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Maximilian Becker

The Fédération Internationale des Résistants (FIR)

Its activities during the Breakdown of the Soviet Bloc¹

Abstract

This paper offers an analysis of the activities of the communist-dominated Fédération Internationale des Résistants (International Federation of Resistance Movements, FIR), the international umbrella organisation of associations of victims of Nazi persecution from both Eastern and Western Europe between the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this time, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc led to a deep crisis for the Eastern European organisations like the Polish Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację (Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy) representing the former anti-fascist resistance fighters and political prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, which had been part of the communist power apparatus, and therefore of FIR. The organisation, which had been mired in growing financial difficulties for at least two decades, then lost much of its influence and of its potential to spread its message among the public. Nevertheless, FIR tried to maintain its activities with a special focus on dealing with right-wing extremism, the preservation of the rights and pensions of former resistance fighters, a commitment to peace and disarmament, as well as to the politics of memory.

In June 1991, the Fédération Internationale des Résistants (International Federation of Resistance Movements, hereafter FIR) held its Eleventh Ordinary Congress Moscow. Founded in Vienna in 1951 as the successor organisation to the Fédération internationale des anciens prisonniers politiques (International Federation of Former Political Prisoners, hereafter FIAPP), the first international umbrella organisation of associations of victims of Nazi persecution, FIR consolidated associations of former anti-fascist resistance fighters and partisans, organisations of former concentration camp inmates and all “other persons persecuted under Nazism and fascism”, as well as their dependents.² FIAPP, FIR and their national member organisations were dominated by communists. Therefore, the collapse of the communist system within the Soviet sphere of control directly affected FIR and the associations of victims of political persecution and anti-fascist resistance fighters. The congress of 1991 was strongly influenced by this crisis.³ During this meeting, at which 69 delegates from both Eastern and Western Europe as well as from Israel took part, the participants commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. At the same event, they celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the founding of FIR.

1 I would like to thank the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) for giving me a generous grant and supporting me in various ways.

2 Art. II Statuten der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR). Beschlüsse des II. Kongresses der FIR, 28 November 1954, Vienna 1954.

3 Der XI. Ordentliche Kongress der FIR tagte vom 24. bis 26. Juni 1991 in Moskau, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

In general, researchers have engaged very little with the international associations of the victims of political persecution. An exception is the recently published PhD thesis of Philipp Neumann-Thein, which dealt with the International Committee of Buchenwald-Dora and Commandos.⁴ Some other international associations have been mentioned mainly in studies about concentration camp memorials such as Auschwitz, Dachau or Mauthausen.⁵ The history of the International Auschwitz Committee (hereafter IAC) from the 1950s until 1965 was also investigated in the biography of the Austrian leader of the IAC of the time, Hermann Langbein.⁶ Meanwhile, the impact of the Eastern and Central-European revolutions of 1989/1990 on the associations of victims of political persecution have attracted very little interest from historians.

The history of FIR has, however, been the subject of various studies. Jérémie Libot recently wrote his Master's thesis about the organisation's history but, despite his focus on the years between 1971 and 1991, he barely analysed the impact of the collapse of communism on FIR.⁷ Wilfried Ruppert, an East-German PhD student whose research on this topic was carried out during the communist period, focussed on the organisation's commitment to the "struggle for peace".⁸ Furthermore, Alexander Heldring's study, which was written at the end of the 1960s and was clearly anti-communist in motivation, and two other recent essays by Ulrich Schneider, FIR's current secretary-general, are extant.⁹ The *Festschrift* which the organisation published to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary is also of interest to this study.¹⁰ All of these papers, however, share the same problematic foundation: namely their sources. Heldring relied on oral information from Hubert Halin, a Belgian anti-communist and declared enemy of FIR, for a significant portion of his book, while Schneider did not utilise any archival sources and did not acknowledge the rich publications of the association. Libot and Ruppert confined themselves to French or East German sources, while the scattered archive of FIR has not been used so far. This author's major research project aims to shed light on FIR's role in transnational politics of memory.

This article presents the preliminary results of this major project. It is based on a reading of the internal protocols of FIR meetings and on an analysis of the organisa-

4 Philipp Neumann-Thein, *Parteidisziplin und Eigenwilligkeit. Das Internationale Komitee Buchenwald-Dora und Kommandos*, Göttingen 2014; for the Comité International de Neuengamme, see the publication of the German Lagergemeinschaft Michael Grill/Sabine Homann-Engel, "... das war ja kein Spaziergang im Sommer!" Die Geschichte eines Überlebendenverbandes, Hamburg 2008. The International Committee of Ravensbrück is mentioned in Helga Amesberger/Kerstin Lercher, *Lebendiges Gedächtnis. Die Geschichte der österreichischen Lagergemeinschaft Ravensbrück*, Vienna 2008.

5 Bertrand Perz, *Die KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, Innsbruck 2006; Jonathan Huenner, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979*, Athens (Ohio) 2003; Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau. The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001*, Cambridge 2001.

6 Katharina Stengel/Hermann Langbein, *Ein Auschwitz-Überlebender in den erinnerungspolitischen Konflikten der Nachkriegszeit*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2012.

7 Jérémie Libot, *La Fédération Internationale des Résistants, 1971–1991: Un Itinéraire de la Résistance Européenne* [The International Federation of Resistance Fighters, 1971–1991: A Guide to the European Resistance], s. l. 2013.

8 Wilfried Ruppert, *Zur Geschichte der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR) im Kampf für Frieden, Entspannung und Abrüstung, gegen Faschismus und Neofaschismus (1951–1970). Zum Anteil der antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer der DDR an der Tätigkeit der FIR*, Berlin (GDR) 1989.

9 Alexander Heldring, *The International Federation of Resistance Movements. History and Background*, The Hague 1969; Ulrich Schneider, *Die Internationale Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR) und der 8. Mai 1945*, in: *Marxistische Blätter* 43 (2005) 2, 72-76; Ulrich Schneider, *Zur Geschichte der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR)*, in: *Informationen. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift des Studienkreises Deutscher Widerstand 1933–1945* 31 (2006) 63, 26-29.

10 *Fédération Internationale des Résistants (FIR) – Association Antifasciste 1951–2011* [International Federation of Resistance Fighters (FIR) – Anti-Fascist Association 1951–2011], Berlin 2011.

tion's journals *Der Widerstandskämpfer*, as well as *Informationsdienst*, which appeared regularly every three months until the beginning of 1990, and its successor *Mitteilungen*. Another important source is the newspaper *Der neue Mahnruf*, which is the organ of the Austrian Communist Party-affiliated KZ-Verband. This study investigates FIR's reactions to the political upheavals in 1989/1990 and focuses on the changes within the associations of formerly persecuted persons, on the impact of the collapse of the communist regimes on the aims and activities of FIR, and on the consequent changes in its understanding of history.

Associations of Victims of Political Persecution

Associations representing the interests of formerly persecuted persons and their dependants were founded immediately after the liberation on local, regional and soon also on national levels. Divisions between Jewish and non-Jewish victims existed in many countries: for instance, in Austria in 1946 the Aktionskomitee jüdischer KZler (Action Committee of Jewish Concentration Camp Prisoners) were founded,¹¹ while the victims of political persecution organised themselves in the non-partisan Bundesverband der ehemals politisch verfolgten Antifaschisten (Federal Association of Former Politically Persecuted Anti-Fascists). Various other groups of persecuted persons could not organise themselves and were soon marginalised: this included 'anti-social persons', criminals, homosexuals, or Roma.¹² As early as the end of 1945, but especially beginning in 1947/1948, the established national associations split along party political and ideological lines.¹³ This also befell the Warsaw-based FIAPP, which was locked in a crisis because of the expulsion of the Yugoslav organisation after the split between Stalin and Tito and the resignation of many Western associations.

In 1951, the FIAPP held its Second World Congress in Vienna in order to found a new umbrella organisation. The International Federation of Resistance Movements, Political Prisoners and Victims of Nazi Persecution (FIR), which was brought into being at this meeting, relieved the FIAPP.¹⁴ Its seat was in Vienna, which then was divided into four occupational zones and therefore was situated at the interface between East and West. The Austrian capital was also regarded as a suitable location, because according to the Moscow Declaration of 1943 Austria was regarded as 'Hitler's first victim', a point of view shared by FIR.¹⁵

FIR claimed to be a non-partisan organisation, but it was in fact dominated by communist interests. According to its statutes, it aimed at unifying all anti-fascist resistance fighters and victims of Nazism and to stand up actively "for the defence of

11 Later it changed its name to Verband der wegen ihrer Abstammung Verfolgten (Association of People Persecuted on the Basis of their Origin).

