort, wo es nur ein paar chassidische *ohelim* gibt, fast zufällig auf das Grabhäuschen von Samuel Frommer stießen und eben dort begannen, ihre Ängste nach dem ‚Anschluß‘ kundzutun.

21 Joachim Riedl, *Jüdisches Wien*, Wien 2012, 78. Der Trauerzug ist fotografisch festgehalten auf Seite 79.

22 Werner Hanak (Hg.), *Heute in Wien. Fotografien zur jüdischen Gegenwart* von Harry Weber, Wien 1996, 158.

23 Tagebuch von Kurt Mezei, 3. Heft 13. August 1941–30. November 1941, Jüdisches Museum Wien, 4465.

Dann bleibt aber noch die brennende Frage: Wer war überhaupt Samuel Frommer? Über diesen Rabbiner fand ich bisher schlicht keine Information. Bietet mittlerweile das Internet ein ausgiebiges Reservoir an Informationen, sogar zu wenig bekannten Rabbinern, gerade auch chassidischen, so beispielsweise auf Wikipedia (vor allem, wenn man auf Hebräisch, Jiddisch bzw. Englisch sucht) oder wenigstens über Lebensdaten und Verwandtschaften auf genealogischen Webseiten wie www.geni.com, so findet sich bisher nichts über einen 1911 verstorbenen Samuel/Shmuel Aron/Aharon Frommer. Auch wird er nicht in der ebenfalls recht ausgiebigen Literatur erwähnt, weder zur Geschichte der Jüdinnen und Juden in Wien noch in der spezifischen Literatur zu Rabbinern in Wien bzw. im deutschsprachigen Raum.²⁴ Das deutet darauf hin, dass es sich hier um eine schon zu Lebzeiten recht unbekannte und inzwischen längst vergessene Figur handelt. Vom Totenverzeichnis der Friedhofsverwaltung der Kultusgemeinde wissen wir nur, dass er in der Nickelgasse im 2. Wiener Gemeindebezirk verstorben ist, somit vermutlich dort auch gelebt hat – angesichts der oft synonymhaften Gleichsetzung dieses Bezirks mit dem orthodoxen Milieu des Wiener Judentums kaum eine große Erkenntnis birgt.

Sogar das in Abb. 1 links von Frommers Grab sichtbare Grabhäuschen, das mit dem Stadtnamen „Kobrin“ (Kobryn, Weißrussland) auf der Außenwand bereits einen eindeutigen Verweis auf einer chassidischen Dynastie birgt, gehört einem offensichtlich bekannteren Rabbiner, nämlich, wie die hebräischsprachige Inschrift bekundet:

„der große Rabbiner Aharon Lewi, Sohn des heiligen Rabbiners, unser Lehrer und Rabbiner Noah Naftali, seligen Andenkens, aus Kobrin/Kobryn, Enkel des *admor* [Abkürzung von *adoneinu morenu werawinu*, „unser Herr, Lehrer und Rabbiner“], der *saba kadisha* [sprichwörtlich: „heiliger Großvater“], Rabbiner Moshe, seligen Andenkens, aus Kobrin/Kobryn, gestorben am 16. Cheshwan [5]670 [31. Oktober 1909]“.

Aharon Lewi war der Enkel des bekannten Rabbiners Moshe aus Kobryn, genannt *saba kadisha* (nicht zu verwechseln mit dem sephardischen Rabbiner Schlomo Elieser Alfandari aus Konstantinopel/Istanbul, der auch diese Ehrenbezeichnung trug). Moshe aus Kobryn war wiederum Nachfolger einer Reihe von Rabbinern, die ihre Linie bis auf den 1760 verstorbenen Baal Shem Tow zurückverfolgten. Es stellt sich damit also wieder die Frage: Wieso wurde nicht bei diesem Rabbiner um Fürsprache bei Gott gebeten – geschweige denn bei den vielen bei weitem berühmteren ‚Wunderrabbinern‘, die sonst am Wiener Zentralfriedhof begraben liegen? Auf diese Frage habe ich bisher keine Antwort, nur Vermutungen. Vielleicht werden wir die Antwort auch nie wissen: Es liegt im Wesen von Grabdenkmälern, dass sie wenig sagen und viel mehr verschweigen.

Als ich 2017 online nach Samuel Frommer suchte, erhielt ich lediglich einen relevanten Treffer, und zwar auf dem Blog *In alten und neuen Städten* von einem Philipp Eichhoff, sesshaft in Gdańsk/Danzig, der über nicht mehr und nicht weniger als folgende drei Themen referiert: tschechoslowakische Bahnhöfe, Johannes von Nepomuk und Erkundungen auf Friedhöfen. Wozu dienen diese Beiträge? Als „Anregungen, das, was einen umgibt, wirklich zu sehen“. Der entsprechende Beitrag vom 18. April 2017 heißt „Das Grab des Rabbis Samuel Aron Frommer“ und in den Fotos erkennt man sie sofort: Die Bittschriften von hoffnungslosen Menschen

²⁴ Vgl. z. B.: Peter Landesmann, Rabbiner aus Wien. Ihre Ausbildung, ihre religiösen und nationalen Konflikte, Wien 1997, und Michael Brocke/Julius Carlebach (Hg.), Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner. Teil 2. Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich 1871–1945, München 2009.

nach Einbruch der Naziherrschaft in Österreich.²⁵ Auch der Autor des Blogs beklagt:

„Informationen finden sich darüber wenigstens im Internet keine. Ein unkommentiertes Bild bei Flickr, eine Erwähnung in einem jiddischsprachigen Forum, der Hinweis, daß Samuel Arons Sohn Simon im Jahre 1907 in der türkisch-israelitischen Gemeinde Wiens heiratete, das ist alles. Wer Frommer war, woher er stammte, das läßt sich nicht mehr herausfinden. Dem steht die Verehrung gegenüber, die er laut der Inschriften bei seinen Anhängern genoß. Man kann also nur spekulieren: Er war Oberhaupt einer chassidischen Dynastie, einer derjenigen, die Roth [gemeint ist Joseph Roth] Wunderrabbis nennt. Er stammte aus dem Osten, aus Galizien, der Ukraine oder Litauen, war aber seit vor 1907 in Wien, vermutlich in der jüdisch geprägten Leopoldstadt. Während manche chassidische Dynastien die Vernichtung durch die Deutschen überstanden und in den USA oder Israel weiterbestehen, am bekanntesten wohl die Chabad, bleibt von der des Rabbiner Samuel Aron Frommer offenbar nur dieses Grab. So erzählt es indirekt auch von der Vernichtung.“

Faszinierend an dieser Geschichte, die der Verfasser folgerichtig ausgeführt hat, ist die Tatsache, dass auch er, wie Andrzej Skrzypczak, „durch Zufall“ auf das Grab gestoßen war – und das genau zu der Zeit, wo ich selbst aktiv danach suchte. Eichhoff erläuterte, wie es zu diesem Fund kam:

„Frommers Grab war für mich dadurch auffällig, daß es so groß und zugleich nur hebräisch beschriftet ist. Aber ich war schon kurz davor, wegzugehen, als ich doch noch reingeschaut habe und dann all die Aufschriften auf dem eigentlichen Grabstein entdeckt habe. Es war ein Gefühl, wie es Archäologen haben müssen. Erst konnte ich einfach nicht glauben, daß ich da lese, was Wiener Juden in den Dreißigern geschrieben hatten. Es fühlte sich so völlig unwahrscheinlich, unwirklich an. Nach und nach wurde ich mir bewußt, daß ich da auf einen ganz besonderen Ort gestoßen war. Umso überraschter war ich dann später, daß ich dazu im Internet nichts finden konnte [...]. Offenbar kennt das Grab einfach niemand.“²⁶

Die Identität Samuel Frommers – also wenigstens weitere Eckdaten, Adressen, Verwandtschaften, vielleicht auch Tätigkeiten bzw. Orte dieser – könnten freilich im Archiv der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde ausfindig gemacht werden, vor allem wenn er in irgendeiner Funktion für die Kultusgemeinde tätig war, oder mindestens irgendwelche Subventionen aus der Gemeinde bezogen hatte, was selbst bei kleinen unabhängigen Betrieben oft der Fall war.²⁷ Auch die Identität, wenigstens die vollen Namen, seiner Bittsteller aus der Zeit der Shoah könnten mit etwas Mühe und Geduld anhand der Matrikeln bzw. anderer zeitgenössischen Quellen der Kultusgemeinde eruiert werden. Doch schließlich ist das Mysterium an sich, jedenfalls meiner Meinung nach, interessanter: Wieso haben Jugendliche, die vermutlich nicht Chassiden, vielleicht gar nicht orthodox waren, die Inschriftentafel eines offensichtlich marginalen chassidischen Rabbiners mit Bittschriften übersät? War das eine bewusste Abwandlung eines weit verbreiteten und als solchen erkennbaren chassidischen Brauchs?

25 Philipp Eichhoff, Erkundungen auf Friedhöfen. Das Grab des Rabbiner Samuel Aron Frommer, <https://inalten-undneuenstaedten.wordpress.com/2017/04/18/erkundungen-auf-friedhofen-das-grab-des-rabbiner-samuel-aron-frommer/> (27. Juli 2019).

26 Korrespondenz zwischen Philipp Eichhoff und Tim Corbett vom 23. Juli 2017.

27 Vgl. zu orthodoxen Vereinen im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit Harriet Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918–1938*, Bloomington 1991, insb. 119–121.

In der Tat sind solche ‚Graffiti‘ auf einem Wiener jüdischen Grabstein nicht einzigartig: Vor einigen Jahren veröffentlichte ich einen Artikel über den ursprünglichen, heute noch erhaltenen Grabstein Theodor Herzls am Döblinger Friedhof im 19. Wiener Gemeindebezirk.²⁸ Die Rückseite des Grabes ist übersät mit eingeritzten, zumeist hebräischsprachigen ‚Graffiti‘ von zionistischen Pilgern, die bis in die 1920er-Jahre zurückreichen. So aufregend dieser Fund war, so erklärt sich doch die Anziehungskraft dieses Grabsteins durch die herausragende Prominenz Theodor Herzls als Gründungsvater der zionistischen Bewegung. Auch da muss ich übrigens anmerken, dass ich nicht von alleine auf diese ‚Graffiti‘ gekommen bin: Nach einem Quellenseminar 2015 am Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien (VWI), in dem ich das Rätsel unter Anderem bezüglich des bis heute unbekanntes Architekten dieses prominenten Grabdenkmals diskutierte, hatte Béla Rásky bei einem zufälligen Besuch am Döblinger Friedhof den Geistesblitz, einen Blick in den dunklen Spalt zwischen dem Grabstein und den Friedhofszaun zu werfen – einen Architektennamen fand er dort nicht, wohl aber die ‚Graffiti‘, die die Instandsetzungswut der Friedhöfe Wien GmbH oder der Kultusgemeinde überlebt hatten, da, wie sich in darauffolgenden Recherchen herausstellte, ähnliche ‚Graffiti‘ auf der Vorderseite bei Instandsetzungsarbeiten Jahre zuvor ‚vernichtet‘ wurden.

Das Bindeglied dieser Geschichten ist jedenfalls das reiche Erkenntnispotenzial, das in einzelnen Grabsteinen sowie insgesamt in den erhaltenen jüdischen Friedhöfen Wiens verborgen ist. So bildet das Grabhäuschen des 1911 verstorbenen Rabbiner Samuel Frommer ein einzigartiges Holocaustdenkmal in Wien – ein Denkmal, das erstaunlicherweise über so viele Jahrzehnte frei zugänglich in der Öffentlichkeit stand und dennoch verborgen und unbeachtet blieb, selbst in den inzwischen vielzähligen historischen Studien, die zu den Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfen sowie zur Geschichte der Shoah verfasst wurden. Bisher wurde es nur von einem deutschen Journalisten, einem polnischen Priester und einem deutschen Blogger bemerkt, von denen keiner direkt etwas mit den Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfen zu tun hatte.²⁹ Dieser seltsame Fall, sowie dessen Nichtbeachtung durch mehrere Generationen Wiener HistorikerInnen, erinnert mich an ein Zitat von Friedrich Schiller, das mein Doktorvater Thomas Rohkrämer gerne und öfters zitierte, wenn wir uns über urbane Erinnerungsorte unterhielten: „Leicht beieinander wohnen die Gedanken, doch hart im Raume stoßen sich die Sachen.“

Es war in diesem Beitrag meine Absicht, dieses einzigartige, faszinierende und doch bisher unbeachtete Wiener Holocaustdenkmal einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit vorzustellen. Es lohnt sich, dem alten jüdischen Friedhof beim I. Tor am Zentralfriedhof einen Besuch abzustatten: So könnte man auch gleich für einen Moment bei Rabbiner Samuel Frommer eintreten und sich diese verzweifelten Hilferufe unter die Haut gehen lassen. Vielleicht sollte man versuchen diesen Grabstein dauerhaft zu erhalten – das geht aber leider über meine Möglichkeiten als Historiker hinaus, ich kann nur davon berichten. Doch habe ich hier wenigstens versucht, diese eigentümliche ‚Quelle‘ kulturhistorisch zu dokumentieren. Dadurch möchte ich auch die Aufmerksamkeit der Wissenschaft auf historische Friedhöfe und Grabsteine lenken, die ein reiches, aber bis dato weitgehend unbeachtetes Archiv von persönlichen, ge-

28 Tim Corbett, „Was ich den Juden war, wird eine kommende Zeit besser beurteilen ...“. Myth and Memory at Theodor Herzl's Original Gravesite in Vienna, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 3 (2016) 1.

29 Beim Schreiben dieses Essays fiel mir übrigens auf, dass ganz zum Schluss der entsprechenden Szene von „Hitlers Helfer“, als das Bild schon in Dunkelheit verschwimmt, das Grabhäuschen links im Hintergrund zu sehen ist. Ohne die Vorkenntnis, wo und was das ist, wäre dies keine Hilfe bei der Suche nach den Bittschriften.

meinschaftlichen und soziokulturellen Geschichten im öffentlichen Raum sind. Es ist das Los der allermeisten Verstorbenen, bald aus der Geschichtserinnerung zu verschwinden – eine Tatsache, die durch einen Genozid, wie es an der Wiener jüdischen Bevölkerung während der Shoah verübt wurde, nochmal zutiefst verschärft wird. Grabsteine bilden somit wertvolle kulturelle und sozialhistorische Quellen, deren Erforschung allerdings oft so viele Fragen aufwirft, wie sie Einsichten bietet. Bilden die jüdischen Friedhöfe Wiens als urbane und jüdisch-gemeinschaftliche Räume längst Objekte regen wissenschaftlichen sowie öffentlichen Interesses, so wurden ihre hunderttausend Grabsteine bis dato noch nie kultur- und sozialhistorisch bewertet. Wie das Grabhäuschen des Samuel Frommer zeigt, gibt es hier noch unzählige Geschichten, die an diesen stillen, baumumringten Orten auf Entdeckung warten.³⁰

³⁰ Ich danke Susanne Korbelt und Marianne Windsperger für ihre hilfreichen Kommentare zum Inhalt sowie ihre sprachlichen Anmerkungen zum Text.

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Quotation: Tim Corbett, „Helf uns lieber Gott ...“. Zur Entdeckung eines einzigartigen
Holocaustdenkmals am Wiener Zentralfriedhof, in S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods.
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Essay

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Marianne Windsperger

Johannes-Dieter Steinert

Von der Gstättn nach Auschwitz

Jüdische Kinderzwangsarbeiter 1938–1945

Abstract

This article is based on a research project that evaluated – alongside contemporary documents – over 500 autobiographical testimonies in which survivors of the Holocaust reported on their time under German occupation, on ghettos and camps, on the fates of their families, and on forced labour. Jewish children were forced to work in all sectors of industry, mining, and agriculture. They worked in the ghettos, in the concentration and extermination camps, and in the construction of motorways and railways, defensive fortifications, barracks, and airstrips. On the basis of a sample, the article traces an arc from the forced labour performed by Jewish children in the Viennese dump in 1938 to the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz. In summary, the article focuses on the attempts made in the personal testimonies to explain one's own survival and the lifelong consequences of forced labour in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Am 27. Jänner 2020 jährt sich zum 75. Mal die Befreiung von Auschwitz durch die Rote Armee, bei der sowjetische Soldaten auf rund 7.500 jüdische und nicht-jüdische Überlebende stießen. Die meisten von ihnen waren krank und am Ende ihrer Kräfte; 650 von ihnen hatten das 16. Lebensjahr noch nicht erreicht. Der im November 1928 in Rom geborene Piero Terracina gehörte zu der kleinen Gruppe jüdischer Kinderzwangsarbeiter, die an diesem Tag in Auschwitz befreit wurden. Er war im Mai 1944 zusammen mit seinen Brüdern nach Birkenau deportiert worden, wo er zunächst mithelfen musste, Abflusskanäle zu bauen und in der Umgebung Sümpfe trocken zu legen, ehe er in einen Zerlegebetrieb kam, wo er Blechteile von abgestürzten Flugzeugen trennte. Wenige Tage vor der Befreiung wurde er auf den Todesmarsch geschickt, doch glücklicherweise legte seine Gruppe nur den Weg von Birkenau in das Stamm lager zurück. Als er dort ankam, hatten die SS-Wachmannschaften das Lager bereits verlassen. Die Wachen seiner Marschgruppe flohen nun ebenfalls. Auf sich allein gestellt und umgeben von Leichen, ernährten sich die geschwächten und zum Teil totkranken Häftlinge von allem, was sie fanden (darunter getrocknete Bohnen, Knoblauch und Dosentomaten). Sie schmolzen Schnee, um den Durst zu löschen und die Verletzungen zu kühlen, während der Schlachtenlärm näher rückte. Am 27. Januar 1945, als Piero wieder einmal Schnee holen wollte und die Tür aufmachte, sah er den ersten sowjetischen Soldaten, ganz in Weiß gekleidet, der sofort seine Waffe zog, aber schnell genug die Situation erkannte.