12 Stengel/Langbein, 109; Zofia Wóycicka, Przerwana żaloba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944–1950 [Interrupted Mourning. Polish Disputes around the Memory of the Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps 1944–1950], Warsaw 2009, 58–59; Harold Marcuse, Die Organisationen der Überlebenden von Dachau. Ein Abriss der Entwicklung von der Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers bis Anfang der 1970er Jahre, in: Janine Doerry/Thomas Kubetzky/Katja Seybold (ed.), Das soziale Gedächtnis und die Gemeinschaften der Überlebenden. Bergen-Belsen in vergleichender Perspektive, Göttingen 2012, 159–174. Concerning criminals as a victim group of National Socialism, see Nikolaus Wachsmann, Hitler's Prisons. Legal Terror in Nazi Germany, New Haven 2004.

13 Neumann-Thein, Parteidisziplin, 92.

14 Der Wiener Kongreß, in: Der neue Mahnruf 4 (1951) 7/8, 1–2; Wir werden unsere Mission erfüllen. Bericht über den Internationalen Kongreß der Widerstandskämpfer und Naziopfer in Wien vom 30. Juni bis 3. Juli, in: Der neue Mahnruf 4 (1951) 7/8, 3–4.

15 Die FIR an den Präsidenten der Bundesrepublik Österreich, in: Der Widerstandskämpfer 6 (1958) 3, 9.

freedom and human dignity against every [...] discrimination and against the re-birth of fascism and Nazism in all of its forms". Furthermore, it aimed at the "punishment of all crimes against humanity" and material compensation.¹⁶ FIR wanted to defend the "spirit and the ideals of the resistance movement" and to show "her historical role", to preserve the memories of the "martyrs of the war of resistance" and to keep alive the memory of the "horrors of the dungeons and concentration camps". FIR swore "to help achieve the aims of restoring peaceful relations between the nations, as defined in the UN charter" and "the strengthening of the fraternal solidarity of the resistance fighters of all countries".

On 28 November 1954, FIR shortened its name to the International Federation of Resistance Movements, although this did not affect the composition of its membership.¹⁷ Among them were associations of victims of Nazi persecution on both sides of the "Iron Curtain": beside the French *Fédération Nationale des Déportés et Internés Résistants et Patriotes* (National Federation of Deported and Imprisoned Resistance Fighters and Patriots, hereafter FNDIRP), these included among others the West-German *Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes* (Association of Persons Persecuted by the Nazi Regime, hereafter VVN), the Austrian *KZ-Verband*, the Polish *Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację* (Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy, hereafter ZBoWiD) and the Czechoslovak *Svaz protifašistických bojovníků* (Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters, hereafter SPB). Dutch, Belgian, Luxembourgish, Soviet, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian, and Bulgarian associations and an organisation from the Free Territory of Trieste were also represented, as were, from the mid-1950s Israeli organisations of former resistance fighters. Yugoslavia was a special case: it was represented by the exiled Stalinist, Joseph Milunić, in FIR's Executive Committee. In addition, there was also a Republican Spanish association.¹⁸ The Western member associations were dominated by former communist resistance fighters or political concentration camp inmates, the Eastern European members were part of the communist apparatus, either as mass organisations like the ZBoWiD or the SPB with hundreds of thousands of members or as cadre association like the East-German *Komitee der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer* (Committee of Anti-Fascist Resistance Fighters, hereafter KdAW), which only had 2,500 members in 1983.¹⁹

In the 1950s, FIR moulded the development of associations of former political prisoners. The organisation initiated or contributed to the founding of the international *Lagergemeinschaften* (Concentration Camp Communities) of Auschwitz and Buchenwald (both founded in 1952), Mauthausen (1953), Dachau (1955), Sachsenhausen (1955 and 1965) and Ravensbrück (1955/56, refounded in 1964).²⁰ At the end of November 1951, the *Fédération Internationale Libre des Déportés et Internés de la Résistance* (Free International Federation of Deportees and Internees of the Resistance, hereafter FILDIR), which unified anti-communist and social-democratic as-

16 Art. IV Statuten der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR). Beschlüsse des II. Kongresses der FIR, 28 November 1954, Vienna 1954; herein also the following quotation.

17 Art. I Statuten der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR). Beschlüsse des II. Kongresses der FIR, 28 November 1954, Vienna 1954.

18 Die Tagung des Generalrats in Paris, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer* 4 (1956) 4/5, 5-10; Das neue Exekutivkomitee der FIR, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 4 (1951) 7/8, 1.

19 K. Erik Franzen, *Verordnete Opfererinnerung. Das "Komitee der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer in der DDR"*, in: K. Erik Franzen/Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Opfernarrative. Konkurrenzen und Deutungskämpfe in Deutschland und im östlichen Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Munich 2012, 28-44, 41; the KdAW replaced the VVN in 1953, when it was dissolved in the GDR. Thomas Hofmann, *Der spezifische Antifaschismus der DDR. Die Auflösung der "Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes" (VVN)*, in: *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* 7 (1999), 68-82.

20 There were several attempts to found International Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück Committees.

sociations, was founded in reaction to the establishment of FIR.²¹ The founding of further, anti-FIR associations on an international level soon followed, with the Belgian anti-communist Hubert Halin playing a leading role. Halin's numerous associations, however, mostly remained short-lived and, by the beginning of the 1960s, FILDIR was also close to failure.²²

Until the mid-1970s, FIR was an important protagonist among the associations of victims of political persecution. Its activities ranged from the social-medical field, the peace movement and the debates over the statute of limitations concerning Nazi crimes during the 1960s through to education about and remembrance of National Socialism and the anti-fascist resistance. However, in the mid-1970s, the organisation got into financial difficulties. Employees had to be dismissed and the two journals had to be merged.²³ This resulted in a loss of visibility.

Changes within the Associations of Victims of Political Persecution and the Debate over FIR's Future

The crisis of 1989/1990 was palpable for the Eastern European associations. They were regarded as a pillar of the old regime and, in many cases, they were infiltrated by the secret police.²⁴ Some associations were involved in domestic and internal party power struggles. In Poland, Mieczysław Moczar, who was then the Minister of the Interior and Chairman of ZBoWiD's Main Committee, attempted to be nominated as chair of the Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers Party, the Polish communist party) with the help of the Union in 1970.²⁵ The legitimacy of the communist states had its source in the victory over the Third Reich and the resistance against the fascist occupiers. These were of course only two elements with which the Eastern European rulers legitimised themselves, and their significance varied from country to country. They were, however, important parts. Therefore the anti-fascist resistance was regarded as a part of the communist dictatorship. Moreover, the resistance, because of its self-professed contribution to the liberation from German occupation, was held as a precursor of communism.²⁶

The result of the breakdown of the Soviet bloc was a deep change within the culture of memory – and the erasure of the memory of communist resistance against Nazi occupation. For instance, in Poland, the commemoration of the communist crimes and of the resistance of the Armia Krajowa (Home Army, hereafter AK) dominated. Linked to the memory of the AK was the attitude of the Soviets to non-communist resistance, for example when the Red Army idly watched while the Wehrmacht and SS crushed the Warsaw uprising of 1944.²⁷

21 Ruppert, *Geschichte*, Volume 1, 36; Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965*, Cambridge 2000, 278–279.

22 *Ibid.*, 282–283.

23 Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (hereafter DÖW), 22718/5, Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR: Tätigkeitsbericht des Sekretariats, 18–19 March 1975.

24 For example, the Polish FIR delegate Gustav Alef-Bolkowiak, who held a high position within the ZBoWiD, was simultaneously an official collaborator of the Polish Secret Police. *Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN)*, 1354/7657.

25 Krzysztof Lesiakowski, Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek". *Biografia polityczna [Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek". A Political Biography]*, Warsaw 1998.

26 Tony Judt, *Die Geschichte Europas seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bonn 2006, 958.

27 Beate Kosmala, Polen. *Lange Schatten der Erinnerung: Der Zweite Weltkrieg im kollektiven Gedächtnis*, in: Monika Flacke (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen: 1945 – Arena der Erinnerungen*, Volume 2, Mainz 2004, 509–540, 525.

Even in Yugoslavia, where the narrative of the partisans was a unifying factor in the country, this master narrative lost its power after the death of Tito in 1980 and amidst growing nationalism.²⁸ The end of the resistance narrative meant an accelerated development of change of the dominant remembrance regime, which in the West had already begun during the 1960s and which by 1990 was not by any means complete in every country.²⁹

The turn of the communist resistance narrative discredited the associations of victims of political persecution and former resistance fighters, which were part of the old system.³⁰ Therefore the organisations were restructured and renamed in all of the former 'people's democracies'. There was also a change of leadership.³¹ At the beginning of December 1991, the Federation of Hungarian Resistance Fighters and Anti-Fascists informed FIR that it had opened up for groups of Nazi victims who had hitherto been excluded, not been accepted officially, or whose persecution had continued after 1945, including Jews and forced labourers.³²

The likewise mostly communist-oriented Western-European associations such as FNDIRP largely escaped the repercussions of political change in Eastern Europe.³³ However, the breakdown of communism brought with it serious consequences for the West-German Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes/Bund der Antifaschisten (Union of Persecuted Persons of the Nazi-Regime/Federation of Anti-Fascists, hereafter VVN-BdA), which had been financially dependent on the Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (German Communist Party, hereafter DKP) and therefore directly from funds of the GDR, as the DKP was on a drip-feed from East Germany. The VVN-BdA not only had to reduce its activities considerably, but also had to dismiss all of its full-time employees.³⁴

For FIR, the economic consequences were also serious. Its funding came mainly from membership fees, and after 1989 several of the Eastern-European associations had to lower their payments or to cease them completely as public financial contributions were cut back or stopped entirely. As a result, FIR was forced to apply drastic economic measures. From 1989 to 1991, the annual total expenses were reduced from 4,646,165 Schillings to 1,583,000 Schillings (from roughly 340,000 Euros to roughly 115,000 Euros). This cut applied to FIR's activities as well as its staff and

28 Holm Sundhaussen, Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten. Konstruktion, Dekonstruktion und Neukonstruktion von "Erinnerungen" und Mythen, in: *ibid.*, Volume 1, 373-426, 386-388.

29 Etienne François, Meistererzählungen und Dammbürche: Die Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg zwischen Nationalisierung und Universalisierung, in: *ibid.*, 13-28; Stefan Berger, Remembering the Second World War in Western Europe, 1945-2005, in: Małgorzata Pakier/Bo Stråth (ed.), *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, Oxford 2010, 119-136.

30 In Bulgaria, the Комитет на борците против фашизма и капитализма в България [Committee of the Fighters against Fascism and Capitalism] was regarded as a party-affiliated organisation of the communists. It was said that its members were never active resistance fighters against the pro-Nazi Bulgarian government during the Second World War: Bulgariens Antifaschisten keine Widerstandskämpfer? In: *Der neue Mahnruf* 45 (1992) 2, 5.

31 Der Wandel hat alle erfaßt, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 43 (1990) 6/7, 2.

32 Die FIR zu aktuellen Problemen. Das Sekretariat der FIR tagte in Wien, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, December 1991, 5; Hans Coppi: Abschied und Neubeginn. Schwierigkeiten mit dem Antifaschismus in der DDR, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 43 (1990) 6/7, 8.

33 Serge Wolikow, *Les Combats de la Mémoire. La FNDIRP de 1945 à Nos Jours* [Battles of Memory. The FNDIRP from 1945 to the Present Day], Paris 2006.

34 Karl Kropotnik, 'Deutsche Kommunisten stoßen VVN in die Pleite. DKP entzieht der "Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes – Bund der Antifaschisten" die Gelder / VVN-Präsidium leugnete bislang eine Fremdfinanzierung / Ende der Vereinigung als Bundesorganisation steht bevor / Finanzhof Stuttgart erkennt Gemeinnützigkeit an', in: *die tageszeitung*, 7 December 1989, 5; Der Wandel hat alle erfaßt, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 43 (1990) 6/7, 2; Organisationen der Widerstandskämpfer in Umgestaltung, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 43 (1990) 4, 5.

journals.³⁵ *Der Widerstandskämpfer* was discontinued because of “organisational restructuring”.³⁶ Its final issue was published in March 1990. It was replaced by the *Mitteilungen*, which were published only on an irregular basis. At the beginning of 1991, it was proposed that FIR be dissolved, but this was rejected unanimously by the Delegation of the Bureau.³⁷

Like its Eastern European member organisations, FIR enforced a leadership change, but this did not mean a new beginning. President Arialdo Banfi, who had held his office since 1965, announced his resignation because “the political motives which determined my election have expired”.³⁸ Obviously Banfi, who as a Senator of the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party) had a seat in the second chamber of parliament, was elected president in order to serve as a front to hide the communist-dominated nature of the organisation.³⁹ The Eleventh Congress declared Alix Lhote, a French communist who was the previous secretary-general, as its new president.⁴⁰ The position of secretary-general was given to Ilja Kremer, a professor from Moscow. Banfi was elected honorary president.⁴¹

Since 1990, the future orientation of FIR was disputed internally, though at the time no major changes were made.⁴² The aims of FIR, which concurred in part with those formulated in Soviet foreign propaganda, remained by and large unchanged after the Eleventh Congress and stayed closely attached to the characteristic style of the Cold War, even though the broad compatibility beyond the communist movement must not be underestimated: the “fight for a stable peace”, the “defence and protection of freedom and human dignity”, the “complete eradication of the Nazi doctrine” as well as the “fight” against neo-fascism and neo-Nazism.⁴³ However, in the demand for the “punishment of all war criminals who are still free”, the connection to the Second World War was missing. In a letter to the participants of the conference of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereafter CSCE) in Paris in November 1990, FIR cited environmental protection and development aid as “the most important matter of concern of the former resistance fighters, combatants and war victims”, which in fact bore only little importance for FIR.⁴⁴

At the meeting of the Delegation of the Bureau in April 1991, it had been settled that FIR's character as an organisation of former resistance fighters and Nazi victims should be preserved, but it was proposed that differently composed left-wing or anti-

35 DÖW, 22713/3, Tagung der “Delegation des Büros” der FIR, 13-14 April 1991: Finanzbericht von Oskar Wiesflecker.

36 An unsere Leser und Abonnenten, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer*. Informationsdienst, January-March 1990.

37 The “Delegation of the Bureau” is not mentioned in FIR's statute. Nonetheless, it led the organisation between the other organs' conferences: of the Congress, the General Council and the Bureau. Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (hereafter SAPMO), DY 57/332, Tagung der “Delegation des Büros” der FIR. Bericht über die Arbeiten, 13 April 1991.

38 Der XI. Ordentliche Kongress der FIR tagte vom 24. bis 26. Juni 1991 in Moskau, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

39 Arialdo Banfi, *Una vita attraverso la storia*. A cura di Andrea Ragusa, premissa di Giorgio Rochat [A life through History. Edited by Andrea Ragusa, foreword by Giorgio Rochat], Manduria/Bari/Roma 2000.

40 Alix Lhote, born 22 June 1921 and died June 2007, was a French resistance fighter and a former inmate of Struthof concentration camp. After 1945, he held various leading positions in FNDIRP; from 1973 he was secretary-general of FIR; from 1991 president. In 2001, he resigned for health reasons. Fédération Internationale des Résistants (FIR), 36.

41 Der XI. Ordentliche Kongress der FIR tagte vom 24. bis 26. Juni 1991 in Moskau, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

42 Tagung der Delegation des Büros, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer*. Informationsdienst, January-March 1990, 1-11.

43 Orientierungs- und Aktionsprogramm der FIR, 26 June 1991, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3; herein also the following quotation.

44 Tagung des Büros der FIR: Kommunique, 7-8 September 1990, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

racist federations be included as well. President Banfi even proposed to include victims of Stalinism, but this suggestion was not put into effect.⁴⁵ Moreover, the Delegation strove to intensify the co-operation with the three international veterans' associations – the Fédération Mondiale des Anciens Combattants (World Veterans Federation, hereafter FMAC), the Confédération Internationale des Anciens Prisonniers de Guerre (International Confederation of Prisoners of War, hereafter CIAPG) and the Confédération Européenne des Anciens Combattants (European Confederation of Former Combatants, hereafter CEAC).⁴⁶ Therefore, the International Committee on Disarmament and Safety, which coordinated the co-operation of these four international organisations since 1971, was to be reactivated.⁴⁷ Representatives of these associations participated in the Eleventh Congress and delivered greetings to the delegates,⁴⁸ but the International Committee was disbanded at the end of 1991 and replaced by informal contacts between the presidents or secretary generals.⁴⁹ However, the co-operation within the peace movement, which had existed since the World Meeting of Former Combatants in Rome in 1971, was continued.⁵⁰

In spring 1991, it was further proposed that FIR be opened to the next generations.⁵¹ This was demanded especially by VVN-BdA, in which since June 1990 younger members, who came from Christian organisations or were associated with the German Green Party or the Social Democratic Party, held leading positions.⁵² Other associations of formerly persecuted persons already had youth sections or – like VVN in 1971 – had opened their ranks to persons born after 1945 in order to preserve the organisation, its aims and the memory of the anti-fascist resistance for the future, when the generation who had lived during the Second World War would be dead. Therefore, people who had no relationship to former concentration camp inmates, but who identified with the goals of the 'old' VVN and who stood in solidarity with the Nazi victims, could become members.⁵³ Within FIR, there was no majority in favour of this at the time, but because of the lack of sources we can only speculate about the reasons for this.