Piero erinnerte sich, dass in diesem Moment kein Jubel unter den Gefangenen ausbrach. Es herrschte vielmehr „totale Gleichgültigkeit“; niemand war „fähig, sich noch über irgendwas zu freuen“, erst später hat manch einer „angefangen zu weinen“. Bei seiner Befreiung wog Piero nur noch 38 Kilogramm. Die sowjetischen Soldaten gaben den Überlebenden zu essen, wobei etliche an der ungewohnt reichhaltigen Kost starben. Bevor er selbst von nachrückenden sowjetischen Einheiten ins Krankenhaus gebracht wurde, musste er mithelfen, Leichen in einen Kellerraum zu schaffen: „Die Körper waren auf dem Gelände und sie waren auch in den Baracken. Diese

traurige Arbeit, die Körper aus dem Lager bringen, das mussten wir machen. [...] Wie kann man so was vergessen? Das ... das ist meine ... meine Geschichte gewesen, dann fing eine andere an ... Es fing eine andere an und ich wurde von den ... von den Russen ins Krankenhaus gebracht. Ich bin behandelt worden, die Rückkehr, ich habe fast ein Jahr für meine Rückkehr nach Hause gebraucht. Aber das war eine vollkommen andere Geschichte. Heute sagt man: ‚Na ja, es ist passiert, aber das Leben geht weiter.‘ Nein. [---] [Schmerzerfüllte Stimme] Das Leben hört auf. Dann fängt es wieder an ... ein neues Leben fängt an, es ist nicht mehr dasselbe. Ein anderes Leben, das auch ... auch glücklich sein kann. Aber es ist ein anderes Leben ... ein anderes ... ein anderes Leben, das ein jeder von uns dadurch lebt, dass er den ganzen Schmerz aus dem vorherigen mitnimmt. Ich denke, dass ich fertig bin.“ Mit dieser Bemerkung beendete Piero seinen Bericht über Auschwitz.¹

Die genaue Zahl der Überlebenden des Holocaust steht bis heute nicht fest. Folgt man den vom Historiker Dan Stone aus der Literatur zusammengetragenen Schätzungen, so befanden sich unter den befreiten Gefangenen der Konzentrationslager etwa 90.000 Juden, von denen zwischen 20.000 und 30.000 kurz darauf starben. Hinzu kamen ungefähr 90.000 Juden, die in Zwangsarbeitslagern, Verstecken und bei den Partisanen überlebt hatten, sowie 250.000, die während des Krieges in die Sowjetunion geflohen waren.² In Europa überlebten – einer Schätzung aus dem Juni 1945 folgend – lediglich 150.000 jüdische Kinder außerhalb der Sowjetunion den Genozid, während etwa 1,5 Millionen ermordet worden waren.³

Die Überlebenden tragen bis heute innere und äußere Wunden, Narben und Behinderungen, die sie in dieser Zeit stammen. Sie waren dem Tod entkommen, hatten Eltern, Familienangehörige, Verwandte und Freunde verloren sowie oftmals jegliches Vertrauen in die Erwachsenen. Über Monate und Jahre hatten Zwangsarbeit, Hunger, Durst und Erniedrigungen ihren Alltag geprägt. Etliche wurden sexuell missbraucht, einige mussten Zwangssterilisation und pseudomedizinische Versuche über sich ergehen lassen. In den Lagern und Ghettos besaßen, von Ausnahmen abgesehen, lediglich Kinder, die von den Deutschen als Arbeitskräfte benötigt wurden, eine Chance zu überleben.

Der Aufsatz basiert auf einem über zehnjährigen Forschungsprojekt über *Jüdische Kinderzwangsarbeiter, 1938–1945*, das von zahlreichen Institutionen in großzügiger Weise finanziell unterstützt wurde. Die Ergebnisse wurden 2018 in einer Monographie veröffentlicht.⁴ Das Forschungsinteresse richtete sich vor allem auf die von Kindern gemachten Erfahrungen und ihre Erinnerungen an Krieg, Gewalt, Trennung und nicht zuletzt an den Holocaust. Von speziellem Interesse waren die Erinnerungen an die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen in und außerhalb der Ghettos und Lager, an die Kontakte zur deutschen Bevölkerung und zu anderen Zwangsarbeitern, an Missbrauch sowie an Formen der Verweigerung und des aktiven wie passiven Widerstandes. Zur historischen Einordnung der individuellen Erfahrungen war es notwendig, die politischen, wirtschaftlichen und ideologischen Hintergründe und Faktoren, die zu einer Zwangsverpflichtung von Kindern als Arbeitskräfte ge-

1 Forced Labor 1939–1945. Memory and History. Stiftung „Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft“, Fern-Universität in Hagen, Deutsches Historisches Museum. <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/en/index.html> (fortan Forced Labour), ZA127, Interview Piero Terracina.

2 Dan Stone, *The Liberation of the Camps. The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, New Haven/London 2015, 19.

3 Leon Shapiro, *Jewish Children in Liberated Europe. Their Needs and the J.D.C. Child Care Work*, New York 1946, 1.

4 Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit. Erinnerungen jüdischer Kinder 1938–1945*, Essen 2018.

führt haben, in die Untersuchung einzubeziehen. Von besonderem Interesse waren dabei die Interdependenzen zwischen Kinderzwangsarbeit, Besatzungspolitik und Holocaust sowie die Beteiligung militärischer und ziviler Stellen an Zwangsarbeit, Massenmord und Genozid.

Jüdische Kinder mussten in allen Bereichen der Industrie, im Bergbau und in der Landwirtschaft arbeiten. Sie arbeiteten in den Ghettos, in den Konzentrations- und Mordlagern sowie beim Bau von Autobahnen und Eisenbahnstrecken. Daneben zwangen Wehrmacht und SS jüdische Kinder zum Bau von Verteidigungsanlagen, Kasernen und Flugplätzen. Die genaue Zahl der jüdischen Kinderzwangsarbeiter ist nicht bekannt; Statistiken darüber gibt es nicht und hat es nie gegeben. Alle Schätzungen hängen davon ab, wie *Zwangsarbeit* definiert wird, und bis zu welchem Alter eine Person als Kind angesehen wird, wobei die Altersangaben in der Literatur zwischen zwölf und 18 Jahren variieren. Die Untersuchung verwendet den Begriff *Zwangsarbeit*, wie ihn die Internationale Arbeitsorganisation in ihrem *Übereinkommen über Zwangs- und Pflichtarbeit* aus dem Jahre 1930 festgelegt hat: „Als ‚Zwangs- oder Pflichtarbeit‘ im Sinne dieses Übereinkommens gilt jede Art von Arbeit oder Dienstleistung, die von einer Person unter Androhung irgendeiner Strafe verlangt wird und für die sie sich nicht freiwillig zur Verfügung gestellt hat.“⁵ Konstituierend für Zwangsarbeit sind mithin Strafandrohung und Unfreiwilligkeit. Als *Kinderzwangsarbeiter* im Sinne dieser Definition werden schließlich Personen angesehen, die bei Antritt ihrer Arbeit das 18. Lebensjahr noch nicht vollendet hatten. Damit folgt die Studie der international anerkannten Altersbegrenzung für Kinder, wie sie in der *Convention on the Rights of the Child* der Vereinten Nationen von 1989 niedergelegt wurde (Art. 1).

In seiner 2001 veröffentlichten Studie *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz* bezifferte Mark Spoerer „die Gesamtzahl der 1939 bis 1945 im Großdeutschen Reich eingesetzten ausländischen Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangenen und Häftlinge“ auf mehr als 13,5 Millionen, darunter 1,7 Millionen KZ-Häftlinge und „Arbeitsjuden“.⁶ Von diesen 1,7 Millionen gehörten 622.500 den Geburtsjahrgängen 1923 bis 1932 an. Obwohl Angaben über den exakten Anteil jüdischer Arbeitskräfte an der Gesamtzahl fehlen, spricht Spoerer von einem auffallend hohen Anteil „der (meist jüdischen) zwölf- bis 16-jährigen Jugendlichen [...], die über den Arbeitseinsatz der Ermordung im KZ vorläufig entkommen konnten“.⁷ Hinzuzurechnen sind darüber hinaus beispielsweise die jüdischen Arbeitskräfte in den Ghettos sowie Juden, die ab 1938 in Deutschland und mit Kriegsbeginn in den besetzten Gebieten außerhalb von Lagern zur Arbeit verpflichtet wurden und in keiner Statistik verzeichnet sind. Diese zwischen 1938 und 1941 von Kindern wie Erwachsenen außerhalb der Lager und Ghettos geleistete Arbeit wird in der vorliegenden Untersuchung als *Zwangsarbeit* angesehen, da unter den Bedingungen von antijüdischer Politik, Krieg und Besatzungspolitik nicht von Freiwilligkeit gesprochen werden kann, auch wenn die Arbeit entlohnt wurde, und etliche Kinder in ihren Selbstzeugnissen betonten, dass sie als Ersatz für ein Familienmitglied oder ein Gemeindemitglied zur Arbeit gegangen waren. Unter Zugrundelegung dieser Erwägungen und Definitionen dürfte die Zahl der jüdischen Kinderzwangsarbeiter mindestens eine Million betragen haben.

5 Internationale Arbeitsorganisation, *Übereinkommen über Zwangs- oder Pflichtarbeit* (Übereinkommen 29), 1930, Art. 2, Abs. 1.

6 Mark Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz. Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945*, München 2001, 222 f.

7 Ebd., 224.

Trotz dieses beträchtlichen quantitativen Ausmaßes ist festzustellen, dass die Zwangsarbeit von Juden im allgemeinen und von jüdischen Kindern im Besonderen immer noch zu den international relativ wenig erforschten Gebieten gehören. Dies hat sicherlich damit zu tun, dass bis 1944 jüdische Zwangsarbeit überwiegend ein Phänomen in den besetzten osteuropäischen Gebieten darstellte, während sich die Forschung vor allem auf die nach Deutschland deportierten nichtjüdischen Zwangsarbeiter konzentriert hat. Ferner ist auf den Verlust zeitgenössischer Dokumente in großem Umfang hinzuweisen sowie auf die Resistenz traditionell arbeitender Historiker, die Lücken mit Selbstzeugnissen zu schließen. Hinzu kam, wie der Historiker Wolf Gruner in seinem 2006 veröffentlichten Standardwerk *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis* betonte, dass lange Zeit Zwangsarbeit nicht als ein wichtiger und damit erforschungswerter Faktor in der antijüdischen Politik angesehen wurde. Sie galt vielmehr lediglich als eine der Ermordung vorangehende zeitlich befristete Erscheinung.⁸ Vier Jahre später demonstrierte Christopher Browning in seiner Studie über das Zwangsarbeitslager Starachowice eindrucksvoll, dass die Analyse von Selbstzeugnissen zu neuen Ergebnissen in der Erforschung jüdischer Zwangsarbeit führen kann.⁹ Selbstzeugnisse bieten zudem einen Blick auf eine Geschichte, der mit zeitgenössischen Dokumenten nicht erreicht werden kann, indem sie sich auf die Erinnerungen der überlebenden Opfer konzentrieren und nicht auf die von den Tätern verfassten Dokumente.

Der Aufsatz wird fünf Aspekte der komplexen Untersuchung skizzieren. Nach einigen methodischen Bemerkungen folgt ein allgemeiner Überblick über die Forschungsergebnisse sowie eine Betrachtung zu Antisemitismus und Zwangsarbeit in Wien. Den Abschluss bilden Skizzen zu Zwangsarbeit in direkter Nähe zum Holocaust sowie zur Resilienz von Kinderzwangsarbeitern.

Methodische Bemerkungen

In seiner 2013 in deutscher Übersetzung erschienenen Untersuchung *Der Tod des Shtetls* betonte Yehuda Bauer bereits in der ersten Zeile seines Vorworts, dass sein Buch „aus der Perspektive der Opfer geschrieben“ wurde und sowohl historische Analysen als auch „Zeugenberichte“ beinhalte.¹⁰ Für Bauer gehört beides zu den Aufgaben des Historikers und doch ist es nicht das Arbeiten mit Selbstzeugnissen, was seine Publikation vor allem auszeichnet. Diese steht vielmehr in der Tradition einer Richtung israelischer Holocaust-Forschung, in der es nicht um den meist vorherrschenden Täter-Zentrismus, sondern um eine systematische Rekonstruktion jüdischen Lebens unter deutscher Besatzung geht.¹¹ Wie die meisten Historiker, die Selbstzeugnisse unterschiedlichen Alters als Quellen für ihre Analysen heranziehen, ging Bauer auf die erwartete Kritik traditionell, d. h. ausschließlich auf der Basis zeitgenössischer Dokumente und zeitgenössischer Selbstzeugnisse arbeitender Kollegen ein, die, wenn auch nicht „überzeugend“, stets die Zuverlässigkeit von Erinnerungen bezweifelten und vor „bewusster Verzerrung oder Schlimmerem“ warnten.¹²

8 Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944*, Cambridge 2006, X.

9 Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival. Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, New York/London 2010.

10 Yehuda Bauer, *Der Tod des Shtetls*, Berlin 2013, 7.

11 Amos Goldberg, *Forum. On Saul Friedländer's The Years of Extermination. 2. The Victims' Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History*, in: *History and Theory* 3, 48, 2009, 220–237.

12 Bauer, *Der Tod des Shtetls*, 34.

Jeder, der mit deutschen Dokumenten dieser Zeit gearbeitet hat, weiß jedoch um deren Unzuverlässigkeit, stellte Bauer fest, der in diesem Zusammenhang beispielhaft auf die Unterschiede zwischen dem Protokoll der Wannseekonferenz und den späteren Aussagen Eichmanns in Jerusalem hinwies.¹³ Andererseits, so Bauer, können aber auch Erinnerungen trügen, was erfordert, sie quellenkritisch mit anderen schriftlichen oder mündlichen Aussagen zu vergleichen.¹⁴

„Zachor!“, die Aufforderung an die jüdische Gemeinschaft, sich zu erinnern und zu gedenken, bildet, wie die Historikerin Susanne Urban betont hat, eine zentrale Kategorie im Judentum. Urban ist sicherlich recht zu geben, dass sich daraus „die heute so herausragende Rolle der Augenzeugenberichte für die jüdische Erinnerung als wesentliches Dokumentationsmedium des Holocaust“ erklärt.¹⁵ Bis in die 1960er-Jahre hinein kann jedoch – von den ersten Nachkriegsjahren abgesehen, die eine relativ große Zahl von Selbstzeugnissen hervorbrachten und in denen die Jüdischen Historischen Kommissionen Tausende von Interviews mit Überlebenden des Holocaust durchführten – von den „years of silencing“ bzw. der „conspiracy of silence“ gesprochen werden, die erst im Laufe der 1960er-Jahre im zeitlichen Umfeld des Eichmann-Prozesses zu Ende gingen.¹⁶

Die 1929 im damals tschechoslowakischen, heute ukrainischen Klyucharki, geborene Fritzie Weiss Fritzshall, die nach dem Krieg in die USA auswanderte, berichtete in diesem Zusammenhang davon, dass sie über Jahre ihre Erinnerungen verborgen hielt, weil sie als ganz normaler Teenager leben wollte, bis ihr Sohn sie ‚zwang‘, darüber zu sprechen: „And this is when the memories started to fall back into place. This is when I went back into the camp, and started to relive all of this. The reason I’m telling you this is because many things are blocked out in my mind. One of the things is, crossing the threshold from the train station into the camp itself.“¹⁷ Bemerkungen über traumatisch bedingte Erinnerungslücken sind insbesondere in Selbstzeugnissen von Kindern häufig anzutreffen. Fritzie war nicht die einzige, die sich nicht daran erinnerte, wie sie vom Zug ins Lager gekommen war. Die Historikerin Joanna Michlic spricht in diesem Zusammenhang vom „lack of precise references to time, space and social actors“.¹⁸

Der Grad der Traumatisierung hing jedoch letztlich von den konkreten Umständen, der Persönlichkeit und dem Alter der Kinder ab. Dem amerikanischen Psychiater Jon A. Shaw folgend, sind Kinder im Vorschulalter weniger gefährdet, posttraumatische Stresssymptome aufzuweisen, als ältere Kinder, solange sie ihre Eltern besitzen und diese in geeigneter Weise auf traumatische Situationen reagieren. Demgegenüber besitzen Schulkinder ein höheres kognitives Wissen – auch über die Gefahren von körperlichen Verletzungen und Tod.¹⁹ Während die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen in den Lagern für alle Häftlinge grundsätzlich gleich waren, gehen einige Psychologen davon aus, dass Teenager und junge Erwachsene weniger unter Traumatisierungen litten und sich nach Kriegsende schneller davon erholten als ältere

13 Ebd., 35 f.

14 Ebd., 36.

15 Susanne Urban, Koordinaten jüdischer Erinnerung. Jüdische Zwangsarbeiter und Juden mit falschen Papieren im Volkswagenwerk, in: Überleben in Angst. Vier Juden berichten über ihre Zeit im Volkswagenwerk in den Jahren 1943 bis 1945, Wolfsburg 2005, 6-18, hier 11.