In spite of this floundering of FIR and of many associations of victims of political persecution, few members left FIR. The only exception was the Związek Kombatantów Rzeczpospolita Polska i Byłych Więźniów Politycznych (Union of Fighters of the Polish Republic and Former Political Prisoners, ZKRP i BWP), which dissociated itself from the communist past of its predecessor.⁵⁴ However, ZKRP i BWP main-

45 Das Büro der FIR tagte in Berlin, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

46 Next to no research exists about these organisations. There is only one blog entry to be found, and that is for FMAC: juliakling, Dreaming an Unlimited Dream in a World of Division: A Veterans' Utopia? <https://erinerung.hypotheses.org/276#more-276> (18/10/2016).

47 SAPMO DY 57/332, Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR. Bericht über die Arbeiten, 13 April 1991.

48 Der XI. Ordentliche Kongress der FIR tagte vom 24. bis 26. Juni 1991 in Moskau, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

49 Die FIR zu aktuellen Problemen. Das Sekretariat der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, December 1991, 5.

50 Friede – Sicherheit – Freundschaft. Das erste gemeinsame Treffen der Widerstandskämpfer, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegsopfer für Frieden, Sicherheit und Freundschaft in Rom war ein voller Erfolg, in: Der Widerstandskämpfer 19 (1971) 16, 12-17.

51 DÖW, 22718/3, Thesen für die Tagung der "Delegation des Büros der FIR" und zum XI. Ordentlichen Kongreß der FIR. Entwurf, undated; SAPMO DY 57/332, Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR. Bericht über die Arbeiten, 13 April 1991.

52 Der Wandel hat alle erfaßt, in: Der neue Mahnruf 43 (1990) 6/7, 2.

53 Schneider, Geschichte, 29. This opening up was also expressed in the change of name to VVN-BdA.

54 The ZKRP i BWP was the successor organisation to ZBoWiD, which itself was the association within FIR with the most members. In March 1990, when it changed its name, it had 860,000 members. Der Wandel hat alle erfaßt, in: Der neue Mahnruf 43 (1990) 6/7, 2.

tained friendly relations with FIR.⁵⁵ Among other things, the founding of new associations in the former Soviet republics and the opening up to further anti-fascist and left-wing groups from the West even led to an increasing number of organisations within FIR after 1990. In April 1992, a Greek association, which represented the communist fighters of the Greek civil war from 1944 to 1949 and the victims of the post-war persecution of communists, became a member. At the same time, a Canadian association of resistance fighters of Greek origin was admitted, thereby becoming the first non-European organisation to belong to FIR.⁵⁶ In September 1992, 79 unions were associated with FIR, more than ever before.⁵⁷

Commitment to Peace and Disarmament

The commitment to peace and disarmament constituted the main emphasis in FIR's activities during the Cold War as well as after 1989.⁵⁸ Their involvement in the CSCE process as a pressure group in the background was a particular source of elation for FIR officials, but in fact the former resistance played only a minor part. It could even be claimed that FIR saw itself as the decisive protagonist in preparing the *détente* process, setting it in motion and bringing it to its positive conclusion. For example, Oskar Wiesflecker said at a meeting of the Delegation of the Bureau in April 1991: "we, the former resistance fighters and combatants, have been the vanguard of that process. [...] We have so to speak started the experiment before the diplomats and statesmen."⁵⁹ Alix Lhote furthermore said at the Eleventh Congress that the existence of FIR had led to the CSCE process, "of which we together with the world community of the former combatants were the precursors, as has been shown by the signing of the Appeal of Rome [which was adopted at the World Meeting of Former Combatants, M.B.] in 1971 and today's situation with the signing of the Charter of a Common Europe".⁶⁰

FIR justified its commitment to disarmament, peace and friendship among nations with the lessons learned from history by the former anti-fascist resistance fighters in order "to avoid for all times the return of the sorrows and horrors suffered by their nations".⁶¹ According to Oskar Wiesflecker, "the work for disarmament, the

55 SAPMO DY 57/332, Letter of the Związek Kombatantów Rzeczpospolita Polska i Byłych Więźniów Politycznych (Association of Combatants and Former Political Prisoners of the Polish Republic, ZKRP i BWP) to FIR, 4 April 1991; SAPMO DY 57/332, Letter of FIR to the president of ZKRP i BWP, 15 April 1991.

56 Das Büro der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, April 1992, 1. Today, the members are once more exclusively European and Israeli. <http://www.fir.at/liste-der-verbände/> (2 June 2016).

57 Ukrainische Union der ehemaligen Kriegsteilnehmer in die FIR aufgenommen, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1992, 3.

58 For the engagement of FIR in this field see Ruppert, *Geschichte*.

59 Von der Notwendigkeit der FIR. Die "Delegation des Büros" der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, April 1991, 2. Oskar Wiesflecker was born on 18 May 1919 in Vienna, and died there on 3 December 2009. He was active within the resistance from 1934 onwards. He was imprisoned for a short time after the 'Anschluß'. After the Second World War, he became an editor for newspapers of several left-wing groups and parties, among them the organ of the Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (Communist Party of Austria), *Volksstimme*. From 1960 he was the chief editor of *Der Widerstandskämpfer* and in charge of many other FIR publications. Wiesflecker was a member of the leadership of the KZ-Verband and from 1981 chief editor of *Der neue Mahnruf*. In the 1990s, he became secretary-general of FIR, which he remained until 2004. Der KZ-Verband trauert um Oskar Wiesflecker. KZ-Verbandsobmann, DÖW-Vizepräsident und Ehrenmitglied der FIR, in: Der Neue Mahnruf 64 (2010) 1/2, 1-2.

60 Der XI. Ordentliche Kongress der FIR tagte vom 24. bis 26. Juni 1991 in Moskau, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3. Lhote meant the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

61 Adresse der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR) an die Staats- und Regierungschefs, die an der Gipfelkonferenz der KSZE teilnehmen. Für ein Stabiles Europa in Frieden und Demokratie, 8 September 1990, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

fight for peace and for the friendship among nations [was] a core matter of concern of all anti-fascists and democrats”, because anti-fascism demands of us “to speak up consistently for democracy, social justice, for the respect of human rights”, “but democracy and its comprising civil freedoms” could “develop only in peace, in an atmosphere of understanding, of friendly co-operation among the nations and the preservation of their security”.⁶²

The ideological restrictions on FIR and on its commitment to *détente* in the East-West conflict were reflected in its long silence about the events in the Eastern Bloc at the end of the 1980s. *Der Widerstandskämpfer* let the calls for independence in the Baltic Soviet republics – growing ever louder since 1988 – pass without comment, while the fall of the Berlin Wall was equally received with silence. FIR was not alone in this: the East-German KdAW needed several weeks in order to adjust itself to the changed situation.⁶³ The FIR publications of the time gave no hint about the partly violent protests and, with the exception of Romania, the largely peaceful regime changes within the former Eastern Bloc.⁶⁴ FIR also refrained from comment on the massacre in Tiananmen Square on 3-4 June 1989, though the organisation had turned towards non-European issues a long time ago – as shown by its commitment to the Middle East conflict or its statement on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.⁶⁵

Not until the meeting of the Delegation of the Bureau on 24 February 1990 did secretary-general Alix Lhote give his opinion on the revolutions within the Soviet sphere of control, in which his skepticism about the recent political developments was diplomatically phrased, but unmistakable.⁶⁶ At that time, the disintegration of the old power structures was clear. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, the communist party had lost its power, the Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, the communist party) had disbanded, and in Romania the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu had been executed. FIR’s skepticism did not change much in the aftermath, even though FIR specifically welcomed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe passed by the CSCE meeting on 19-21 November 1990, which endorsed the results of Eastern- and Central-European revolutions and in which the CSCE states (including the former communist states) declared their belief in the market economy and pluralism.⁶⁷ FIR followed the belief in pluralism and gave up the communist understanding of democracy, which its Eastern-European members had held until a short time previously.⁶⁸

FIR did not express a disapproving attitude towards German unification and it demanded a European security system which would include a unified Germany.⁶⁹

62 Kongreß der ANED [Associazione nazionale ex deportati nei campi nazisti, National Association of Deportees to the Nazi Camps] in Prato, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 43 (1990) 11, 2.

63 Antifaschistische Widerstandskämpfer: Mit unseren Erfahrungen für den Prozess der Erneuerung, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer*. Informationsdienst, January-March 1990, 21-23.

64 On these events and a discussion on whether the term ‘revolutions’ can be used in this context, see Philipp Ther, *Die neue Ordnung auf dem alten Kontinent. Eine Geschichte des neoliberalen Europa*, Berlin 2014, 58-80.