16 Henry Greenspan, On Listening to Holocaust Survivors. Beyond Testimony, St. Paul/Minnesota 2010, 48 f.

17 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington DC (fortan USHMM), RG-50.030*0075, Interview Fritzie Weiss Fritzshall.

18 Joanna Michlic, Jewish Children in Nazi-occupied Poland. Survival and Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust as reflected in Early Postwar Recollections, Jerusalem 2008, 15 f.

19 Jon A. Shaw, Children, Adolescents and Trauma, in: Psychiatric Quarterly, 71, 2000, 227-243, 230.

re Gefangene.²⁰ Erklärt wird die höhere Resilienz jüngerer Menschen unter anderem damit, dass sie sich rascher an die Realität von Lager und Zwangsarbeit anpassen, sich sogar „beweisen“ und als „vorbildliche Arbeiter“ präsentieren konnten. Hingegen litten sie im allgemeinen stärker unter dem Verlust von Angehörigen.²¹

„Kinder erlebten die Lager nicht nur anders, sondern sie erinnern sie anders“, stellte 1999 die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Andrea Reiter fest, wobei sie den Blick von Kindern als „naiv, aber genau“ charakterisierte.²² Ähnlich argumentierten Barbara Bauer und Waltraud Strickhausen in der Einleitung ihres Sammelbandes *Für ein Kind war das anders*: „Kinder erleben anders, sie haben noch kein Deutungssystem, in das sie das Erlebte einordnen können, sondern erarbeiten es sich erst. Sie bewahren das, was sie beeindruckt, erstaunt, erfreut oder bekümmert, anders im Gedächtnis auf. Grausame Szenen prägen sich ihnen nachhaltiger ein als Erwachsenen.“²³ Andererseits wurde aber die Erfahrung von Freundlichkeit und Hilfe von jüngeren Menschen intensiver interpretiert als von älteren.²⁴

Forschungsergebnisse

Bei der Analyse der Selbstzeugnisse wurde deutlich, dass nur relativ wenige ehemalige Kinderzangsarbeiter die erzwungene Arbeit in den Mittelpunkt ihrer Erzählungen gerückt haben.²⁵ Dies hat sicherlich mit dem Kontext zu tun, in dem die Selbstzeugnisse entstanden sind, bei denen es sich überwiegend um Interviews zum Holocaust handelte. Zentrale Themen bildeten die Erinnerungen an die Familie, das eigene Überleben sowie die Allgegenwärtigkeit des Todes.

Etliche Interviewpartner reflektierten über die Schwierigkeiten bzw. Unmöglichkeit, das Erlebte adäquat in Worte zu fassen und verständlich zu machen. Als Beispiel diene wiederholt die Erfahrung des Hungers, was mitunter zum Anlass genommen wurde, über zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen und Diebstähle in den Lagern zu reflektieren. Relativ breiten Raum nahmen zudem Schilderungen der hygienischen Bedingungen in den Ghettos und Lagern ein, sowie der unzureichenden Kleidung, die kaum gegen Regen und Kälte schützte und die nur selten gewaschen werden konnte, so dass sich Krankheiten ausbreiteten.

Die Arbeit überstieg oftmals die physische und psychische Leistungsfähigkeit der Kinder, was von deutscher Seite beabsichtigt war. Das dadurch bewirkte Leiden stand jedoch keineswegs immer im Mittelpunkt der Schilderungen. Es wurde – wie auch Details der Arbeiten selbst – oft nur relativ kurz angedeutet. Einige Überlebende verzichteten vollständig darauf, über Emotionen zu berichten, wenn sie sich an ihre Zwangsarbeit erinnerten. Die Kürze der Bemerkungen mag damit zu tun haben, dass Details von Arbeitsprozessen als weniger erzählenswert betrachtet wurden als beispielsweise das Schicksal von Familienangehörigen. Wichtig dürfte auch gewesen

20 Shamaï Davidson, *Holding on to Humanity. The Message of Holocaust Survivors*. New York 1992, 145 f.

21 Sara Ghitis/Ruth Weinberger, *Jüdische Sklavenarbeit. Lebensgeschichten aus den USA*, in: Alexander von Plato/Almut Leh/Christoph Thonfeld (Hg.), *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich*, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2008, 324–335, hier 332–334.

22 Andrea Reiter, *Die Funktion der Kinderperspektive in der Darstellung des Holocaust*, in: Barbara Bauer/Waltraud Strickhausen (Hg.), *„Für ein Kind war das anders.“ Traumatische Erfahrungen jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Berlin 1999, 215–229, hier 216 f.

23 Barbara Bauer/Waltraud Strickhausen (Hg.), *„Für ein Kind war das anders.“ Traumatische Erfahrungen jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Berlin 1999, 15.

24 Sara Ghitis/Ruth Weinberger, *Jüdische Sklavenarbeit*, 334.

25 Zum folgenden: Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit. Erinnerungen jüdischer Kinder 1938–1945*, Essen 2018, 394–398.

sein, dass Zwangsarbeit lediglich als einer von vielen Faktoren betrachtet wurde, die zum Überleben beigetragen haben. Ferner erschien es etlichen Interviewpartnern wichtiger, über Zwangsarbeit im Zusammenhang mit körperlichen Misshandlungen, ungeeigneter Bekleidung, mangelndem Schutz vor Verletzungen und giftigen Substanzen zu sprechen. Die Folgen reichten von Blasen an den Händen bis hin zu Verätzungen der Lungen und anderen lebenslangen Schäden. Wie in den Selbstzeugnissen nichtjüdischer Kinderzwangsarbeiter fanden sich mitunter Erinnerungen an die Nachtschichten, ihre Vor- und Nachteile, an bestialische und tolerante Vorarbeiter und Meister, an die eigenen Schliche, um nachts oder tagsüber doch noch etwas schlafen zu können.

Ferner reflektierten ehemalige Kinderzwangsarbeiter über lagerinterne Arbeiten und ihre mitunter als überlebenswichtig erachtete Funktion. Sie gelangten zu diesen Positionen, für die oftmals Alter und Geschlecht ausschlaggebend waren, durch Vermittlung von Erwachsenen sowie durch eigene Initiative. Innerhalb der Lager waren Kinder meist besser vor der Witterung geschützt; ihnen blieben die mitunter langen Märsche zu den Arbeitsstellen erspart; es war leichter, zusätzliche Lebensmittel und Kleidung zu erhalten und mit Familienangehörigen oder Verwandten in anderen Teilen des Lagers Kontakt zu halten. Begehrt waren Hilfsdienste in den Küchen und beim Transport von Essen, die Rollwagenkommandos sowie die Positionen der Läufer.

Überleben auf Zeit oder auf Dauer war oftmals reine Glückssache, doch versuchten Kinder ihr Aussehen, ihr Alter und ihre Identität zu verändern. Oftmals wurden sie dabei von ihren Eltern bzw. von anderen Erwachsenen unterstützt, wobei manchen die Details ihrer Rettung unbekannt geblieben sind. So konnten Geburtsurkunden und Eintragungen in die Lagerkartei geändert und falsche Altersangaben gemacht werden, was etlichen nach Ankunft in Auschwitz oder anderen Lagern das Leben rettete. Einige Kinder agierten in dieser Beziehung selbstständig, andere auf Anraten von Erwachsenen oder von Häftlingen an den Rampen, die unter eigener Lebensgefahr dazu rieten, ein bestimmtes Alter oder einen bestimmten Beruf anzugeben. Kleidung und Frisur halfen, älter auszusehen. Steine in den Schuhen ließen Kinder größer erscheinen. Manche Eltern versuchten, ihre Kinder zwischen kleinkwüchsigen Erwachsenen zu postieren oder ihnen in die Wangen zu kneifen, um die Gesichter nicht so bleich aussehen zu lassen. Daneben gibt es Berichte, dass sich – je nach Kontext – Jungen Mädchenkleidung anzogen und Mädchen Jungenkleidung. Im einigen Fällen gelang das Leugnen der eigenen Identität. Bekannt ist der *Hitlerjunge Salomon*; aber darüber hinaus hat es eine unbekannt Zahl jüdischer Kinder wie Erwachsener geschafft, sich einem Zwangsarbeitertransport nach Deutschland anzuschließen und auf Dauer in einer mitunter antisemitisch eingestellten Gruppe nichtjüdischer Zwangsarbeiter zu überleben. Dies war für Mädchen einfacher als für Jungen, die die Gemeinschaftsduschen in den Unterkünften fürchteten.

Trotz einer Vielzahl eigener Initiativen kann die Bedeutung von Erwachsenen insbesondere für das Überleben jüngerer Kinder nicht überschätzt werden. Der Verlust von Eltern oder anderer Familienangehörigen ließ etliche Kinder schutzlos in den Lagern zurück. Einige wurden apathisch, mutierten innerhalb kurzer Zeit zu *Muselmännern* und erholten sich erst wieder, nachdem eine andere Bezugsperson gefunden worden war. Überleben ohne Bezugspersonen war kaum möglich, so dass in den Selbstzeugnissen immer wieder die hohe Bedeutung von individuellen und Gruppenbeziehungen betont wird. Solidarisches Handeln half beim Überleben; vor einer Legendenbildung haben Historiker jedoch bereits seit Jahren gewarnt. Nicht so häufig berichteten Kinder von ihren negativen Erfahrungen mit anderen Häftlingen, von Diebstählen untereinander, um am Leben zu bleiben.

Spannungen entstanden, wenn sich jüdische Mithäftlinge und Funktionshäftlinge brutal verhielten, aber auch, wenn Gruppen unterschiedlicher Herkunft und Sprache in den Lagern aufeinandertrafen. In den Ghettos Osteuropas bildeten Juden aus Westeuropa die unterste Schicht der Bevölkerung, da sie weder Polnisch noch Jiddisch sprachen bzw. verstanden und somit kaum mit der Mehrheit kommunizieren konnten. Ab 1944 waren es vor allem Juden aus Ungarn, die in den Lagern von polnischen Juden argwöhnisch betrachtet und mitunter diskriminiert wurden.

In den Lagern wurden Kinder Opfer alltäglicher Gewalt und eines von deutscher Seite geförderten Antisemitismus, der sich häufig in gewaltsamen Handlungen niederschlug. Die ausgewerteten Selbstzeugnisse boten eine Fülle von Informationen über beobachtete und selbst erlittene Gewalt, einschließlich Prügel bis zur Bewusstlosigkeit sowie hetero- und homosexuellen Missbrauchs von Jungen und Mädchen durch erwachsene Juden und Nichtjuden beiderlei Geschlechts. Positiv wurden zumeist Begegnungen mit Kriegsgefangenen geschildert, mitunter auch mit polnischen und deutschen älteren Vorarbeitern und Meistern. An Reflexionen über Erniedrigungen und Verzweiflung mangelt es in den Selbstzeugnissen nicht. Insbesondere Mädchen erlebten und erinnerten ihre erzwungene, öffentliche Nacktheit, die Leibesvisitationen und Entlausungen sowie den Verlust der Haare als beschämend. Hinzu kam die Kennzeichnung sowie die Degradierung zu einer rechtlosen Nummer. Jedoch wurde auch deutlich, dass nach der Befreiung kaum über sexuelle und sexualisierte Gewalt gesprochen und diese Formen des Missbrauchs häufig erst nach Jahrzehnten verbalisiert wurden.

Mit einem gewissen Stolz wurde hingegen meistens über Verweigerung und Sabotage berichtet, wenn es beispielsweise gelungen war, eine Maschine zu manipulieren. Einige Kinder nahmen an den Aufständen und am Widerstand teil und schmuggelten Waffen und Sprengstoff in Ghettos und Lager.

Antisemitismus und Zwangsarbeit in Wien

Offener Antisemitismus äußerte sich in Wien direkt nach dem Einmarsch deutscher Truppen in den *Reibpartien*, bei denen die jüdische Bevölkerung gezwungen wurde, mit Bürsten oder bloßen Händen die mit Ölfarbe auf den Straßen angebrachten politischen Parolen mit ätzenden Laugen abzuwaschen. Meist waren es erwachsene Juden beiderlei Geschlechts, die auf diese Weise gedemütigt wurden, doch finden sich gelegentlich Selbstzeugnisse von Kindern, darunter der spätere Fotograf Harry Weber, der sich als 16-Jähriger während einer solchen Reibpartie auf der Ringstraße aufhielt und mit einem „Kübel, Fetzen und Bürste in der Hand“ die Straße zu reinigen hatte. Danach, erinnerte sich Harry, „brachte man mich noch in die Küche des Kaffeehauses, mit dem Befehl: ‚Saujud, wasch auch da den Boden auf.‘“²⁶

Andere Kinder, wie die damals elfjährige Trude Berger, beobachteten die „Putzkolonnen“, den Applaus und die Fußtritte,²⁷ oder sie wurden, wie der 15-jährige Hans Reichenfeld in seinem Tagebuch festhielt, „hopp“ genommen und zu Reinigungsarbeiten gezwungen. Hans hatte „zur größten Belustigung des Wiener Pöbels“

²⁶ Dieter Hecht/Eleonore Lappin-Eppel/Michaela Raggam-Blesch, *Topographie der Shoah. Gedächtnisorte des zerstörten jüdischen Wien*, Wien 2015, 23.

²⁷ USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. <http://vhaonline.usc.edu> (fortan Shoah Foundation), 47865, Interview Trude Berger.

eine Halle auszukehren; Margarethe Hirschler musste ein HJ-Heim putzen.²⁸ Einige Kinder wurden bei solchen antisemitischen Aktionen Opfer sexueller oder sexualisierter Gewalt. Die 13-jährige Anne Kelemen wurde während einer Razzia auf der Straße gefangen genommen und per Lastwagen zu einem Keller gebracht, wo sie auf eine Leiter steigen musste, während ihr „Burschen“ unter den Rock schauten: „Ich war außer mir. Außer mir. Ich stand oben auf dieser Leiter, ich durfte nicht hinuntergehen, man johlte und schrie und kicherte und lachte, und es war ganz furchtbar und beschämend, beschämend. Das war etwas, das ich meiner Mutter nie erzählte.“²⁹

Von schwerer körperlicher Arbeit im Ziegelwerk sowie beim Straßenpflastern in Wien berichtete der damals 14-jährige Alfred Kocian, der sich auch an die Reaktionen von Passanten erinnerte, die vom Auslachen, über gehässige Bemerkungen bis hin zum Anspucken reichten. An Wochenenden musste er „Extraarbeit leisten“. Sie bestand aus Arbeiten auf dem Lande und im Wald sowie im Transport von Möbeln aus jüdischen Wohnungen, die anschließend per LKW in Sammellager gebracht wurden. Mitunter suchten sich Parteigenossen Möbel direkt in den zu räumenden Wohnungen aus, die Alfreds Gruppe zu ihnen nach Hause liefern musste.³⁰

Viele Arbeiten, die jüdische Kinder zu verrichten hatten, standen in Zusammenhang mit Wehrmächtsaufträgen. Dazu gehörte die Herstellung von Betten, wobei jüdische Zwangsarbeiter, folgt man den Erinnerungen des damals 14-jährigen Bernhard Morgenstern, vor allem nachts arbeiten mussten. Der am 4. März 1926 in Polen geborene Bernhard war in Wien aufgewachsen. Als seine Eltern 1939 nach Polen zurückgingen, wollten sie die Kinder so rasch wie möglich nachkommen lassen, was jedoch der Einmarsch deutscher Truppen in Polen verhinderte. Bernhard und seine Geschwister kamen in ein Waisenhaus im 19. Bezirk, ehe er vom Arbeitsamt in die Bettenfabrik geschickt wurde, wo er von 1940 bis 1942 in Nachtschichten arbeitete. Anschließend wurde er nach Theresienstadt deportiert.³¹

Trude Berger hingegen, deren Mutter zum Judentum konvertiert war, musste mit 15 Jahren Munitionskisten herstellen,³² während die 1928 in Wien geborene Vilma Neuwirth, die ebenfalls aus einer ‚Mischehe‘ stammte, zunächst Fausthandschuhe für die Wehrmacht anzufertigen hatte, wobei sie sich wohl anfänglich so ungeschickt anstellte, dass ihr Vorgesetzter damit drohte, sie zu der Wiener Mistgstätten versetzen zu lassen.³³ Vilma Neuwirth wurde die Gstätten erspart, weil sich eine Arbeitskollegin, die ihrem Vorgesetzten wohl „ein bisschen gefallen“ hat, erfolgreich für sie einsetzte. Die Müllverwertung, erinnerte sie sich, „war das Ärgste was man hat machen müssen“.³⁴ Noch deutlicher wurde Vilma Kühnberg, die mit 14 Jahren dort zu arbeiten hatte: „Man musste den ganzen Tag und bei jedem Wetter im Freien Dinge aussortieren, die noch irgendwie verwendbar waren. Altes Papier, alte Fetzen, alte Flaschen – alles wurde wiederverwertet. Ratten liefen herum und der Gestank war penetrant. Jede Arbeit, die wir zu dieser Zeit gezwungenermaßen verrichten mussten, war schlimm, aber die Mistgstätten war mit Abstand die grauslichste.“³⁵ Vilma Kühnberg sollte indes nicht recht behalten, denn die Gstätten war bei weitem nicht das „grauslichste“, was Kinderzwangsarbeiter zu erleiden hatten oder mitansetzen mussten.

28 Michaela Raggam-Blesch, Das „Anschluss“-Pogrom in den Narrativen der Opfer, in: Werner Welzig (Hg.), „Anschluss“: März/April 1938 in Österreich, Wien 2010, 111-124, hier 123.

29 Zitiert nach: Ebd., 119.

30 Shoah Foundation, 26579, Interview Alfred Kocian.

31 Shoah Foundation, 29254, Interview Bernhard Morgenstern.

32 Shoah Foundation, 47865, Interview Trude Berger.

33 Shoah Foundation, 37970, Interview Vilma Neuwirth.

34 Ebd.

35 Dieter Hecht/Eleonore Lappin-Eppel/Michaela Raggam-Blesch, Topographie der Shoah, 362.

Zwangsarbeit, Mord und Genozid

Überall im besetzten östlichen Europa machten Kinder Erfahrungen mit Leichen. Etliche mussten Tote transportieren, andere halfen beim Begraben und Verbrennen. Die Erzählungen der ehemaligen Kinderzangsarbeiter über den Umgang mit Leichen sind meist sehr nüchtern gehalten und beziehen sich fast ausschließlich auf Fakten. Nur selten lassen einzelne Bemerkungen auf erinnerte Emotionen schließen, wenn beispielsweise der 1927 geborene Abe Malnik über das traumatische Erlebnis der Auflösung des kleinen Ghettos in Kovno berichtete, einschließlich seiner Aufgabe, beim Bestatten der Toten zu helfen. Er schloss seine Schilderung mit der Bemerkung ab: „You get used to it.“³⁶ Als Abe 1944 in einem Außenlager von Dachau die Aufgabe hatte, täglich mit einem Karren von Baracke zu Baracke zu gehen, um Leichen aufzuladen, beschrieb er dies als einen guten Job, da er im Lager bleiben konnte und dadurch etwas mehr Suppe erhielt als die Häftlinge in den Außenkommandos.³⁷

Im Birkenauer Leichenkommando arbeiteten 1944 der 16-jährige Sam Smilovic, der in seinen Memoiren Prügel, Hunger und gebrochene Herzen als häufigste Todesursache nannte,³⁸ sowie der 13-jährige in Rumänien geborene Shony Alex Braun, der nach dem Krieg als Komponist und Schauspieler bekannt wurde. Eindrucksvoll erzählte Shony in einem Interview, dass sein Kommando beim täglichen Rundgang sowohl Leichen auf einen Karren hob und zum Krematorium brachte, als auch noch lebende Häftlinge, die am Boden lagen, halbverhungert, dehydriert oder weil sie einfach aufgegeben hatten. Als er eines Tages einen noch lebenden Gefangenen retten wollte, fing er sich eine Ohrfeige vom Kapo des Krematoriums ein, womit er andeutete, dass solche Gefangenen bei lebendigem Leibe verbrannt wurden.³⁹ Ähnliche Bemerkungen finden sich in Selbstzeugnissen anderer ehemaliger Kinderzangsarbeiter.

Für das Arbeits- bzw. Konzentrationslager Płaszów liegen etliche Selbstzeugnisse vor, in denen ehemalige jüdische Kinderzangsarbeiter über ihre Arbeit an den Massengräbern berichteten. Dies betraf zunächst alle mit den Erschießungen zusammenhängenden Arbeiten, vom Ausheben von Gräbern, dem Hineinlegen der Erschossenen und dem Bestreuen der Leichen mit Kalk bis hin zum Aufschütten der Erde.⁴⁰ Ferner existieren für das Jahr 1944 Berichte, nach denen Kinder den Erschossenen eventuell vorhandene Goldzähne ziehen mussten, bevor die Leichen mit Benzin übergossen und angezündet wurden, wobei sich einige Körper noch bewegten. Die 1929 geborene Agnes Glick benötigte Jahre, um den Geruch brennenden menschlichen Fettes aus ihrer Erinnerung zu verdrängen.⁴¹ 1944 begann in Płaszów zudem das Exhumieren und Verbrennen der teilweise bereits stark verwesenen Körper, um die Spuren der deutschen Verbrechen vor der anrückenden Roten Armee möglichst weitgehend zu beseitigen.⁴² Dies geschah, wie sich die damals 14-jährige

36 Shoah Foundation, 2259, Interview Abe Malnik.

37 USHMM, RG-50.030*0145, Interview Abraham Malnik.

38 Concordia University Montreal, Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors in Canada. <http://www.concordia.ca/research/migs/projects/holocaust-memoirs.html>, Sam Smilovic, Buchenwald 56466, 2001.

39 USHMM, RG-50.030*0036, Interview Shony Alex Braun.

40 Hierzu beispielsweise Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg, B 162/1127, Zeugenaussagen Mike Staner, 3194-3198 sowie 3207-3234.

41 Shoah Foundation, 7133, Interview Agnes Glick.

42 Angelina Awtuszewska-Ettrich, Płaszów-Stammlager, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (Hg.), Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager, Bd. 8, München 2008, 235-287, hier 273. Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg, B 162/1122, E. Podhorizer-Sandel, Vernichtung der Juden im Distrikt Krakow, Bulletin des Jüdischen Historischen Instituts, Warschau, 1959 (Übs.), 1997-2033.

Elizabeth Franklin erinnerte, unter strenger Bewachung, bei der auch angriffslustige Hunde eingesetzt wurden, sowie Schlägen, sobald sie nur für eine Sekunde aufhörte zu arbeiten. Dieses Bild brannte sich in ihr Gedächtnis ein: „I really do not remember too much more about Płaszów, that’s mostly I remember, the digging the graves, and the dogs and the Germans, and screaming and yelling all the time.“⁴³

Zu den häufigsten Zwangsarbeiten, zu denen Kinder eingesetzt wurden, gehörte das Sortieren und Verpacken von Hausrat, Kleidung und Gegenständen des persönlichen Besitzes von deportierten bzw. ermordeten Juden. Jüdische Kinder mussten zudem dabei helfen, Lastwagen und Eisenbahnwaggons mit Raubgut zu beladen. Diese Arbeit fand in aufgelösten Ghettos und Arbeitslagern, aber auch an den Erschießungsgruben in der besetzten Sowjetunion sowie in den berüchtigten Mordlagern der Aktion Reinhardt statt.

In Auschwitz-Birkenau hatten Kinder an der Rampe zu arbeiten, die sich bis 1944 außerhalb des Lagers befand. Sam Pivnik stand nur wenige Wochen vor seinem 17. Geburtstag, als er im August 1943 nach Birkenau deportiert wurde. Nach einiger Zeit musste er an der Rampe das Gepäck der Häftlinge neben die Waggons stapeln, damit diese keinen Verdacht schöpften, und nach Abschluss der Selektion auf einem Karren zu den Sortierstellen schaffen. Seiner autobiographischen Schrift *Survivor* ist zu entnehmen, dass er auch Leichen aus den Waggons holte und neben das Gepäck auf den Boden legte. Ein anderes Kommando brachte sie anschließend in eines der Krematorien.⁴⁴ Der 14-jährige Henry Kanner musste 1944 bereits an der neuen Rampe arbeiten. In einem Interview betonte er, dass er die Waggons leerzuräumen und zu säubern hatte. Insbesondere konnte er sich an die Züge mit Juden aus dem Ghetto Łódź erinnern, die arm waren und keine Lebensmittel bei sich trugen, während diejenigen aus Ungarn „viel Essen mitgebracht“ hatten, darunter Fleisch und gebratene Hühner, das den Hunger in unbemerkten Momenten stillte, sowie reichlich Wäsche und Kerzen, die sich einstecken und tauschen ließen.⁴⁵

Während eine gewisse Zahl von Selbstzeugnisse von Kindern vorliegen, die Auschwitz überlebt haben, und über ihre erzwungene Arbeit in einzelnen Bereichen der Lager – einschließlich dem Sonderkommando – berichteten, überlebten nur wenige jüdische Kinder Sobibór und Treblinka, wo eine kleine Gruppe von Zwangsarbeitern – wie es die Historikerin Barbara Distel formulierte – „in den Mordprozess wie auch in der Sicherstellung des geraubten Besitzes der Opfer eingebunden“ war. Darüber hinaus mussten sie Dienstleistungen für die SS erbringen und körperlich schwere Arbeiten verrichten.⁴⁶ Ähnliches geschah auch in Belzec;⁴⁷ jedoch überlebten nur wenige dieses Lager. Zu ihnen gehörte indes Adam Drewniak, der 1940 als 16-Jähriger in das Arbeitslager und 1942 in das Mordlager Belzec deportiert wurde. In einem Interview für die Shoah Foundation erwähnte er seine Tätigkeit in letzterem lediglich mit einigen Sätzen, aus denen hervorgeht, dass er im „Umkleideraum“ die persönlichen Hinterlassenschaften der Ermordeten nach Geld und Gold zu durchsuchen hatte, ehe ihm die Flucht zu den Partisanen gelang.⁴⁸

Die Selbstzeugnisse von jüdischen Kindern, die Sobibór und Treblinka überlebt haben, verdeutlichen, dass Kinder in allen Bereichen dieser Lager zu arbeiten hatten,

43 Shoah Foundation, 695, Interview Elizabeth Franklin.

44 Sam Pivnik, *Survivor. Auschwitz, the Death March and my Fight for Freedom*, London 2012, 122, 127 f.

45 Shoah Foundation, 48193, Interview Henry Kanner.

46 Barbara Distel, Sobibór, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (Hg.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Bd. 8, München 2008, 375–404, hier 384.

47 Zu den Sortierarbeiten in Belzec ausführlich: Kuwalek, *Das Vernichtungslager Belzec*, 2014, S. 199–210.

48 Shoah Foundation, 13035, Interview Adam Drewniak.

angefangen bei den Rampen, wo sie den Ankommenden beim Aussteigen behilflich sein mussten, um in ihnen keinen Verdacht aufkommen zu lassen. Mitunter erhielten die Kofferträger sogar ein Trinkgeld.⁴⁹ Im sogenannten Schlauch, der zu den Gaskammern führte, wurden einzelne Kinder dazu gezwungen, den Frauen die Haare abzuschneiden. Zu ihnen gehörte der in Warschau geborene Berek Freiberg, der am 15. Mai 1942 als 14-Jähriger nach Sobibór deportiert wurde und hier 18 Monate überlebte, ehe ihm im Laufe des Aufstandes vom 14. Oktober 1943 die Flucht gelang. Berek verfasste seinen Bericht in Łódź und datierte ihn auf den 25. Juli 1945.⁵⁰ Demnach verdankte der 14-Jährige sein Überleben vor allem seiner Intuition. Als er bei Ankunft in Sobibór beobachtete, dass Handwerker und „gesunde Jungen“ von den SS-Leuten ausgesucht wurden, stellte er sich „zwischen die kräftigen Jungen und Handwerker“, obwohl er keinerlei Berufserfahrung besaß. Während die übrigen Juden sofort ermordet wurden, wurde Berek's 80-köpfige Gruppe aufgeteilt. Ein Teil musste die Kleidung und Habe der Angekommenen sortieren, während Berek mit seiner Gruppe eine Grube auszuheben hatte, wobei er sich mit der Schaufel so ungeschickt anstellte, dass er von einem Deutschen, der die Arbeit beaufsichtigte, einen heftigen Schlag auf den Kopf erhielt. „Ich lernte schnell, wie man arbeitet“, resümierte er. Am Abend des ersten Arbeitstages hielt ein SS-Mann eine Rede, in der er beteuerte, dass ihnen nichts geschehen würde, wenn sie sich „gut aufführten, falls nicht, bekämen wir kostenlos eine Kugel in den Kopf“.⁵¹

Während der 18 Monate Gefangenschaft und Überlebenskampf in Sobibór musste Berek eine Vielzahl von Tätigkeiten verrichten, wozu unter anderem das ‚Scheren‘ der Frauen vor ihrer Ermordung gehörte. „Einen Kopf zu scheren, dauerte eine halbe Minute“, erinnerte er sich: „Wir nahmen die langen Haare und schnitten sie schnell ab, dadurch blieben Stufen und Stellen mit Haar auf dem Kopf.“⁵² In seinem Bericht kam Berek an einer anderen Stelle noch einmal auf diese Tätigkeit zurück, erinnerte sich an kurze Gespräche mit einigen Frauen, aus denen hervorging, dass sie um ihren bevorstehenden Tod wussten, ihn baten, Rache zu nehmen und ihm die Verstecke von Wertsachen anvertrauten. Er erwähnte Mütter, die sich nicht von ihren Kindern trennen wollten: „Wenn man der Mutter die Haare abschnitt, hielt sie beim Rasieren das Kind neben sich, damit sie bis zur letzten Minute zusammen sein konnten. Und viele Frauen konnte man tatsächlich nicht scheren, man schoss und schlug, aber es half nichts. Sie setzten sich und rührten sich nicht von der Stelle, ließen sich nicht scheren und wollten nicht ins Bad gehen. Man erschoss sie oder trieb sie mit starken Schlägen lebendig ins Feuer.“⁵³

Auch in anderen Selbstzeugnissen finden sich längere Passagen über das Haarschneiden, aus denen deutlich wird, wie peinlich es den Kindern war, den nackten Frauen gegenüberzutreten. Der im November 1929 geborene Philip Bialowitz wurde hierzu mehrere Male eingeteilt. Es war ihm strikt verboten, mit den Frauen zu sprechen und Informationen weiter zu geben. Überwacht wurde er von einem SS-Mann, der sich in der Mitte des Raumes postiert hatte.⁵⁴ Der etwas ältere Thomas Blatt, der 1942 als 15-Jähriger nach Sobibór verschleppt wurde, und „noch nie eine nackte

49 Shoah Foundation, 2533, Interview Regina Zielinski.

50 Berek Freiberg, Sobibór, in: Frank Beer/Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (Hg.) *Nach dem Untergang. Die ersten Zeugnisse der Shoah in Polen 1944–1947. Berichte der Zentralen Jüdischen Historischen Kommission*, Berlin 2014, 617–652. Trunk, Isaiah (Hg.), *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution. Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis*, New York 1982, 268–287.