65 Delegation der FIR in Israel. *Der Widerstandskämpfer*. Informationsdienst. Sondernummer, Vienna 1989; Resolution zur Lage im Persisch-Arabischen Golf, 7-8 September 1990, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

66 Tagung der Delegation des Büros. Vienna, 24 February 1990, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer*. Informationsdienst, January-March 1990, 1-11, 2.

67 Charta von Paris für ein neues Europa, Paris 1990.

68 Die Zukunft der FIR: Für eine gerechtere, freiere, solidarische und brüderliche Welt, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

69 Das Büro der FIR tagte in Berlin, in: *Mitteilungen*. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

FIR responded positively to German representatives who declared that the German external borders would be recognised. In his speech at the Berlin meeting of the Bureau of FIR, Peter Florin, the chair of the Provisional Board of the KdAW, discussed “the fears of some countries in view of a German nationalism and said that we want a Germany from which peace started. Germany must never again be a threat to other countries.”⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the president of the Comité International de Mauthausen (International Mauthausen Committee, hereafter CIM), Josef Hammelmann from Luxembourg, declared that the former concentration camp prisoners were afraid of a unified Germany whose strength had been regained. The CIM claimed that a distancing from National Socialism must be included in the German Basic Law.⁷¹ FIR was even more definite on this point, demanding even before the merger of the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany (hereafter FRG) that an obligation to commemorate the Nazi crimes and the duty “to make future generations aware of these crimes in order to preserve them from totalitarian, racist and antisemitic temptations” had to be fixed in the German constitution.⁷²

Another important issue for FIR was the war in the Balkans, which had begun in June 1991 with the separation of Slovenia from Yugoslavia. The war in Bosnia which broke out two months later and escalated in April 1992 was the main focus of a conference of the four international associations of former resistance fighters, combatants and prisoners of war. Many national organisations took part in this conference, which was held in Warsaw in September 1992, among them representatives of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian veterans’ associations. Ilja Kremer represented FIR at this conference and suggested somewhat helplessly that the participants from the former Yugoslav republics should sit together and discuss their problems in order to find a solution. Furthermore, the conference decided to send a common delegation of FIR, FMAC, CIAPG and CEAC to the Balkans. This “mission of information” was required to meet with representatives of partisans’ and veterans’ associations and gain a better overview of the situation.⁷³ Even before the delegation left, FIR called upon the former partisans within the veterans’ associations in disintegrating Yugoslavia to fight for an end to all “excesses and all violations of human rights”.⁷⁴ Shortly prior to this, reports on mass murders had spread about.⁷⁵

From 26-31 October 1992 the delegation – in which Oskar Wiesflecker represented FIR – first travelled to Slovenia and Croatia, and then from 24-28 November to Serbia and Montenegro, in order to inform employees of relief organisations about

70 Ibid., 2. Peter Florin was born on 2 October 1921, and died on 17 February 2014. During the Second World War, he was in exile in the Soviet Union, where he fought as a partisan in Belarus in 1943/1944. In 1945, he became a member of the Gruppe Ackermann, which was sent to Saxony to secure the influence of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands on the future political development in central Germany. Between 1958 and 1989, he was a member of the Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany] and, from 1973 until 1989, deputy foreign minister of the GDR and ambassador to the UN.

71 Angst vor Deutschland, in: Der neue Mahnruf 43 (1990) H. 11, S. 4.

72 Tagung des Büros der FIR: Kommunique, 7-8 September 1990, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

73 Warschauer Konferenz beschließt Entsendung einer Informationsmission der vier internationalen Organisationen ehemaliger Widerstandskämpfer und Kriegsteilnehmer in Länder des ehemaligen Jugoslawien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, October 1992, 5.

74 Abscheu und Empörung. Die FIR zur Situation im ehemaligen Jugoslawien, in: Der neue Mahnruf 45 (1992) 10, 3.

75 Drei Stunden lebend im Massengrab. Muslimischer Augenzeuge berichtet von serbischem Massaker, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 4 September 1992.

the situation, but the priority was the representatives of veterans' and partisans' associations. Furthermore, the delegation visited refugee camps and POW camps in Croatia. It was planned to publish a common communiqué, but this was never completed.⁷⁶

Dealing with Right-Wing Extremism and Nationalism

Just as in previous years, dealing with neo-Nazism and neo-fascism occupied a central position in the activities of FIR and its member associations.⁷⁷ FIR took on this 'special task' on the basis of former resistance fighters' experiences, from which a moral obligation arose "to fight against every appearance of fascism, Nazism, racism and antisemitism".⁷⁸ The memory of "their comrades fallen in the battle against the forces of inhumanity" also laid an obligation at the feet of former resistance fighters. The oaths taken by the former communist camp inmates of Buchenwald and Mauthausen also played a part. According to tradition, the prisoners of Buchenwald had sworn in April 1945, shortly after their liberation, that the "destruction of Nazism and its roots is our watchword".⁷⁹ For FIR, the exact wording was of only minor importance. What matters, was the message of the oath, which in the 1990ies meant to fight against neo-nazism. The oath of Mauthausen, which its former inmates had sworn in May 1945, made no reference to National Socialism, but FIR nevertheless also used this text to justify their approach to right-wing extremism.

In the 1980s, both of these oaths played a major part within FIR's discourse of the past.⁸⁰ They were reinterpreted as the one "oath of the resistance movement", but without mentioning their reading, because FIR not only had to integrate into its ranks former prisoners of Buchenwald and Mauthausen, but also other groups: former inmates of other camps and prisons, resistance fighters who had never been caught, former members of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War and veterans of the republican Spanish army, and bereaved families. Through Eastern-European mass organisations such as ZBoWiD, groups which had nothing to do with the resistance or Nazi victims were represented in FIR: veterans of the regular armies, for example in ZBoWiD or the Soviet Committee of War Veterans, or those who took part "in the armed struggle for the strengthening of the people's power".⁸¹ Furthermore, several associations had opened their ranks to young people. More importantly, the fact that FIR positioned itself as the executor of these oaths underlined the special moral standing of the former prisoners.

76 Informationsreise in Länder des ehemaligen Jugoslawien, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 45 (1992) 12, 8.

77 Sekretariat der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (F.I.R.): *Die FIR zu Ausländerfeindlichkeit, Rassenhass und Neonazi-Terror*, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, Dezember 1991, 5.

78 Das Büro der FIR tagte in Wien, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, April 1991, 1; herein also the following quotation.

79 Buchenwaldarchiv, NZ 488, *Ansprache in französischer, russischer, polnischer, englischer und deutscher Sprache auf der Trauerkundgebung des Lagers Buchenwald*, 19 April 1945; another version read slightly differently: "Crushing Nazism is our watchword". *Buchenwalder Nachrichten* Nr. 5, 20 April 1945, in: Bodo Ritscher (ed.), *Buchenwalder Nachrichten*: Nr. 1 (14 April 1945) – Nr. 28 (16 May 1945), Weimar/Buchenwald 1983, cited in: Neumann-Thein, *Parteidisziplin*, 74.

80 Alix Lhote, *Für eine Welt des Friedens. Basierend auf mehr Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit und Zusammenarbeit*, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst*, 1979, special issue, 1-3, 1; *Botschaft der FIR zum 8. Mai*, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst*, 1980, 5; *An die Teilnehmer der Madrider Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa*, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst*, 1980, 8, 3-5, here 5.

81 ZBoWiD hat 800.000 Mitglieder, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 41 (1988) 5, 7.

During the Cold War, Western Europe and especially the FRG were FIR's sole focal point, yet after 1989/1990 FIR began anxiously recognising the growing nationalistic, neo-Nazi and neo-fascist movements in Eastern and Central Europe.⁸² The most senior FIR committees repeatedly expressed their will to fight these fascist, racist, xenophobic, violent, and antisemitic groups. For example, FIR protested against the desecration of the graves of Soviet soldiers in Kiev in September 1991 and against the desecration of graves and memorials in Hungary in 1992, as well as against the radical right-wing remarks of a leading Hungarian politician.⁸³

However, the financial and personnel cutbacks within FIR became increasingly noticeable. In December 1991, FIR sent a letter to the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Lithuania, in which it demanded the revocation of the rehabilitation of condemned Nazi collaborators as alleged victims of Stalinism. Before FIR had sent this protest, however, the Jewish World Congress intervened in Vilnius and pushed through a commission to review the rehabilitations.⁸⁴ FIR obviously not only lacked sufficient information about such occurrences for a timely reaction, but also the means to push through its demands. These weaknesses were also evident in the problems regarding compensation for Nazi victims and of the preservation of the former resistance fighters' privileges granted before 1989, especially in the Eastern Bloc.