51 Freiberg, Sobibór, 617–652, hier 621 f.

52 Ebd., 623.

53 Ebd., 632 f.

54 Shoah Foundation, 32788, Interview Philip Bialowitz.

Frau gesehen hatte“, erhielt von einem Mitgefangenen den Rat, mit der Schere „einfach schnell und in dicken Strähnen“ sowie „nicht nah am Kopf“ zu schneiden. Thomas wollte die Frauen bei seiner Arbeit nicht ansehen, die ihrerseits zu Boden blickten „und versuchten, ihre Körper zu bedecken“. Als sich eine der Frauen wehrte, wurde sie zunächst von der Wache mit der Peitsche geschlagen und dann erschossen. „Daraufhin resignierten die meisten und fügten sich ihrem Schicksal“, berichtete Thomas, der sich an ein junges Mädchen erinnerte, das „über den Verlust ihres schönen Haares“ weinte und bat, nicht zuviel davon abzuschneiden: „Nachdem die Frauen weg waren, füllten wir ihr Haar in Kartoffelsäcke, die dann in einen nahen Lagerraum gebracht wurden. Nach etwa dreistündiger Arbeit und über zweitausend Toten, mussten wir auf Befehl der SS-Männer wieder zurück in unsere Baracken.“⁵⁵

In den nach den Deportationen aufgelösten Ghettos und Lagern blieb meist ein „Aufräumkommando“ zurück, dessen Aufgabe es war, die Wohnungen leerzuräumen und Möbel, Hausrat und Kleidung in Sammellager zu bringen, wo sie gegebenenfalls desinfiziert, gewaschen und repariert sowie sortiert und versandfertig gemacht wurden. In den Selbstzeugnissen finden sich sowohl nüchterne wie extrem emotionale Berichte über diese Arbeit, die für die meisten eine Möglichkeit bot, länger in der vertrauten Umgebung und mitunter sogar im Familienverband bleiben zu können. Höchst emotionsgeladen war die Schilderung der 1929 in Tomaszów geborenen Edith, die nach der Auflösung des örtlichen Ghettos im Oktober und November 1942 zusammen mit ihrer Mutter dem Aufräumkommando angehörte: „And then they put me to work, me and my mother and we had to go and clean up after they deported all the people. We had to clean out the houses after. So then we worked [...] where my grandmother used to live. It was so bad. We were crying and crying, touching things and, ugh, it was ... (crying).“⁵⁶

Die Aufräumkommandos bestanden nicht immer aus örtlichen Zwangsarbeitern. Dies wird in den Erinnerungen der 1927 in Grodno geborenen Vivian Chakin deutlich, die 1943 in Treblinka als Arbeitskraft ausgewählt worden war und von dort zunächst nach Majdanek und schließlich in das Flughafenlager nach Lublin verschleppt wurde. Von hier aus führte ihr Weg über Milejów, wo sie in einer Lebensmittelfabrik arbeitete, in das Zwangsarbeitslager Trawniki, in dem unmittelbar zuvor alle Juden im Rahmen der ‚Aktion Erntefest‘ ermordet worden waren.⁵⁷ Trawniki diente sowohl als Ausbildungslager der SS für „fremdvölkische Hilfstruppen“, zumeist Ukrainer, die in den Mordlagern der ‚Aktion Reinhardt‘ sowie bei den Deportationen aus den Ghettos eingesetzt wurden.⁵⁸ Ab 1943 war in Trawniki zudem ein Zwangsarbeitslager, in dem sich einige der Betriebe ansiedelten, die zuvor im Warschauer Ghetto produziert hatten. Zu ihnen gehörte die Firma Schultz & Co für die 6.000 Häftlinge Winterkleidung für die Wehrmacht herstellten.⁵⁹ Als Vivian Anfang November 1943 zusammen mit einer Gruppe von Mädchen und Frauen nach Trawniki gebracht wurde, war das Lager menschenleer, abgesehen von einer Gruppe jüdischer Zwangsarbeiter, die ebenfalls gerade angekommen war: „There wasn’t a soul there. They put us into a barrack and then they brought the men that were working there, they brought also. And they put us together in the same barrack. And this we thought, that well that’s the end of all of us, because they never kept men and

55 Thomas Toivi Blatt, *Nur die Schatten bleiben. Der Aufstand im Vernichtungslager Sobibor*, Berlin 2000, 137 f.

56 The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Kestenberg Archive, (257) 19-44, Interview EN [Edith].

57 Shoah Foundation, 7457, Interview Vivian Chakin.

58 Angelika Benz, Trawniki, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (Hg.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Bd. 9, München 2009, 602-611, hier 602 f.

59 Ebd., 99.

women together. [...] We came into the barrack. The bunks were all around the walls. And in the middle was a large table with, with benches. And there was still food on the table that people had started to eat and never finished. They did not put us to work right the first day. But the men were taken and they were divided up into three eight hour shifts. And they were taken to burn the bodies of the camp, of the [...] people [...] that were shot. [...] On this big heap of bodies, they worked for one week. And when they were all finished burning the bodies, the Ukrainians shot them and burnt their bodies on the same flames.”⁶⁰

Die Zwangsarbeiterinnen hatten die Baracken zu säubern und die Hinterlassenschaften der Ermordeten zu sortieren. Gelegentlich stießen sie in den Stockbetten auf Leichen, weitere befanden sich in einer Fabrik, wo neun Männer verzweifelt versucht hatten sich einzugraben. Vivian arbeitete in Todesangst und mit der Gewissheit, dass sie ebenfalls bald ermordet werden würde. Sie blieb insgesamt sieben Monate in Trawniki, wo noch bis zum Sommer 1944 ein SS-Ausbildungslager bestand. Während dieser Zeit verrichtete sie eine Vielzahl von Arbeiten, zu denen das Sortieren von Kartoffeln ebenso gehörte wie Hilfsdienste in der Bäckerei. Anfang Juni 1944 wurde ihre Gruppe in das KZ Majdanek deportiert, in dem zu diesem Zeitpunkt kaum noch Häftlinge lebten. Hier arbeitete sie als Näherin, ehe sie nach einigen Wochen auf den Todesmarsch geschickt wurde. In der Entfernung konnte sie bereits Artillerie hören.⁶¹

1944 begann auch der Abbau von Auschwitz-Birkenau. Der Sprengung der Krematorien und Gaskammern voran, ging die systematische Suche nach allem, was sich vor der anrückenden Roten Armee nach Westen transportieren ließ. Dafür benutzt wurden die in der Literatur häufig genannten Rollwagen, die jeweils von einer Gruppe von Kinderzwangsarbeitern gezogen wurden. Der im Juni 1932 geborene Izchak Reichenbaum, der zunächst von Mengele für seine Versuche ausgewählt worden war, arbeitete von Oktober 1944 bis Januar 1945 beim Abbau der Lagerräume und der Krematorien. Er erinnerte sich, dass der mit Baumaterial beladene Wagen von etwa zehn Kindern zum Bahnhof gezogen wurde.⁶² Andrew Burian, geboren im Dezember 1930, half dabei, das Dach der Krematorien abzutragen, wobei die Dachpfannen per Hand runtergereicht und zwischen Stroh gebettet aufgeschichtet wurden.⁶³ Sie befinden sich vielleicht heute noch auf deutschen Dächern, ebenso wie die Ziegelsteine, die Arthur Brown aus den Krematorien und Gaskammern herausbrach,⁶⁴ eventuell noch in einzelnen Mauern anzutreffen sind.

Resilienz

In etlichen Selbstzeugnissen finden sich Reflexionen über die Gründe des eigenen Überlebens. Dabei handelte es sich um subjektive Einschätzungen, die sich nicht verallgemeinern lassen. In der bisherigen Forschung finden sich keine schlüssigen Interpretationen über die unterschiedliche Resilienz bei Erwachsenen und Kindern. War Jugend ein Vorteil oder war es ein Nachteil? Besitzen Kinder größere Anpassungsfähigkeiten als Erwachsene? Haben sie eine stärkere Willenskraft? Waren ihre

⁶⁰ Shoah Foundation, 7457, Interview Vivian Chakin.

⁶¹ Ebd.

⁶² Auschwitz Archives, Wspomnienia, tom 203, Izchak Reichenbaum, Haifa, an Jerzy Wroblewski, Auschwitz, 3. Februar 1999.

⁶³ Shoah Foundation, 38143, Interview Andrew Burian.

⁶⁴ Shoah Foundation, 497, Interview Arthur Brown.

altersspezifischen Reaktionen auf traumatische Erlebnisse von Vorteil oder Nachteil? Spielte die Dauer der traumatisierenden Umstände eine Rolle?⁶⁵ Oder war Überleben „reine Glückssache“, wie der 1927 geborene Abe Malnik rückblickend vermutete?⁶⁶

Als Objekte psychologischer Studien dienten überlebende Kinder seit dem Tag ihrer Befreiung. Schlüssige Ergebnisse zu formulieren war und ist jedoch nicht einfach, wie Judith Hemmendinger und Robert Krell in einer Studie über die Kinder von Buchenwald festgestellt haben. Von den über 900 dort befreiten Kindern wurden 426 etwa zwei Monate später nach Frankreich geschickt, wo sie psychologisch betreut wurden. Sie galten als hoffnungslose Fälle, ohne Aussicht, irgendwann einmal ein normales Leben führen zu können. Von einigen psychologischen Mitarbeitern wurden sie als Psychopathen angesehen oder als Wesen, die es durch Manipulation anderer, durch Egoismus und niedrige Gesinnung geschafft hatten zu überleben. Jahre später waren aus dieser Gruppe von Kindern Rabbiner und Gelehrte hervorgegangen, Physiker und Ärzte, Geschäftsleute und Künstler sowie ein Nobelpreisträger. Aus den meisten waren liebende Ehepartner und Eltern geworden. Doch nicht alle hatten es geschafft; einige mussten dauerhaft betreut werden, andere verübten Selbstmord.⁶⁷

In ihren Selbstzeugnissen reflektierten nur wenige ehemalige Kinderzangsarbeiter über ihre Jugend als ausschlaggebenden Faktor für ihr Überleben. „Ich habe das wohl nur überstanden, weil ich so jung war, das rächt sich aber heute“, bemerkte die 1931 geborene Lena Szeiner während einer 1971 protokollierten Zeugenaussage, in der sie ausführte, dass sie in jedem Zustand ihrer Arbeit nachgekommen war, auch mit Lungenentzündung und hohem Fieber.⁶⁸ Einige ehemalige Kinderzangsarbeiter verwiesen auf ihre Anpassungsfähigkeit und auf den Lernprozess, der für ein Überleben im Konzentrationslager notwendig war. Mit der Zeit gewann man an Erfahrung, bemerkte die 1929 geborene Halina Birenbaum über ihre Zeit in Majdanek: der Instinkt wurde schärfer, die Wachsamkeit entwickelte sich und die Reaktionen wurden schneller. Man lernte, dass man tagsüber tunlichst nicht im Lager sein sollte, dass selbst harte körperliche Arbeit draußen sicherer war, man unterschied zwischen anstrengenden und weniger anstrengenden Arbeitskommando, man lernte zu bestechen.⁶⁹

Die Kriterien *Pairing* und *Grouping* spielen in der wissenschaftlichen Betrachtung eine mitunter zentrale Rolle;⁷⁰ direkte Hinweise und Reflexionen auf deren überlebenswichtige Funktion finden sich jedoch nur selten. Die 1926 geborene Rosalie Laks Lerman, die 1944 in der Effektenkammer in Auschwitz arbeitete, stellte gegenseitige Hilfe und Liebe als „Geheimnis des Überlebens“ heraus.⁷¹ Die meisten ehemaligen Kinderzangsarbeiter reflektierten hingegen über ihren Willen und die Hoffnung zu überleben. Für den 1929 geborenen Moshe Avital war seine starke mentale Widerstandskraft und die Hoffnung auf Revanche ausschlaggebend.⁷² Die

65 Sara Ghitis/Ruth Weinberger, Jüdische Sklavenarbeit. Lebensgeschichten aus den USA, in: Alexander von Plato/Almut Leh/Christoph Thonfeld (Hg.), Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich, Wien, Köln, Weimar 2008, 324-335, hier 332-334.

66 Shoah Foundation, 2259, Interview Abe Malnik.

67 Judith Hemmendinger/Robert Krell, The Children of Buchenwald. Child Survivors of the Holocaust and their Post-War Lives, Jerusalem und New York 2000, 8.

68 Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg, B 162/20659, Zeugenaussage Lena Szeiner, 253-254.

69 Halina Birenbaum, Hope is the Last to Die. A Coming of Age under Nazi Terror, New York/London 1996, 86.

70 Hierzu insbesondere: Shamaï Davidson, Holding on to Humanity. The Message of Holocaust Survivors, New York 1992.

71 USHMM, RG-50.030*0396, Interview Rosalie Laks Lerman.

72 Moshe Avital, Not to Forget. Impossible to Forgive, Jerusalem 2004, 141.

1927 geborene Kate Bernath hielt es niemals für möglich, dass sie im Lager sterben würde. Sie träumte davon, nach Hause zurückzukehren und dass die Deutschen den Krieg verlieren würden. Die Hoffnung durfte man nicht aufgeben; wenn man in Auschwitz die Hoffnung aufgab, dann war man verloren.⁷³ Die bei ihrer Befreiung 14-jährige Anita Schorr lebte und schuftete von einem Tag auf den anderen. Sie war darauf fixiert zu überleben und fühlte eine starke Kraft in sich, es zu schaffen.⁷⁴ Die etwa gleichaltrige Liliane Segre verglich sich mit einer „gierigen Wölfin, abgemagert, egoistisch. Ich hatte keinen weiblichen Körper mehr, ich war eine der hässlichsten Frauen, die ich um mich herum sah, wirklich hässlich, verbraucht. Und ... aber ... noch am Leben, am Leben, am Leben und so entschlossen: Noch ein Tag ist vorüber, und ich bin noch am Leben, noch eine Nacht ist vorüber, und ich bin noch am Leben, ich will nichts sehen, ich will nicht hinschauen, ich will nichts wissen ... (sie schnieft). Egoistisch, verschlossen, einsam, einsam, sehr einsam.“⁷⁵ Für einige war der Glaube der entscheidende Faktor, andere haben sich damit „nicht beschäftigt“, wie es die 1929 geborene Sara Weinryb ausdrückte. Für sie war es wichtig „zu sehen“, begleitet von dem Willen, über das Erlebte und Erlittene „zu erzählen“.⁷⁶

Schlussbemerkungen

Der Beitrag hat einige Ergebnisse eines langjährigen Forschungsprojektes zusammengefasst, dass sich vor allem auf der Basis von Selbstzeugnissen mit den Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen jüdischer Kinderzwangsarbeiter in den Jahren 1938 bis 1945 auseinandergesetzt hat. Methodisch wurde die Perspektive der Betroffenen unter Berücksichtigung der analytischen Kategorien Alter und Geschlecht gewählt. Dies hat zu neuen Erkenntnissen geführt, es hat aber auch etliche Forschungslücken kenntlich gemacht. Während bereits eine Studie über polnische und sowjetische Kinderzwangsarbeiter vorliegt⁷⁷ und sich eine weitere über Roma und Sinti Kinderzwangsarbeiter in Vorbereitung befindet, bedarf es weiterer intensiver Forschungen über Kinder und Kinderzwangsarbeiter in Deutschland und in den besetzten Gebieten Europas.

Zwar endete die Analyse mit der Befreiung der jüdischen Kinderzwangsarbeiter, doch verdeutlichen die Selbstzeugnisse, dass mit der Befreiung eine neue Geschichte begann, die keineswegs frei von Konflikten und ausschließlich positiv verlief. Nachdem die von den Kindern gefeierten Kampftruppen weitergezogen waren, wurde eine unbekannte Zahl von Jungen und Mädchen von nachrückenden Angehörigen der alliierten Armeen vergewaltigt. Wer nach Hause zurückkehrte, traf dort nur vereinzelt auf überlebende Familienangehörige, häufig jedoch auf Antisemitismus und neue Gewalt. Die meisten betraten eine Nachkriegswelt, die ihnen bereits nach kurzer Zeit nicht mehr zuhören wollte und sie argwöhnisch betrachtete.

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73 USHMM, RG-50.030*0023, Interview Kate Bernath.

74 FernUniversität in Hagen, International Forced Laborers Documentation Project, Interview Anita Schorr.

75 Forced Labour, ZA124, Interview Liliane Segre.

76 Shoah Foundation, 13881, Interview Sara Weinryb.

77 Johannes-Dieter Steinert, Deportation und Zwangsarbeit. Polnische und sowjetische Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa 1939–1945, Essen 2013.

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Von der Aufklärung zur Affirmation?

Die Krise der Erinnerungskultur

Abstract

In Germany, a culture of remembrance first began to emerge haltingly in the 1960s before establishing itself in a remarkable show of solidarity between scholarship, politics, and the public culture of history. This culture of remembrance aims at a critical engagement with Germany's calamitous history. Through its relentless demand to come to terms with the past, a fundamental consensus has emerged in Germany's culture of history in the past decades that was most recently declared to be a „part of our national self-understanding“ by the current federal government in its coalition agreement. However, the signs are increasing that this paradigm of a resolute and critical re-examination of a suppressed and silenced history is losing its validity. The rise of right-wing populism in Germany and the significantly diminished acceptance of democracy in eastern Germany raise the question of whether the belief in a secure democratic culture of remembrance has not in fact led the country astray; whether the process of coming to terms with the past in Germany has not failed in its aim to secure the future of democracy through an engagement with the collapsed dictatorships of the past. This lecture investigates the causes of this new uncertainty. It traces the creeping shift from critical self-reflection to affirmative self-vindication that has increasingly characterised Germany's understanding of its calamitous past since the 1990s. It thereby elucidates possible alternatives to the ever clearer crisis experienced by Germany's culture of remembrance.

Die Frage, wohin die Bundesrepublik treibe, führte Karl Jaspers Mitte der 1960er-Jahre zu einer düsteren Prognose, in der er vor dem Wandel der Demokratie zur Parteienoligarchie und von der Parteienoligarchie zur Diktatur warnte. Die Frage, wohin die deutsche Erinnerungskultur treibt, führt uns fünfzig Jahre später indes zur beruhigenden Antwort, dass ein Wandel zum Schlechten nicht zu befürchten steht – die historische Verfassung der Deutschen gründet in der Gegenwart auf der gefestigten Übereinkunft, die eigene Vergangenheit nicht als nationalstolze Kontinuitätserzählung im Gedächtnis zu bewahren, sondern als opferzentrierte Umkehrerzählung. Um zu diesem Geschichtskonsens zu kommen, hat die Bundesrepublik gedenkpolitisch und geschichtskulturell allerdings einen weiten Weg zurücklegen müssen. Kein Unternehmer würde noch wie der frühere IG-Farben- und nachmalige Bayer-Manager Fritz ter Meer jede Schuld am Leid der für den Konzern schuftenden Zwangsarbeiter mit der kühlen Feststellung abwehren, dass den Zwangsarbeitern ja kein besonderes Leid zugefügt worden sei, „da man sie ohnehin getötet hätte“. Unmöglich wäre es, heute deutsche Freiwillige in der Kriegsgräberfürsorge „vor zwinglicher Anbiederung und vorlautem Versöhnungseifer“ zu warnen, wie es *Die Welt* zum 50. Jahrestag des Kriegsausbruchs von 1914 tat, oder gar das Schweigen als aufrichtigste Form der Bewältigung preisen: „Besser als Worte wird immer die praktische Tat der Versöhnung dienen. Konsequentermaßen ermahnen die Verantwortlichen des Volksbundes die Freiwilligen zu taktvoller Zurückhaltung gegenüber der französischen Bevölkerung.“

Der kulturelle Erinnerungskonsens

Kein christdemokratischer Bundeskanzler würde heute mehr wie einst Bundeskanzler Ludwig Erhard in einer Gedenkansprache zum 20. Jahrestag des Kriegsendes den 8. Mai als einen Tag, „so grau und trostlos wie so viele vor oder auch nach ihm“ hinstellen, und kein sozialdemokratischer Oppositionsführer wie Willy Brandt aus demselben Anlass mehr fordern, dass es nun „genug des bloßen Zurückschauens“ sei, und auch Heiner Geißler würde es heute nicht mehr einfallen zu behaupten, dass der Pazifismus der 1930er-Jahre Auschwitz erst möglich gemacht habe.

Adornos bittere Erfahrung, „im Hause des Henkers soll man nicht vom Strick reden; sonst hat man Ressentiment“ hat nicht nur ihre Gültigkeit verloren, sie ist in ihr Gegenteil umgeschlagen, wenn der damalige Bundespräsident Joachim Gauck zum 50. Jahrestag der Befreiung von Auschwitz feststellte: „Es gibt keine deutsche Identität ohne Auschwitz. Die Erinnerung an den Holocaust bleibt eine Sache aller Bürger, die in Deutschland leben.“ Die bei Adorno noch vor allem gegen den Staat und das staatlich verantwortete „Nachleben des Nationalsozialismus in der Demokratie“ gerichtete Bewältigungsforderung ist heute ein Handlungsziel für den Staat geworden, und die staatliche Politik von der Bundesregierung bis zu den Kommunen stellt sich der Aufarbeitung nicht mehr entgegen, sondern begreift sich als ihr Wegbereiter formuliert mittlerweile als Maxime ihres Handelns: „Staat und Gesellschaft sind bei allen Unterschieden zwischen nationalsozialistischer und kommunistischer Gewaltherrschaft verpflichtet, der Verantwortung für die Folgen beider totalitärer Ideologien des 20. Jahrhunderts nachzukommen, an die Leiden der Opfer zu erinnern und das begangene Unrecht aufzuarbeiten.“

Die damit formulierte Norm der andauernden kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem „Zivilisationsbruch“ (Dan Diner) muss nicht von jedermann geteilt werden. Aber sie markierte für fast drei Jahrzehnte den Rahmen des öffentlich Sag- und Vertretbaren. Der Schweigekonsens der Nachkriegszeit wurde seit den späten 1970er-Jahren immer deutlicher von einem Aufarbeitungskonsens abgelöst, der sich gegen einen öffentlich verstummenden und gesellschaftlich immer weniger greifbaren Dritten richtete – durch generationellen Zeitablauf in Bezug auf die erste deutsche Diktatur und ihr Menschheitsverbrechen sowie durch soziale Marginalisierung und weitgehende Abdrängung der entmachteten DDR-Eliten aus dem öffentlichen Diskurs im Fall der ostdeutschen Nachfolgediktatur. Der Verbrechenscharakter der NS-Herrschaft und der Diktaturcharakter des SED-Regimes gelten im Grundsatz für nicht mehr öffentlich verhandelbar, und die 2010/2011 geführte Kontroverse um die Rolle des Auswärtigen Amtes im ‚Dritten Reich‘ markiert aus heutiger Sicht den Abschluss einer konfrontativen Aufklärung.

Erinnerungskultur in der Krise

Und doch spüren wir immer deutlicher, dass das Fundament unserer Erinnerungskultur weniger fest sein könnte, als es uns lange Jahre schien, und historische Erfahrung lehrt, wie rasch sich unter der Oberfläche des scheinbar allseits Akzeptierten grundstürzende Veränderung anbahnen kann. Fast hilflos stehen wir vor der provokativen Konsensverletzung, die das Aufkommen des Rechtspopulismus als Massenphänomen auf der Straße und in die Parlamente mit sich bringen. Namentlich der Einzug der AfD in die Parlamente der Bundesrepublik hat in jüngster Zeit die zeithistorischen Sagbarkeitsregeln in einer Weise verwischt, wie wir es uns noch

vor drei oder vier Jahren kaum hätten vorstellen können und der sich mit den Mitteln der rhetorischen oder institutionellen Ausgrenzung nur unzureichend abwehren lässt, wie wir tagtäglich erfahren müssen. Dammbrechende Wirkung hatten und haben Äußerungen von Rechtspopulisten, die die „dämliche Bewältigungspolitik“ durch eine „erinnerungspolitische Wende um 180 Grad“ korrigiert wissen wollen oder Hitler und die Nationalsozialisten zu einem „Vogelschiss in 1.000 Jahren erfolgreicher deutscher Geschichte“ verharmlosen.

Wir reagieren auf diese Herausforderung unserer Erinnerungskultur in der Regel mit fassungsloser Verstörung und dem Appell, unsere Bemühungen um die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit weiter zu verstärken, um den verlorenen Erinnerungskonsens zurückzuerobern. Ich möchte in diesem Vortrag einen anderen Weg einschlagen und danach fragen, welche Bruchlinien und Schwachstellen sich hinter der glatten Fassade unserer scheinbar erfolgreichen Erinnerungskultur verbergen.

Ubiquisierung und Banalisierung

Ein erstes augenfälliges Krisensymptom zeigt sich in der zunehmenden Kommerzialisierung und Banalisierung der Auseinandersetzung mit historischen Lasten. KZ-Souvenirs und Auschwitz-Selfies sind bekannte Phänomene geworden.

Das Holocaust-Mahnmal in der Mitte Berlins ist eine Touristen-Attraktion, die für Erschütterung und Entspannung gleichermaßen zur Verfügung steht; und die Auseinandersetzung mit dem nationalsozialistischen Zivilisationsbruch hat es zu einer Ästhetik des Grauens gebracht, die etwa die Filmmusik von *Schindlers Liste* bei den Olympischen Winterspielen in Südkorea zu einer gern genutzten Choreographie deutscher Eiskunstlauf deutscher Olympioniken zu machen erlaubte. Im Wettbewerb um die Lenkung von Touristenströmen ist der Schrecken vom Schandmal zum Alleinstellungsmerkmal, „vom Stigma zum Standortfaktor“ geworden, wie der *Dark Tourism* lehrt, der auf der Berliner Geschichtsmeile so anziehungsmächtig in Erscheinung tritt wie in der historischen Pilgerfahrt auf den Obersalzberg. Mehr noch: Das Grauen ist zum ästhetischen Erlebnis geworden, und die vielfältigen Aneignungen überschreiten bisher als unverrückbar wahrgenommene Grenzen.

Einen damit zusammenhängenden Trend bildet die Ubiquisierung der Auseinandersetzung mit historischer Schuld. Norbert Freis 2014 gestellte Frage, „ob es nicht auch ein Zuviel des Guten gibt“ ist unbeantwortet und seine Anregung unbeachtet geblieben, dass die architektonischen Monstrositäten der Nazizeit keine Renovierung verdienten und das Nürnberger Zeppelinfeld im Sinne von Albert Speers Ruinentheorie besser dem kontrollierten Verfall zu überantworten wäre. Stattdessen zeichnet sich unsere Zeit durch eine sich immer weiter verästelnde Gesamtanstrengung von Staat und Gesellschaft aus, die sich in der konstanten Höhe bundesstaatlicher Förderanträge für Erhalt und Neuschaffung von Gedenkstätten ebenso niederschlägt wie in der in Deutschland geführten Debatte über die Frage, ob der Schülerbesuch von Gedenkstätten zur Verpflichtung gemacht werden solle.

Gleichzeitig ist deutlich erkennbar, dass die Dignität des Erinnerungsbegriffs sich abgenutzt hat. Das Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur der Gegenwart ist längst zu einem vielzitierten Topos der geschichtskulturellen Reflexion geworden; jüngste Äußerungen in dieser Debatte sprechen bereits von einem Scheitern der Erinnerungskultur. Die dunkle Vergangenheit, in deren noch immer finsternen Schatten wir im Sinne der Stockholmer Staatenerklärung aus dem Jahr 2000 andauerndes Licht zu bringen versuchen, ist längst nicht mehr die unsrige – infolge des Generations-

wandels ebenso wie infolge des postnationalen Identitätswandels der Bundesrepublik. In der Auseinandersetzung mit der Last des 20. Jahrhunderts verhandeln wir politische und moralische Verantwortung, aber schon lange nicht mehr persönliche Schuld; und die Scham über die „Dauerpräsentation unserer Schande“, die Martin Walser 1998 in die Frankfurter Paulskirche rief, hat mit in der postnationalen deutschen Gesellschaft ihr emotionales Fundament verloren. Nicht zufällig reicht die staatlich gegenwärtig so forcierte Behördenaufarbeitung bis in die späten sechziger und gelegentlich auch bis in die siebziger Jahre, aber nicht bis in die jüngste Zeitgeschichte nach 1989. Und wenn Peter Gauweiler 1997 gegen die Wehrmachtsausstellung zu Felde zog, die das Andenken seines Vaters Otto zu verdunkeln drohte, der im Zweiten Weltkrieg an der Besetzung Polens mitwirkte, so gilt eine Halbgeneration später im deutschen Familiengedächtnis weitgehend selbstverständlich, dass Opa kein Nazi war: Nur 18 Prozent der Deutschen glauben, dass unter ihren Vorfahren auch Nazis waren.

Erinnern versus Versöhnung

Ein weiteres Problem der Erinnerungskultur lässt sich an der Wortgeschichte des Begriffs *Aufarbeitung* ablesen. Es war gerade die semantische Anlehnung an Sigmund Freuds tiefenpsychologisches Konzept des erinnernden Durcharbeitens, die dem Wort *Aufarbeitung* im Verein mit seinem Antonym – Gegenwort – *Verdrängung* die zeitgeistige Durchschlagskraft verlieh. Zusammen formulierte das Begriffspaar einen durchschlagskräftigen Appell zur Auseinandersetzung mit den Lasten einer traumatischen Vergangenheit, der die mentale Abschüttelung der Vergangenheit als „Unfähigkeit zu trauern“ mit gefährlichen politischen Konsequenzen zu lesen erlaubte.

Vergangenheitsvergegenwärtigung als Weg zur Gesundung – aus dieser erfolgreichen Einbettung des Umgangs mit der jüngsten Geschichte in einen sozialen wie politischen Krankheitsdiskurs erklärt sich der Erfolg des Begriffs *Aufarbeitung*, der andere Formen der Vergangenheitsüberwindung etwa durch Vergessen und Tabuisierung in den diagnostischen Rahmen von Störung und Verdrängung stellte. Dabei machte der Begriff *Aufarbeitung* allerdings eine bemerkenswerte Verschiebung durch. In der Tiefenpsychologie gilt das erinnernde Durcharbeiten bekanntlich als Schritt zur endgültigen Heilung mit dem Ziel des psychischen Überwindens und Loslassens. Im gesellschaftlichen *Aufarbeitungs*diskurs hingegen ist nicht loslassen das Ziel, sondern die fortwährende Auseinandersetzung. Ganz im Gegensatz zu dem Bestreben, die traumatisch erfahrene Vergangenheit durchzuarbeiten, um sie am Ende loslassen zu können, versteht sich das Konzept der *Aufarbeitung* als dessen genaues Gegenteil – nämlich als dauerhaften Auftrag zur Erinnerung.

Die vornehmste Legitimation des Plädoyers für das Wachhalten der Erinnerung und damit der eigentliche Sinn der *Aufarbeitung* steckt in ihrer heilenden Kraft, auf der schon 1990 niemand stärker als Joachim Gauck insistierte: „Vor der Gesundheit kommt der Heilungsprozeß. In dieser Zeit geschieht viel Arbeit, werden medizinisches Wissen und die physischen und psychischen Kräfte des Patienten einen Bund eingehen, und am Ende dieses Prozesses kann dann alles gut werden. So wollen wir in unsere neue Demokratie eintreten: wach, informiert und angetrieben vom Willen zu mehr Gerechtigkeit und Wahrhaftigkeit.“

Doch mit Formeln wie „Heilung durch Wahrheit“ oder „Versöhnung durch Ehrlichkeit“ schloss der *Aufarbeitungs*diskurs unmittelbar an die Arbeit besonders der

südafrikanischen Truth-And-Reconciliation-Commissions an und offenbarte zugleich einen konstitutiven Zielkonflikt, der sie bis heute begleitet. Joachim Gauck wehrte sich bereits im Frühjahr 1990 gegen jede Fristbindung der Dikturaufarbeitung. Aber er warb doch mit der Idee einer Vergebung, die nach dem Erinnern kommen werde. „In unserem Eintreten für Ehrlichkeit und Bewahrung des Belastenden wollen wir nicht eine deutsche Vorliebe zu Selbstzerfleischung pflegen, auch nicht Vergebung und Versöhnung ausschließen. Aber vor der Versöhnung muss klar sein, wo Schuld und Versagen lagen. Vor der Vergebung liegt das Erinnern. Vor der Freude an der Demokratie die Räumung der Trümmer der Diktatur. Das wird Zeit brauchen.“

Heute hingegen gründet die Idee der Aufarbeitung mehr denn je auf einer prinzipiellen Unabschließbarkeit, die ihrer gleichermaßen fundamentalen Vergebungsbereitschaft zuwiderläuft. Anders gesagt: Aufarbeitung verspricht permanent eine Versöhnung, die sie nicht einlösen kann. Dies zeigte sich prägnant in dem Streit, den Matthias Platzeck 2010 mit seiner Forderung nach Versöhnung in Brandenburg auslöste. Im *Spiegel* gefragt, was sie unter Versöhnung verstehe, wies Marianne Birthler die Verantwortung für ihr mögliches Ausbleiben unter Verweis auf die Täter von sich: „Das Ziel der Aufarbeitung ist zunächst, dass die Opfer mit ihrem Schicksal klarkommen und die Täter zu ihrer Verantwortung stehen. Versöhnung ist etwas Zusätzliches, sie kann sich in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Opfern und Tätern ereignen. Sie braucht die Wahrheit und oft auch Zeit, und sie lebt von der Einsicht der Täter.“ Den entgegengesetzten Vorstoß des brandenburgischen Ministerpräsidenten Matthias Platzeck dagegen, der nun nach zwanzig Jahren Aufarbeitung einen „Prozess der Versöhnung“ forderte, wies Marianne Birthler als gänzlich unangemessen zurück: „Platzeck hat eine Koalition mit der Partei, deren Vorläufer als SED verantwortlich für Unterdrückung und Unfreiheit war, als Versöhnungsprojekt ausgerufen. Und das geht nicht. Versöhnung ist keine politische Kategorie, sondern etwas Persönliches. Sie lässt sich weder planen noch anordnen.“

In einem Wort: Aufarbeitung lehnt sich zwar begrifflich an Freuds tiefenpsychologisches Konzept von Durcharbeitung und Loslassen an. Aber sie kann den Lohn der Anstrengung nicht gewähren, sondern sie verspricht eine Versöhnung, die sie immerfort auf die Zukunft verschieben muss, um sich selbst nicht aufzugeben. Die ursprüngliche erhoffte Vergangenheitsbefreiung durch Aufarbeitung hat sich unter der Hand in eine iterative Vergangenheitsbeschwörung zu verwandeln begonnen, die sich nur vorgeblich noch an die Mitlebenden richtet, sondern in Wirklichkeit an die Nachlebenden. Die innere Unwahrheit der Aufarbeitung besteht darin, dass sie eine temporäre gesellschaftspolitische Aufgabe in eine dauerhafte historische Lehre verwandelt, ohne ihrem moralischen Geltungsanspruch zu entsagen.