However, the main focus of dealing with right-wing extremism remained on a now unified Germany. There, neo-Nazis committed numerous xenophobic crimes and arson attacks at the beginning of the 1990s.⁸⁵ FIR protested several times. In November 1991, FIR condemned "the growing acts of violence and terror of right-wing and neo-Nazi groups" in identical letters addressed to Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker, President of the German Bundestag Rita Süßmuth, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl.⁸⁶ Simultaneously, FIR demanded a "resolute conduct" of the authorities and that the "necessary legal measures" be taken. At this time, the German authorities had registered more than 200 corresponding incidents since January, for instance in Hoyerswerda, Honnef, Hünxe and Eisenhüttenstadt.⁸⁷ In December 1991, FIR appealed to the "former resistance fighters and victims of Nazi-fascist barbarity" once again, not only condemning the radical right-wing attacks but also pointing out the successes of right-wing political parties in elections in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.⁸⁸ At the beginning of September 1992, FIR once again commented on "right-wing extremist terror acts" in several German towns.⁸⁹ Numerous national member organisations, among them FNDIRP, the Association

82 Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR, in: Der neue Mahnruf 43 (1989) 5, 7; Das Büro der FIR tagte in Berlin, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1990, 2.

83 Die FIR zu aktuellen Problemen. Das Sekretariat der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, December 1991, 5; Die FIR zu den rechtsextremistischen Terrorakten, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1992, 4. There is no information given in the document as to which graves and memorials were affected.

84 Die FIR zu aktuellen Problemen. Das Sekretariat der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, December 1991, 5; Schreiben der Fédération Internationale des Résistants an den Vorsitzenden des Obersten Sowjets der Republik Litauen, 9 December 1991, in: *ibid.*

85 Judt, *Geschichte Europas*, 860-861.

86 Neonazi-Terror unterbinden! In: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, November 1991, 4, 4.

87 Theo Sommer, Das Schandmal des Fremdenhasses, in: *Die Zeit*, 11 October 1991.

88 Sekretariat der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (F.I.R.): Die FIR zu Ausländerfeindlichkeit, Rassenhass und Neonazi-Terror, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, December 1991, 5.

89 Sekretariat der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (F.I.R.): Die FIR zu den rechtsextremistischen Terrorakten, 7 September 1992, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, September 1992, 4.

of Anti-Fascists and Victims of Nazism in Israel and the Austrian KZ-Verband condemned the arson attack of 26 September 1992 which partly destroyed the 'Jewish Hut' memorialising the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen.⁹⁰ FIR itself continued its activities, considering it one of its most important duties "to inform the young generation about the inhumane character of these manifestations".⁹¹ How this was possible in practise in the face of more or less complete absent media and public visibility as well as reduced financial means remains unclear.

Dealing with Historical Research, Memorials and Holocaust Denial in the Transition to Democracy

Part of the policy towards right-wing extremist, nationalist and right-wing political trends was to combat "all attempts to falsify, deny or trivialise the history of Nazi crimes and of the genocide".⁹² Not only FIR, but also the international committees of former concentration camp inmates targeted several groups in their wording:⁹³ right-wing radicals who refused to acknowledge Nazi crimes and portrayed them as a post-war fabrication, but also conservative historians in the FRG in particular, such as Michael Stürmer or Andreas Hillgruber. FIR and several of the international committees saw the new concepts for the exhibitions in concentration camp memorials in the former GDR and the inclusion of the camp histories after 1945 also in the context of the trivialisaton of the Third Reich.⁹⁴

In April 1989, Oskar Wiesflecker as representative of FIR addressed the extraordinary general meeting of the *Lagergemeinschaft* of the former internment camp in Gurs, claiming that by opposing the "forgers of history" the resistance fighters preserved "the remembrance of our brothers and sisters who have been killed in action".⁹⁵ At the FNDIRP congress in May 1992, the Belgian vice-president of FIR, Jean Brack, commented on "the forgers of history who are trying to deny or trivialise the Nazi crimes. This is therefore the time to spare no effort to keep this memory alive."⁹⁶ Like Wiesflecker, Brack avoided any explicit reference to the Holocaust or to the Jewish victims of National Socialism. In dealing with the assertion that there had been no gas chambers in the concentration camps and that therefore no prisoners could have been killed with poison gas, FIR also avoided mentioning Jewish victims.⁹⁷ This must be considered in the context of the rivalry between victims of the Holocaust and the communist victims of Nazi persecution, according to which var-

90 Scharfe Proteste gegen Brandanschlag in Sachsenhausen, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, October 1992, 5.

91 Von der Notwendigkeit der FIR. Die "Delegation des Büros" der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, April 1991, 2.

92 Orientierungs- und Aktionsprogramm der FIR, 26 June 1991, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

93 40. Jahrestag des Sieges und der Befreiung. Veranstaltungen – Erklärungen – Aufrufe (2), in: Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst, 1985, 5, 1-15, here 7.

94 Von der Notwendigkeit der FIR. Die "Delegation des Büros" der FIR tagte in Wien, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, April 1991, 2; Das Büro der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR): 50. Jahrestag: Befreiung und Sieg über den Nazismus. Für den Aufbau einer Welt des Friedens und der Freiheit, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, 1995, 1.

95 50. Jahrestag der Errichtung des Lagers Gurs, in: Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst, 1989, 3/4/5, 31-32.

96 Kongreß der FNDIRP in Vichy, in: Der neue Mahnruf 45 (1992) 8/9.

97 On the attempts to play down National Socialism and to deny its crimes, see Brigitte Bailer-Galanda/Wolfgang Benz/Wolfgang Neugebauer (ed.), Die Auschwitzleugner. "Revisionistische" Geschichtslüge und historische Wahrheit, Berlin 1996.

ious interpretations of FIR's argumentation are possible: either it made demands on the Jewish victims and subsumed them under the term "political prisoner", a tradition which goes back at least as far as the founding of FIAPP,⁹⁸ or FIR wanted to consciously remind of the fact that non-Jewish prisoners had also been murdered in the gas chambers, for example in Mauthausen.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, for FIR and the international committees of former concentration camp prisoners, Holocaust denial in its myriad forms was another issue for concern, but at the same time FIR levelled the differences between the political victims and the Jewish victims.¹⁰⁰

In October 1989, FIR organised the "European Symposium of Historians on the Problems in the Historiography of Fascism, the Second World War and the Resistance" as an "academic and political answer to the ideological approach of a group of conservative historians from the FRG".¹⁰¹ This conference was thus FIR's contribution to the West-German *Historikerstreit* of 1986/1987, taking a firm stand against the positions of, among others, Ernst Nolte, Michael Stürmer and Andreas Hillgruber. Several representatives of national associations and of international camp committees presented papers, as well as Ilja Kremer, who also welcomed the participants and the deputy secretary-general Zygmunt Bieszczyński as functionaries of FIR. Some prominent Austrian historians were also among the speakers, to whom no one-sided political interpretation of the resistance could be attributed, such as Wolfgang Neugebauer, the academic head of the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance, hereafter DÖW), the founding director of DÖW Herbert Steiner, and Siegfried Mattl from the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna.¹⁰² The conference transcript, however, makes no mention of the speakers' institutions – with the exception of Kremer's and Bieszczyński's – so that the impression arises that most of the participants were specialists.¹⁰³ However, not only historians and political scientists appeared at the conference as main speakers. For instance, the Soviet diplomat Valentin Bereshkov spoke about the "historical significance of the anti-Hitler coalition", and the former chairman of the DKP Kurt Bachmann appeared on a panel entitled "Forgery and Revisionism in Current Historiography and the Questions of the New Generation in this Context". Among the specialists were also sympathisers of the political left, including the Marxist political scientist Reinhard Kühnl from

98 See the discussion on whether a special Jewish delegation should be permitted to attend the founding congress of the Fédération Internationale des Anciens Prisonniers Politiques (International Federation of Former Political Prisoners), hereafter FIAPP in Paris. At the first international conference of political prisoners in February 1946, a Jewish delegation took part. FIAPP was the predecessor organisation of FIR.

99 Florian Freund/Bertrand Perz, Mauthausen – Stammlager, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (ed.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Volume 4: Flossenbürg, Mauthausen. Ravensbrück, Munich 2006, 293-346, 321.

100 40. Jahrestag des Sieges und der Befreiung. Veranstaltungen – Erklärungen – Aufrufe, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst*, 1985, 4, 11-18; Das Büro der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR): 50. Jahrestag: Befreiung und Sieg über den Nazismus. Für den Aufbau einer Welt des Friedens und der Freiheit, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants* (1995), 1.

101 Kommunique der Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR für weitere Abrüstungsmaßnahmen – gegen neofaschistische Umtriebe, in: *Der Widerstandskämpfer. Informationsdienst* 1989, 3/4/5, 7.