Aufklärung und Affirmation

All diese Trends der gegenwärtigen Erinnerungskultur laufen auf dasselbe versteckte Resultat zu, nämlich auf den heimlichen Umschlag von Aufklärung in Affirmation. Im selben Maße, in dem der opferzentrierte Aufarbeitungskonsens zum selbstverständlichen Fundament unserer politischen Kultur wurde, hat er begonnen, sein aufrüttelndes Potenzial einzubüßen. Die Konfrontation mit der NS-Vergangenheit verlangt uns nichts mehr ab, weil sie uns selbst nicht einschließt und weil sie keine Gegner mehr kennt: 93 Prozent aller zu Beginn des Jahres 2018 befragten Deutschen im Alter von 16 bis 92 Jahren halten die Erinnerung an die Vernichtung

von Menschen in Konzentrationslagern für einen wichtigen oder den wichtigsten Inhalt des Geschichtsunterrichts. Mit dem Sieg der schmerzhaften Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung über die bequeme Vergangenheitsverdrängung hat sich der Anspruch auf kritische Bewältigung der Vergangenheit in die Realität einer selbstgewissen Bestätigung der Gegenwart zu verwandeln begonnen. Unser Geschichtskonsens ist wohlfeil geworden, und das Projekt der historischen Aufklärung hat sich in die Realität einer historischen Affirmation verwandelt, die aus der Beschäftigung mit der Vergangenheit nicht mehr unbequeme und womöglich unwillkommene Erkenntnisse zieht, sondern vertraute Bilder immer wieder reproduziert und ritualisiert. Hier tritt die eigentliche Herausforderung der heutigen Erinnerungskultur zutage: in der leeren Selbstbestätigung eines Aufklärungsgestus, der unbemerkt in Affirmation umgeschlagen ist und seine innere Krise durch geschichtskulturelle Geschäftigkeit und erinnerungspolitische Unduldsamkeit zu verbergen trachtet.

Faktizität und Fiktionalität

Die Krise der Erinnerungskultur zeigt sich schließlich in einer zunehmenden Verwischung der Grenzen zwischen Faktizität und Fiktionalität, die der Erinnerungskultur ihren wichtigsten Antrieb nimmt: die Wahrheit ans Licht zu bringen. Wenn Quentin Tarantinos Spielfilm *Inglorious Basterds* in der Filmkritik gefeiert wurde, weil er die „Authentizitätshörigkeit“ des deutschen Geschichtsfilms hinter sich gelassen und mit erfrischender Unbedenklichkeit die Wirklichkeit nach dem Wunschbild geformt habe, indem er Hitler in einem Pariser Kino umkommen ließ, mag das vom Begriff der künstlerischen Freiheit gedeckt sein.

Diese Ausnahme gilt aber nicht für das historische Ereignisfernsehen mit seinen Doku-Dramen, Doku-Fiktionen und Re-Enactments, das die mediale Präsentation von Zeitgeschichte prägt und nicht nur den Mangel an mediengerechten Sachzeugnissen ausgleicht, sondern den Übergang zwischen Original und Mimesis ästhetisch inszeniert. Wie weit die filmische Kombination aus fiktionalen und nichtfiktionalen Elementen vorangeschritten ist, die eine historische Rahmenhandlung mit einer unhistorischen Binnenhandlung melodramatischen Zuschnitts verwebt, brachte der 2008 ausgestrahlte Mauerfallfilm über die in den Westen geschmuggelten Aufnahmen der Leipziger Montagsdemonstrationen schon im Titel zum Ausdruck: *Wir sind das Volk – Liebe kennt keine Grenzen*. Hier wie in anderen Doku-Dramen emanzipiert sich die Geschichtskultur von der Vetokraft der Quellen und projiziert die Weltvorstellungen der Gegenwart in den historischen Raum, ohne auf das Gütesiegel der historischen Authentizität verzichten zu müssen. Dies aber verwischt in den Augen des Betrachters die kategoriale Differenz zwischen Faktizität und Fiktionalität bis hin zur Ununterscheidbarkeit – unser Bild von Adolf Hitler trägt die Züge seines Protagonisten Bruno Ganz in Bernd Eichingers Film *Der Untergang* von 2004, und Veronica Ferres versichert, dass die Tränen „echt“ gewesen seien, die sie als *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie* weinte.

Wie erfolgreich diese Authentisierung des Fiktionalen mittlerweile geworden ist, zeigt sich umgekehrt, wenn auch historische Spielfilme unter das Wahrheitsgebot des Presserechts gestellt werden, wie es 2006 dem Contergan-Film des Drehbuchautors Benedikt Röskau erging. Infolge der Klage des Produzenten von *Chemie Grünenthal* stellte die 24. Zivilkammer des Hamburger Landgerichts fest, „dass der Film [...] eine so hohe Authentizität besitze, dass der Zuschauer nicht mehr zwischen Fiktion und Wirklichkeit unterscheiden könne, und darum unter das viel strengere Presse-

recht falle, sich also nicht auf den Verfassungsartikel der Kunstfreiheit berufen könne“.

Denselben Triumph des Simulacrums über die flüchtige Vergangenheit, die eine Unterscheidung zwischen Original und Kopie, Realität und Vorstellung zunehmend unmöglich macht, bestimmt unseren Umgang mit den materiellen Zeugnissen der Vergangenheit. Was ist im Sinne Johann Gustav Droysens Tradition, was Überrest, wenn 1999 neben Goethes Gartenhaus ein originalgetreuer Nachbau entstand, der heute in Bad Sulza steht und Besuchern erlaubt, ohne Rücksicht auf die Schutzbedürftigkeit der Artefakte Goethes Lebensgefühl wirklichkeitsnäher zu erfahren als im Ursprungsgebäude?

Mit der Aufweichung des von Georg Dehio geprägten denkmalpflegerischen Grundsatzes „Konservieren, nicht rekonstruieren“ ging die Aufgabe eines naiven Begriffs historischer Authentizität einher, der die Aura des historischen Zeugnisses noch aus seiner unverfälschten Überlieferung ableitete. Heute gilt hingegen als Gemeinplatz, dass „das geschichtlich Echte [...] nur in immer schon gewandelter Gestalt (existiert), überformt, überschrieben, an spätere Zeiten angepasst“. Authentizität lässt sich im heutigen Verständnis nicht naiv als Eigenschaft der Sache begreifen, sondern nur als Beziehung zwischen Objekt und Betrachter, und der Begriff der historischen Wahrheit tritt hinter ein Spiel von Faktizität und Fiktionalität zurück, wenn in Deutschland kriegszerstörte oder nach 1945 abgetragene Schlösser und Kirchen oder in Frankfurt am Main ein ganzes Altstadtviertel in historischer Originaltreue wieder aufgebaut werden.

Auch die Figur des in der Erinnerungskultur omnipräsenten Zeitzeugen spiegelt die andauernde Auseinandersetzung um die Grenzen zwischen Wirklichkeit und Vorstellung. Dass der sich erinnernde Zeitzeuge unwissentlich und unwillentlich weniger das seinerzeit beobachtete Geschehen selbst mitteilt als vielmehr die Erzählung, die er daraus im Laufe der Zeit geformt hat, ist eine Binsenweisheit und hat doch denn Aufstieg des Zeitzeugen zur authentischen Auskunftsinanz der Vergangenheit für die Gegenwart nur verzögert, aber nicht verhindert. Doch der Authentizitätsanspruch der Zeitzeugenerinnerung sieht sich im digitalen Zeitalter vor neuen Herausforderungen, und das Vordringen der künstlichen Intelligenz stellt alte Trennlinien zwischen Wirklichkeit und Vorstellung auf neue Proben. Was ist Realität, was ist Einbildung, wenn längst verstorbene Zeitzeugen Rede und Antwort auf Fragen stehen, die zu ihren Lebzeiten vielleicht nie gestellt wurden? Mit dem Namen von Pinchas Gutter verbindet sich das ehrgeizige Projekt *New Dimensions in Testimony* der Shoah Foundation an der University of Southern California in Los Angeles, das die visuelle und akustische Aufzeichnung der Lebenserinnerungen von Holocaust-Überlebenden auf höchstem technischem Standard digital so aufbereitet, dass sie als 3D-Hologramm-Interviewpartner zur Verfügung stehen. Als Avatare, also digitale Konstrukte präsentieren sich die Zeitzeugen so über ihren eigenen Tod hinaus in Interviewsituationen, und Algorithmen wählen aus der Menge des gespeicherten Materials passende Antworten auf die ihnen gestellten Fragen aus.

Was wie bloße Spielerei aussieht, löst in der Weiterentwicklung die Aura des Zeitzeugen von der lebenden Person und lässt die materielle Realität in der digitalen aufgehen, wie die Projektverantwortlichen versprochen. Tatsächlich scheint das Experiment zu funktionieren, wie eine zunächst skeptische Studentin nach ihrem Gespräch mit dem Avatar Pinchas Gutter resümierte. Auch distanzierte Beobachter konzedierten, dass schon bald die „Projektion als 3D-Hologramm ist irgendwann dank der technischen Weiterentwicklung vom lebenden Pinchas Gutter nicht mehr zu unterscheiden“ sein wird, und damit endgültig wird sich die tradierte Unterschei-

derung von Echtheit und Fiktion in unserem Zeitalter ihre kategorische Gültigkeit verloren haben. Die Beziehung zwischen Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit ist also komplexer, als das Instrument des Faktenchecks gegenüber dem Vorwurf der Lüge in Presse und Wissenschaft glauben machen will.

Die Zeitgeschichte als Akteur

Eine weitere Problemzone der Erinnerungskultur bildet die professionelle Geschichtsschreibung, die in zeitgeschichtlichen Fragen zunehmend von einer distanzierten Beobachterin zu einer engagierten Akteurin geworden ist. Die partnerschaftliche Engführung von Wissenschaft und Politik in der Aufarbeitung der Diktaturvergangenheiten des 20. Jahrhunderts stellt vordergründig unbezweifelbar eine Wohltat dar: Der Staat hört in Deutschland auf seine Experten in geschichtspolitischen Fragen; die Ministeriumsaufarbeitung profitiert von einer behördlichen Bereitschaft zur Öffnung der eigenen Akten, die nicht einmal vor den Mauern des Verfassungsschutzes und des Bundesnachrichtendienstes haltmacht. Die staatliche Anerkennung, die die Aufarbeitung auch der eigenen Institutionen heute erfährt, trennt Welten, um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen, von den – am Ende vergeblichen – Bemühungen des Auswärtigen Amtes, in den 1960er-Jahren eine Amerikareise von Fritz Fischer zu verhindern, die das Amt als untunliche Bekräftigung der deutschen Kriegsschuld 1914 ansah.

In der engen Zusammenarbeit von Betroffenen, Politikern und Wissenschaftlern in geschichtspolitischen Expertenkommissionen steckt auf der anderen Seite aber auch eine unübersehbare Schwäche. Insbesondere die beiden Enquetekommissionen des Deutschen Bundestags zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur in den 1990er-Jahren zeitigten eine Fülle von Forschungserkenntnissen, aber sie stülpten ihnen auch ein ganzes Netz von Formelkompromissen über, die in Aushandlungsprozessen zwischen Politik und Wissenschaft entstanden wie weiland historische Grundlagenwerke in der DDR. Auch das im Koalitionsvertrag der jetzigen wie der vorigen Bundesregierung eingegangene Bekenntnis, „die Aufarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit von Ministerien und Bundesbehörden voran[zu]treiben“, zeitigt neben dem enormen fachlichen Erkenntnisgewinn auch Schattenseiten. Mittlerweile gilt die Behördenprüfung auf ihren NS-Umgang hin als eine Art Gütesiegel, um das alle Ministerien mit einer Leidenschaft konkurrieren, die binnen zehn Jahren zu einem grotesken Rollentausch geführt hat: 2009 noch standen Teile des Auswärtigen Amtes den bohrenden Fragen der Historiker in kritischer Abwehr gegenüber; heute drängen oberste Verfassungsorgane mit Macht darauf, den Grad ihrer postfaschistischen Belastung prüfen zu lassen, und halten den zögernden Historikern die braunen Flecken auf ihrer Behördenweste entgegen, um die Plausibilität ihres Anliegens zu unterstreichen.

All diese Kommissionen arbeiten heute in so strikt gewahrter Unabhängigkeit, dass sie ihren Autonomieanspruch längst nicht mehr wie die Unabhängigen Historikerkommissionen zum Auswärtigen Amt 2005 und zum BND 2011 schon im Titel glauben tragen zu müssen. Aber auch einflussfreie Förderung bindet, nämlich allein durch ihre von außen kommende Zwecksetzung. So ist die gegenwärtig starke Behördenforschung überaus produktiv, aber sie ist nicht innovativ, insoweit sie einen gesellschaftlich anerkannten Interpretationsrahmen nur auszufüllen statt zugleich auch kritisch zu befragen sucht. Aus diesem Grund bewegen sich ihre Ergebnisvorstellungen immer wieder in dem Dilemma, die von der Öffentlichkeit erwartete

„Nazi-Zählerei“ analytisch problematisieren zu wollen und praktisch dann doch bedienen zu müssen, wie etwa die Berichterstattung über das vom Institut für Zeitgeschichte München und dem Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam durchgeführte Aufarbeitungsprojekt zum Bundesministerium des Innern vor Augen führt: „Hitler-Getreue dominierten das Innenministerium noch lange nach dem Krieg“, dröhnte der *Spiegel*; während der Direktor des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Andreas Wirsching, drei Tage später bei der Buchpräsentation weit weniger stark in die Öffentlichkeit drang, als er sich dagegen verwahrte, dass das Nachrichtenmagazin aus dem BMI ein „Horrorkabinett“ gemacht habe, obwohl doch dessen NS-Belastungsgrad in Wahrheit kaum höher gewesen war als der vieler Zeitungen und übrigens auch des *Spiegel* selbst.

Fazit

Welches Fazit ergibt sich aus dieser kritischen Analyse unserer heutigen Erinnerungskultur? Es besteht zunächst in der Befreiung von bequemen Selbsttäuschungen: Unsere Erinnerungskultur ist weniger gefestigt, als wir gern denken, und die schmerzhafteste Anstrengung, die wir uns selbst attestieren, ist zu einer selbstgefälligen Attitüde geworden. Der Appell an die weitere Intensivierung der Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung verfehlt ihr Ziel, und der herrschende Erinnerungskonsens samt seiner Engführung von Wissenschaft, Politik und Moral ist nicht die Lösung, sondern vielmehr das Problem. Die Waffen schließlich, mit denen wir uns gegen Fake News und Geschichtslügen zu behaupten suchen, sind im digitalen Zeitalter stumpf geworden. Die Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung ist darum nicht gescheitert, wie zuletzt in Bezug auf die Auseinandersetzung mit der kommunistischen Vergangenheit in Ostdeutschland behauptet wurde, aber um zukunftstauglich zu werden, bedarf unsere Verständigung über die Vergangenheit und ihre Lasten der kritischen Selbstreflexion auf ihre Vorannahmen und Wirkungsweisen, auf ihre äußeren Verstrickungen und inneren Widersprüche, auf ihre brüchig gewordenen Gewissheiten und ihr überholtes Selbstverständnis. Zur engagierten Mitwirkung muss die epistemische Distanz treten, aus der die Bauformen und Leitvorstellungen einer Geschichtskultur sichtbar werden, die sich in unablässigem Wandel befindet und ein bloßes „Weiter so!“ nur allzu rasch in das „Mir doch egal!“ umschlagen lassen kann, von dem der europäische Rechtspopulismus zeugt, der mit Marine Le Pen oder Alexander Gauland Hitlerbarbarei und Holocaust gar nicht leugnen muss, um die Erinnerung an sie verächtlich abzutun.

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Lang ist der Weg

Ein Film von Herbert B. Fredersdorf und Marek Goldstein,
1947

Der erste Spielfilm, der nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in den Ateliers der Bavaria Filmstudios in München-Geiseltal gedreht wurde, ist eines der ganz frühen Beispiele für den Versuch einer Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Vergangenheit. Dieser einzige in Deutschland produzierte jiddische Film stellt das Schicksal der Juden in den Mittelpunkt und nähert sich der Thematik nicht aus der Perspektive der Täter, sondern aus der der Opfer. *Lang ist der Weg* wurde 1947 in jiddischer und polnischer Sprache mit deutschen Untertiteln mit der Lizenznummer 13 der American Information Control Division gedreht und von der Jidische Film Organizazie (JFO)/Internationale Filmorganisation GmbH München unter der Leitung von Abraham Weinstein produziert. Die Bavaria Filmkunst selbst bekam erst 1949 wieder eine Lizenz, Fremdproduktionen durften aber bereits vorher auf dem Gelände gedreht werden. Herbert B. Fredersdorf, der während der NS-Zeit u. a. Kriminalfilme gedreht hatte, führte zusammen mit Marek Goldstein, der wie Weinstein aus Polen stammte und den Holocaust überlebt hatte, Regie. Goldstein und Weinstein waren in Polen bereits als Filmemacher tätig gewesen.

Das Drehbuch¹ entstand nach einer Idee von Israel Becker (z. T. auch als Beker transkribiert) und wurde von ihm und Karl-Georg Külb verfasst. Külb, der 1937 als Drehbuchautor bei der Ufa engagiert worden war, entwickelte während der NS-Zeit die Vorlagen für Propaganda- und Unterhaltungsfilme u. a. mit Zarah Leander und Marika Röck. 1939 kam sein Film *Der Stammbaum des Dr. Pistorius* in die Kinos, ein Unterhaltungsfilm, der die Ahnenforschung einer Familie in der Zeit der Nürnberger Rassegesetze thematisiert und nach dem Krieg als Vorbehaltsfilm klassifiziert wurde. In den 1950er-Jahren kehrte Külb zu seinem alten Genre zurück und schrieb Drehbücher für Unterhaltungsfilme.

Israel Becker, sein Gegenpart und der Hauptdarsteller des Films, wurde in Białystok geboren und entkam der NS-Verfolgung durch die Flucht in die Sowjetunion. 1946 hatte er in Reichenbach in Niederschlesien, in der dort für kurze Zeit existierenden Jüdischen Autonomen Republik, eine eigene Theatergruppe gegründet. Im Juli 1946 gelang es der gesamten Truppe, mit Hilfe der jüdischen Fluchthilfeorganisation Brichah über Stettin und Berlin nach München – das damalige Zentrum jüdischen Nachkriegslebens in Deutschland – zu fliehen. Dort trat das Ensemble unter dem Namen Minchener Jiddischer Klajnkunst Teater, kurz: MIKT, vor allem mit jiddischen Stücken auf. Nachdem Becker in München einen wesentlichen Anteil am kulturellen Leben der Scherit Hapleitah, des Restes der Geretteten, wie sich die Überlebenden selbst nannten, hatte, machte er sich bald nach der Staatsgründung – wie viele andere – auf den Weg nach Israel, und wurde Ensemblemitglied und später Direktor des dortigen Habima National Theaters und gründete schließlich auch ein Jiddisches Theater. Der im Jahr 2000 uraufgeführte Film *The Balcony* (Ha'mirpeset) ist eine Reminiszenz an Beckers Leben.

¹ Leo W. Schwarz Papers [LWSP] im YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, Folder 431; 82 Bilder.

Die Außenaufnahmen wurden in München und Umgebung sowie vor allem auch in dem im Oktober 1945 in einer ehemaligen Kaserne eingerichteten Lager für ausschließlich jüdische Displaced Persons, in Landsberg/Lech gedreht. Als Kameramänner wurden Franz Koch, der bei Leni Riefenstahls nazistischem Heroenfilm *Triumph des Willens* mitgewirkt hatte, und der aus Wilna stammende Holocaustüberlebende Jakob Jonilowicz, der später den Eichmann-Prozess filmisch dokumentierte, beauftragt. Nicht nur die Kameraführung, sondern auch Regie und Drehbuch waren doppelt besetzt, d. h. zum einen mit Personen, die während der NS-Zeit in der Filmbranche tätig waren, und zum anderen mit jiddischen Filmschaffenden, die den Holocaust überlebt hatten. Diese Vorgehensweise war wohl nicht der Intention geschuldet, Täter und Opfer zu versöhnen, sondern dem Ziel, den Film auch für ein deutsches Publikum attraktiv zu machen. Dennoch muss dies auch als ein ganz frühes Beispiel für den Versuch gesehen werden, Täter und Opfer in einem Film zusammenzubringen, der die Gräueltaten der NS-Zeit thematisiert und sich nicht dem allgemeinen Tenor vieler deutscher Nachkriegsfilme anschließt, die eine heile Welt suggerierten.

Mit *Die Mörder sind unter uns* entstand bei der DEFA in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone 1946 der erste sogenannte Trümmerfilm, dem dann im westlichen Teil Deutschlands noch Filme wie *In jenen Tagen* und *Zwischen gestern und morgen* oder *Der Ruf* folgten. Wolfgang Staudtes Film *Die Mörder sind unter uns* gilt als erster deutscher Trümmer- und Nachkriegsfilm. Vergessen allerdings wird bei der Aufzählung dieser ersten Produktionen, die sich mit der NS-Zeit im Spielfilm auseinandersetzten, grundsätzlich *Lang ist der Weg*, obwohl dieser Streifen ein beeindruckendes Beispiel einer so frühen Auseinandersetzung mit der Verfolgung der Juden und den Traumata für die Überlebenden darstellt.

Den Schnitt des Films übernahm der bedeutendste Filmregisseur der Ufa vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Erich (Eric) Pommer, der so viel beachtete Filme wie *Metropolis* und *Der Blaue Engel* geschaffen hatte und der NS-Verfolgung durch die Emigration in die USA entkommen war. Während des Krieges arbeitete er in Hollywood. 1946 kehrte Pommer nach Deutschland zurück und war bis 1949 als oberster Filmoffizier – Film Production Control Officer – für die US-amerikanische Militärregierung tätig und damit beauftragt, die Filmindustrie in Deutschland neu aufzubauen.

In den Hauptrollen waren der in Białystok geborene Regisseur und Schauspieler Israel Becker, der David Jelin spielte, sowie die Tochter des albanischstämmigen österreichischen Schauspielers Alexander Moissi, Bettina Moissi, die Dora Berkowitz verkörperte, zu sehen. Die Rolle von Davids Mutter Hanna Jelin hatte Berta Litwina übernommen, eine in Simferopol geborene polnisch-jüdische Schauspielerin, die vor dem Krieg in jiddischen Filmen und Theaterstücken zu sehen war und über die darüber hinaus kaum etwas bekannt ist. Ihren Mann spielte Jacob Fischer, Mitglied eines der damals zahlreichen Dramenzirkel der jüdischen Displaced Persons (DPs).

Die deutschen Schauspieler Paul Dahlke und Otto Wernicke übernahmen die Rollen der Ärzte, die Davids Mutter Hanna Jelin in einer Klinik versorgten, nachdem sie durch die Suche nach ihrem Sohn und dem Trauma ihres KZ-Aufenthalts psychisch völlig am Ende war. Den Einsatz zweier bekannter deutscher Schauspieler sollte einmal mehr das Interesse des deutschen Publikums wecken, löste aber gleichzeitig heftige Proteste in den Kreisen der jüdischen DPs aus, die sich gegen deutsche Schauspieler in einem Film, der die Erlebnisse von Verfolgung und Überleben eindringlich schildert, wehrten.

Jüdische Überlebende aus den DP-Lagern Neu-Freimann/Kaltherberge (München) und Pocking (eines der größten jüdischen DP-Lager in der US-Zone) übernahm

men die Statistenrollen. In einem Brief vom 3. Juli 1947 erbat die Ifo-Filmgesellschaft zusätzlich vom DP-Kulturamt in Feldafing, wo sich ebenfalls ein großes jüdisches DP-Lager befand, „für den nächsten Tag fünf orthodoxe Juden im Alter von 45 bis 60 Jahren“, um die „große Sache“ zu unterstützen.² Die wohl emotional schwierigste Aufgabe fiel den DPs aus Pocking zu, sie verkörperten jüdische Häftlinge bei der Selektion an der Rampe in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Lang ist der Weg erzählt die Geschichte einer polnisch-jüdischen Familie und deren Schicksal. Der Film beginnt mit dem Überfall auf Polen am 1. September 1939 und zeigt die Stationen Ghetto, Deportation, Flucht, Selektion und das Schicksal der Partisanen, das Leben im Nachkriegschaos, die Erlebnisse der Überlebenden in Warschau sowie die Phase des jüdischen DP-Lebens, die sich allmählich einschleichende Lethargie im DP-Lager, weil der Weg aus Deutschland noch immer versperrt war, und schließlich die Erfüllung eines Traums mit der Reise nach Eretz-Israel.

David, dem Sohn von Jakob und Hanna Jelin, gelingt die Flucht aus dem Deportationszug. Er versucht bei polnischen Bauern Unterschlupf zu finden und wird verraten, kann aber fliehen und schließt sich den Partisanen an. Nach Kriegsende erfährt er, dass sein Vater umgekommen ist. Auf der Suche nach seiner Mutter irrt er durch die Straßen von Warschau, findet in der ehemaligen Wohnung neue Bewohner vor, die das einstige Zuhause okkupiert haben. Bei seinen Irrwegen durch die Straßen und das Büro des Suchdienstes lernt David Dora Berkovitz kennen, die keine Familie mehr hat und sich ihm anschließt. Gemeinsam machen sie sich auf den Weg und landen schließlich im Lager für jüdische Displaced Persons in Landsberg/Lech. David lässt Dora dort in einem überfüllten Zimmer zurück, das nur durch Vorhänge abgeteilt ein wenig private Atmosphäre bietet, um sich alleine nochmals auf die Suche nach seiner Mutter zu machen. Schließlich finden Sohn und Mutter zusammen. David ist inzwischen mit Dora verheiratet.

Lang ist der Weg endet mit der Auswanderung von David, Dora, ihrem inzwischen geborenen Kind und der Mutter Hanne nach Israel, nachdem sie auf einer der landwirtschaftlichen Ausbildungsfarmen, die die Überlebenden in der Nähe der großen jüdischen DP-Lager eingerichtet hatten, auf die Aufgaben in der neuen Heimat vorbereitet worden waren.

Der Film zeichnet damit die Stationen nach, die viele Überlebende durchliefen, bevor es ihnen endlich gelang nach Israel auszuwandern und dort ein neues Leben zu beginnen. Für einen Großteil von ihnen war erst dann – zumindest rational – das Ende ihrer Verfolgung erreicht.

Szenen aus dem DP-Lager Landsberg und Originalfilmdokumente des Zweiten Kongresses der befreiten Juden der US-amerikanischen Besatzungszone in Bad Reichenhall vom 25. bis 27. Februar 1947 sind ein beredtes Zeugnis für die schwierige Lage, der sich die Überlebenden ausgesetzt sahen, obwohl sie doch hofften, nach all den Stationen der Verfolgung schnell ein freies Leben führen und die Vergangenheit hinter sich lassen zu können.

Der Film kombiniert fiktive Aufnahmen mit dokumentarischem Material aus amerikanischen Militärarchiven über Kriegereignisse und Befreiung. Schuld oder Verantwortung für die deutschen Verbrechen thematisiert der Streifen nicht, Antisemitismus wird ausschließlich den Polen zugeschrieben. Die fehlende Reflexion über deutsche Schuld und Verantwortung ist wohl zu einem dem zweiten Drehbuch-

² Jacqueline Dewell Giere, „Wir sind unterwegs, aber nicht in der Wüste“. Erziehung und Kultur in den jüdischen Displaced Persons-Lagern der amerikanischen Zone im Nachkriegsdeutschland 1945–1949, Diss., Frankfurt am Main 1993.

autor Karl Georg Külb, aber auch der Intention, ein deutsches Publikum gewinnen zu können, zu verdanken.

Als der Film gedreht wurde, lebte noch der weitaus größte Teil der jüdischen DPs in den Lagern der US-amerikanischen und britischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands. Etwa 200.000 Menschen, vor allem osteuropäische Überlebende, die aus den Konzentrationslagern bzw. auf den Todesmärschen befreit worden waren oder sich während der NS-Zeit durch Flucht zunächst in die Sowjetunion gerettet hatten und zurückgekehrt in Polen keine Zukunft mehr sahen, waren im Nachkriegsdeutschland gestrandet. Die überwiegende Mehrheit war erst nach dem Juli 1946, dem Pogrom im polnischen Kielce, insbesondere in die US-Zone Deutschlands und Österreichs gekommen und wurde dort von der Militärregierung, UN-Hilfsorganisationen sowie jüdischen Wohlfahrtsorganisationen versorgt. Nach der Staatsgründung Israels 1948, dem Ende des israelischen Unabhängigkeitskrieges 1949 und der Lockerung der amerikanischen Einwanderungsgesetzgebung 1950 verließen die meisten DPs Deutschland. Die DP-Lager wurden nach und nach geschlossen. Geblieben war allerdings noch ein letztes jüdisches DP-Lager, Föhrenwald bei Wolfratshausen, 25 Kilometer südlich von München. 1951 in deutsche Verwaltung übergegangen, beherbergte das Lager noch bis zum Februar 1957 etwa 2.000 jüdische sogenannte *hard-core-cases*, also Menschen, die aufgrund ihres Gesundheitszustandes oder dem ihrer Angehörigen nicht auswandern konnten. Erst als dieses letzte jüdische DP-Lager in Deutschland geschlossen werden konnte, nachdem die verbliebenen DPs auf mehrere deutsche Städte verteilt wurden, war die Geschichte der jüdischen DPs in Deutschland beendet.

Nachdem der Film im Juni 1948 in München uraufgeführt worden war, erfolgte der Kinostart 1948, zum Jahrestag des Kriegsbeginns am 1. September, im Berliner Marmorhaus. Der Rezensent des *Berliner Nachtexpress* war angetan von der Tatsache, dass der Film „ohne Pathos, ohne Anklage mit erhobener Hand, nur aus dem reinen Sehnsuchtsgefühl nach menschlichem Glück“³ die Geschichte erzählt. Es gelte den Hass zu unterbinden, damit Frieden einkehre. Damit hält der Autor ein Plädoyer für die Vertuschung der NS-Gräuel und befindet sich damit auf der Höhe des Zeitgeistes.

In der Filmbesprechung der *Süddeutschen Zeitung* vom 16. November 1948 wird darauf verwiesen, dass während der Aufführung, als die Sequenz mit den Krematorien von Auschwitz zu sehen war, einige Zuschauer applaudiert und gerufen hätten: „Es sind nicht genug umgekommen“. Der Rezensent betont den „ungewöhnlichen Erfolg“ des Films, der „einer der am heftigsten diskutierten und umstrittenen Filme der deutschen Nachkriegszeit“ sei: „Im ersten Teil ist die Verbindung des Dokumentarischen mit dem Menschlichen, des Wochenschauberichtes mit Spielszenen überraschend gut gelungen. Die Spielszenen zeigen die Hand eines instinktsicheren Regisseurs, der sich davor hütet, die Kamera allzu nahe an Grauen und Gräuel jener Jahre heranzuführen und den künstlerisch überzeugenderen Weg der indirekten Wirkung, der symbolischen Details, wählt. Im zweiten Teil fällt das Dokumentarische und das Private mehr und mehr auseinander, aber die Gesamtwirkung bleibt infolge der atmosphärischen Echtheit immer noch stark.“ Kritisiert wird allerdings das Ende des Films: „Der Schlussteil ist am Schwächsten. Hier hat man propagandistischen Pathos eingesetzt, statt nur die Tatsachen reden zu lassen, hier lässt man lyri-

3 Berliner Nachtexpress, 2. September 1949, zit. nach: 2. September 1948, zit. nach: Cilly Kugelmann, *Lang ist der Weg. Eine jüdisch-deutsche Film-Kooperation*, in: *Jahrbuch 1996 zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust*, Fritz Bauer Institut, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 353-370, 365.

sche Chöre gewisse dekorative Plakatszenen untermalen, statt kompromisslos im Kontakt mit der Realität zu bleiben, hier gibt es Stellen, die der Zuschauer nicht mehr als echt empfindet, und hier liegt denn auch der Punkt, an dem sich die Diskussionen entzünden.⁴

Obwohl die *Süddeutsche Zeitung* den Erfolg des Films lobte, scheint die Begeisterung tatsächlich doch eher gering ausgefallen zu sein. Es half offensichtlich nichts, dass bekannte deutsche Schauspieler mitspielten, keine Schuldzuschreibungen an die Deutschen erfolgten und nur die polnische Bevölkerung als antisemitisch dargestellt wurde. Einer der führenden Persönlichkeiten der Scherit Hapleita, Samuel Gringauz, Herausgeber des DP-Organs *Landsberger Lager-Cajtung* (Jidisze Cajtung), zog 1948 eine desillusionierende Bilanz und erwähnte als eines der Indizien auch den Film: „Die jüdische Welt will nichts mehr von unseren speziellen Leiden wissen. Hier in New York ist der Film ‚Lang ist der Weg‘, ein Streifen über Überlebende unter der Regie von Israel Becker, der vor allem im DP-Lager Landsberg gedreht wurde“, vor leeren Kinoreihen gelaufen und abgesetzt worden.⁵ In seinem dokumentarischen Buch *The Redeemers* über seine Zeit in Deutschland 1946 bis 1947 als Direktor des American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee konstatiert Leo W. Schwarz hingegen, der Film sei mit einigem wirtschaftlichen Erfolg in Kinos in New York und Tel Aviv gelaufen.⁶ Eine gewisse Attraktivität für das Publikum muss der Film wohl gehabt haben, sonst wäre er nicht 1949 mit französischen Untertiteln versehen unter dem Namen *La route est longue* gezeigt worden.

Nicht nur in den USA, sondern auch in Deutschland war der Drang nach seichten Filmabenteuern und Liebesgeschichten in den unmittelbaren Nachkriegsjahren größer als der Bedarf an Trümmerfilmen, die die Realität der niedergebombten Städte zeigten und eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Gräueln des NS-Regimes notwendig gemacht hätten. Auch der heranziehende Kalte Krieg forderte seinen Tribut und verhinderte die Konfrontation mit der NS-Vergangenheit, weil Deutschland als westlicher Partner gebraucht wurde.

Nachdem der Film lange Zeit zu den vergessenen Zeitzeugnissen gehörte, erhielt er 1996 den *Spirit of Freedom Award* des Jerusalem Film Festivals und wurde seitdem immer wieder einmal anlässlich verschiedener Film- und Dokumentarfestivals aufgeführt.

4 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16. November 1948.

5 Jidisze Cajtung, 31. Dezember 1948.

6 Leo W. Schwarz, *The Redeemers. A Saga of the Years 1945–1952*, New York 1953, 295.

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