102 Peter Steinbach, Ein Glücksfall. Zum 70. Geburtstag von Wolfgang Neugebauer, in: Christine Schindler (ed.), *Feindbilder*, Vienna 2015, 317-322; Brigitte Halbmayr/Herbert Steiner, Auf vielen Wegen, über Grenzen hinweg. Eine politische Biographie, *Weitra* 2015, 242-243; Johanna Gehmacher/Albert Müller/Bertrand Perz, In memoriam Siegfried Mattl (1954–2015). Nachruf des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, <https://mediportal.univie.ac.at/uniview/uni-intern/detailansicht/artikel/in-memoriam-siegfried-mattl-1954-2015/> (28 April 2015).

103 Internationale Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer, *Faschismus, Krieg, Widerstand. Historikersymposium der FIR: "Die Aggressionen Nazideutschlands in Europa – Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung"*, Vienna 1989.

Marburg and Kurt Pätzold, who was a professor at the East Berlin Humboldt University. Outside FIR and its member associations, the symposium was widely ignored. No report was published in any academic journal, the miscellany was not reviewed and it is hardly available in German or Austrian public libraries.¹⁰⁴

At the beginning of the 1990s, attempts by Brandenburg and Thuringia to redesign the memorials in Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück and Buchenwald met with the determined resistance of the communist associations of former prisoners and of FIR. During the course of this process, it was suggested that the manner in which communist resistance within the concentration camps was presented be revised, and that the use of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen as Soviet special camps after 1945 be addressed in the exhibitions.¹⁰⁵ FIR supported the attempts by the international committees of former Nazi concentration camp prisoners to confer upon the memorials UNESCO protected status in order to preserve “their original condition”.¹⁰⁶ For FIR, this meant preventing all changes which contradicted the communist interpretation of the resistance in the camps, and the commemoration of the NKVD special camps.¹⁰⁷ This was not only about maintaining the influence on the memorials in competition with the victims of Stalinist repression. In GDR times, the right to have an input was not highly protected. It was simply unbearable for the former concentration camp inmates that Nazi perpetrators should be put on the same level as them – the reasoning being that these had been under the thumb of special camp prisoners.¹⁰⁸

The core element of the communist remembrance of the resistance in the camps was a heroic picture of selfless men and women who saved the lives of as many of their fellow prisoners as it was possible to save. This interpretation, however, completely ignored the dark sides of the attempts to resist the murderous intentions of the SS and over-emphasised the alleged “solidarity” of all the prisoners, which never existed in such a universal form. Saving one life in the concentration camps usually meant sacrificing another prisoner, who had to be added to execution or transportation lists or simply had to take the place of the other condemned person. Furthermore, the communist remembrance ignored the complicated reality of the camps, which could be described only insufficiently, if not falsely, by categories such as “resistance” and “collaboration”. Instead, the reality of life in the camps was pushed into the background.¹⁰⁹

The revised exhibitions attempted to offer a more realistic view of the concentration camps and the role of the prisoner functionaries.¹¹⁰ However, the former resist-

104 This finding is the result of a search in the Karlsruhe Virtual Catalogue and in the library database of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gedenkstättenbibliotheken. Altogether, only seven copies are available in German libraries. In Austria, only the libraries of the University of Vienna and of the DÖW hold copies.

105 Neumann-Thein, *Parteidisziplin*, 448-496.

106 Orientierungs- und Aktionsprogramm der FIR, 26 June 1991, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, July 1991, 3.

107 Internationale Lagerkomitees fordern: Gedenkstätten müssen erhalten bleiben, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 44 (1991) 1, 3; Neumann-Thein, *Parteidisziplin*, 460.

108 Stefanie Endlich, *Die Diskussion des Colloquiums. Versuch einer Zusammenfassung*, in: *Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten für die Verfolgten des NS-Regimes. Perspektiven, Kontroversen und internationale Vergleiche*, Berlin 1992, 184-199, 186, 191-193.

109 Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors. Das Konzentrationslager*, Frankfurt am Main 1993; Detlef Garbe, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand*, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (ed.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Volume 1, *Die Organisation des Terrors*, Munich 2005, 242-257.

110 Volkhard Knigge, *Die Umgestaltung der DDR-Gedenkstätten nach 1990. Ein Erfahrungsbericht am Beispiel Buchenwalds*, in: Hans-Joachim Veen/Peter März (ed.), *Woran erinnern? Der Kommunismus in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2006, 91-108; Petra Hausteil, *Geschichte im Disens. Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen nach dem Ende der DDR*, Leipzig 2006.

ance fighters saw in the revised interpretation of the communist resistance a further attack on their self-image, which was repeatedly shaken by unveilings of the crimes committed by Stalin and the GULAG after 1956, particularly as the uncovering of Stalinist crimes in Khrushchev's 'secret speech' and in the publications of Solzhenitsyn led to the conviction that it was better to have stood on the "right" and "better" side in the struggle between fascism/National Socialism and communism.¹¹¹

In April 1991, FIR joined an initiative of the international concentration camp committees directed at the upcoming CSCE Colloquium at the European Cultural Heritage meeting in Cracow from 28 May to 7 June. FIR sent a letter of its own to the ambassadors member states of the CSCE in Vienna,¹¹² in which the organisation expressed its "anxieties about the threat to memorials especially of the former Nazi concentration camps in the territory of the former GDR",¹¹³ namely their redesigning, which was pushed ahead by the persons responsible in the former East-German states with little sensitivity towards the former prisoners and without consulting the victim associations.¹¹⁴ FIR asked its members to protest to their national governments. While the CSCE Colloquium took place, the international concentration camp committees held a conference in Cracow to lend weight to their demands and to lobby alongside.¹¹⁵ The result was a statement of the CSCE Colloquium in which the signatory states, to which Germany belonged, obliged themselves to support the preservation of the memorials.¹¹⁶ FIR saw the acceptance of this document as an affirmation of the success of this endeavour and of the international concentration camp committees, but it neither brought an end to the debate nor prevented the memorial sites in the former GDR from receiving new exhibitions and the memory of the Soviet special camps being included in the memorials.¹¹⁷

However – and this was the most important point – the victims' associations and the international committees, which had withdrawn from the communist narrative of the resistance, though not including FIR, were now involved in the discussions about the redesigning of memorials.¹¹⁸ FIR thus became an outsider. Nevertheless, and despite its lack of personnel, the organisation continued to protect its position and maintained the positive picture of the Soviet Union's role as exclusively a liberator. In 1995, it warned against mixing up "the history of these camps [i.e. the concentration camps] with the use by the allies after the war", but – not surprisingly – this went unheeded.¹¹⁹ Ultimately, FIR participated in this debate only sporadically and without decisive success.

111 Jorge Semprun, *Was für ein schöner Sonntag!* Munich 2004.

112 DÖW, 22718/3, Schreiben der FIR an die Botschafter der 34 KSZE-Staaten, 15 April 1991.

113 DÖW, 22718/3, Tagung der "Delegation des Büros" der FIR: Bericht von Oskar Wiesflecker: Von der Notwendigkeit der FIR, 13-14 April 1991.

114 Endlich, Diskussion, 192.

115 Die Bewahrung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager und die Frage des Archivs von Arolsen, 26 June 1991, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

116 Symposium über das kulturelle Erbe der KSZE-Teilnehmerstaaten. Cracow, 6 June 1991, in: Ulrich Fastenrath (ed.): *KSZE/OSZE. Dokumente der Konferenz und der Organisation für Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa*, Neuwied 1992, Volume 1.

117 Die Bewahrung der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager und die Frage des Archivs von Arolsen, 26 June 1991, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

118 Bernd Faulenbach, Zu den Schwierigkeiten eines Diskurses über die Neukonzeption von Gedenkstätten. Nachwort, in: *Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten für die Verfolgten des NS-Regimes. Perspektiven, Kontroversen und internationale Vergleiche*, Berlin 1992, 200-204.

119 Das Büro der Internationalen Föderation der Widerstandskämpfer (FIR): 50. Jahrestag: Befreiung und Sieg über den Nazismus. Für den Aufbau einer Welt des Friedens und der Freiheit, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants (1995), 1.

Reparations, Pensions and the “Rights of the Resistance Fighters”

Defending the social privileges granted to the former resistance fighters during the Cold War was another main focus of FIR’s activities. These privileges were cut back or completely eliminated in almost all European states after 1990. According to information from FIR, corresponding legal drafts or laws were already in place in Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.¹²⁰ Research about the provision for Nazi victims is due for many states with the exception of Austria and Germany, and the FIR documents do not tell us which benefits the formerly persecuted persons received before 1989 and which were supposed to be or were in fact cut back after 1990.¹²¹ In any case, in September 1991, *Der neue Mahnruf* reported that the pensions of former resistance fighters in Greece had been cut.¹²²

FIR’s protest was very general: no reference to any concrete state or to particular benefits were made. Instead, the organisation maintained that “the legitimacy of many governments of European countries emerged from the victory over Nazism”.¹²³ This argument, which seemed to be taken directly from the strategies of legitimation of the overthrown communist regimes, did not have any traction after 1989. At best, the ethical right to special social welfare benefits for former resistance fighters could be derived from the struggle against National Socialist occupation. However, this was also denied to the mostly communist former resistance fighters, particularly as they often reached high party and state positions in the post-war period. In addition, one must bear in mind the tight budgetary situation in the Eastern- and Central-European states, which had to fight against economic crises and high unemployment rates in the transition from planned to market economy.¹²⁴

In this context, unified Germany was the focus of attention once again. Since 1949, the GDR had granted privileges to formerly persecuted persons, who had been distinguished between “victims of fascism” and the “fighters against fascism”. Since 1965, upon reaching retirement age, members of these groups received “honorary pensions”: since the income was last increased on 1 January 1989, “fighters” received 1,700 East-German Marks, while victims received only 1,400 Marks.¹²⁵ This was a significant sum, considering that old-age pensions averaged only 434,12 Marks for invalids.¹²⁶ However, a person’s status as a “fighter” or “victim” could be taken from them at any time as a result of unfavourable political conduct.

Although the Unification Treaty was intended to continue paying the pensions according to the GDR law, after 3 October 1990 it was envisaged that this difference be evened out, to the disadvantage of the former resistance fighters, whose pensions were decreased.¹²⁷ The Interessenverband der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (Association of Persons Persecuted by the Nazi Regime, hereafter IVVdN), the successor to

120 FIR agiert für die Respektierung der legitimen Rechte der Widerstandskämpfer, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, November 1991, 4, 2-4.

121 There is current research available in France, Italy and Poland.

122 Athen streicht Pensionen, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* 44 (1991) 8/9, 7.

123 Für die Respektierung der legitimen Rechte der ehemaligen Widerstandskämpfer und Opfer des Nazismus 26 June 1991, in: Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants, July 1991, 3.

124 Judt, *Geschichte*, 791-800.

125 Constantin Goschler, *Schuld und Schulden. Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945*, Göttingen 2005, 373-384.

126 *Ibid.*, 392; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Berlin 1990, 384.

127 Nr. 5, Anlage II, Sachgebiet H, Abschnitt III zum Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zur Herstellung der Einheit Deutschlands – Einigungsvertrag, in: *Bundesgesetzblatt II*, 889-1236, here 1214.

KdAW, repeatedly turned to FIR to ask for intervention in Bonn, where severe cuts – or in some cases a complete abolishment – were planned to these “honorary pensions”.¹²⁸ FIR protested and seemed to be successful,¹²⁹ until in October 1992 the IVVdN notified FIR that the German Bundestag had passed a law which made it possible to cut back or cut off the pension for profiteers of the East-German regime and for persons who “had offended against the principles of humanity or of the rule of law”.¹³⁰ Those affected included Peter Florin and the widow of Horst Sindermann, who was chairman of the GDR’s council of ministers and member of the Politburo, but during National Socialism had been a prisoner in the concentration camps at Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen.¹³¹ FIR lacked any means of pressure for disposal and could not act effectively in this context.

Summary and prospects

The democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe decisively changed the circumstances in which FIR acted. Many of its member organisations from Eastern Europe experienced a deep crisis, which also affected FIR. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, the old mass organisations dissolved during the democratic revolutions, while many new, much smaller organisations were founded, of which by today only a small minority have become members of FIR.¹³² The financial problems of FIR dramatically increased. The organisation had to dismiss employees and to restrict its activities. Victim groups which had been discriminated against during communist rule now established their own associations. Furthermore, conflicts arose between the former anti-fascist resistance fighters and the victims of Stalinist and communist persecution, as the latter called for recognition, compensation, and justice. In some cases, former resistance fighters against German occupation had been the perpetrators of the communist regimes, while their associations had supported the rulers. The result was a delegitimisation of the communist resistance as a whole, and of FIR as its international representative. To complicate the situation, some of those who had been persecuted during Stalinism had taken an active part in the mass murder of the Jewish population during the Second World War, or had been local fascists.

Although the communist anti-fascist resistance had lost much of its reputation, FIR hardly reacted to the challenge of post-1989 Europe and its changing memory culture. The aims and statutes of the organisation remained the same and the personnel of the leading bodies was not fundamentally renewed. Furthermore, its political orientation did not change much, despite the declaration of belief in pluralistic democracy. Only in November 2004 did the thirteenth Ordinary Congress adopt a new statute, in which the aims of FIR were amended, as is still in force today. It especially included goals criticising globalisation, and opened FIR to “members of today’s generations, who support the safeguarding of the memory and the political legacy of the resistance and of persecution”.¹³³ The latter had gained increasing importance

128 NS-Verfolgte in der ehemaligen DDR, in: *Der neue Mahnruf* (1991) 3, 6.

129 Die FIR zu aktuellen Problemen. Das Sekretariat der FIR tagte in Wien, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, December 1991, 5.

130 § 5 Entschädigungsrentengesetz, 22 April 1992, in: *Bundesgesetzblatt I*, 906.

131 *Ibid.*; Legitime Rechte von deutschen Widerstandskämpfern werden durchlöchert, in: *Mitteilungen. Fédération Internationale des Résistants*, October 1992, 6.

132 In Poland, for instance, there are today 79 associations of different victim groups, of which only one is a member of FIR. www.kombatanci.gov.pl (31 August 2016); www.fir.at/liste-der-verbände/, (31 August 2016).

133 <http://www.fir.at/statut/> (2 June 2016).

because of the advancing age and the death of many functionaries and since the reduction of FIR's activities could also be traced back to the weakened health of many of its representatives.¹³⁴ In 2004, a generational shift took place with the election of Ulrich Schneider, born in 1954, as new secretary-general. The new president, however, was a representative of the old generation: Michel Vanderbrought, who was elected to this office, was already 79.¹³⁵

134 Arialdo Banfi died in 1997, Alix Lhote in 2007 and Oskar Wiesflecker, who had managed FIR's publications for decades, died in 2009.

135 Fédération Internationale des Résistants (FIR), 34-38.

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Quotation: Maximilian Becker,
The Fédération Internationale des Résistants (FIR). Its activities during the Breakdown of the Soviet
Bloc, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 3 (2016) 2, 4-24.

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ART_Becker02.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_ART_Becker/ART_Becker02.pdf)

Article

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Zuzanna Dziuban

The Things that Affectively Live On

The Afterlives of Objects Stolen from Mass Graves¹

Abstract

The problem of grave-robbing at the sites of the former Nazi extermination camps in occupied Poland has received increasing academic interest recently. Rediscovered in historical research and brought to public attention by the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's and Irena Grudzińska-Gross's *Golden Harvest* (2012), this practice, undertaken by local villagers searching for gold and other valuables allegedly hidden among and in the human remains of the camps' victims, has since been engulfed in controversy around its meaning and social causes. At the same time, the objects stolen from the mass graves at the sites of the extermination camps have begun to resurface – sometimes they are even brought back to the sites from which they were taken. Focussing specifically on the 'Aktion Reinhardt' extermination camp at Belżec, this paper traces the material afterlives of the stolen objects and the transformations of the affective, political and symbolic economies structuring their handling. Providing an interpretative gaze on the circumstances of their theft, their integration into the daily lives of the inhabitants of Belżec, and finally their return, this paper brings to the fore the affective afterlives of those objects, and investigates their potential to challenge the cultural economies of science surrounding practices of grave-robbing at the sites of the former Nazi camps in post-war Poland.

On May 5th, 2006, a middle-aged man arrived at the newly opened museum at the former National Socialist extermination camp in Belżec, Poland, with the intention of giving back a ring given to him by his grandmother, a Polish resident of Belżec, almost 42 years previously. The ring, a piece of gold jewellery adorned with a ruby, most probably intended as a future engagement ring for an adolescent grandson, was given to a museum employee with a letter explaining both its provenance and the reasons for its return. The man, who described himself in the note as a successful Belżec-born entrepreneur from Szczecin, kept his grandmother's gift hidden in a box until the summer of 2005, when an unexpected and somewhat traumatic event forced him to cast his mind back to this long-forgotten piece of family property.

"I was returning from Berlin with my business partners. We were driving in a fast car back to Szczecin. In the middle of the journey the momentarily distracted driver nearly caused an accident at the speed of 200 km/h. In a fraction of a second – this must have been fate – he managed to turn abruptly and prevented us from crashing into another car. My life would have been cut short – but I was left to live. On that night I had a vivid, almost realistic dream. A young Jewish girl appeared and in a quiet voice instructed me: 'Januszek'² (that's what she was calling me, Januszek) you

1 I wish to thank the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI), which generously supported my research. An extended version of this article will be published in Christoph Kreutzmüller/Jonathan R. Zatlín (ed.), *Dispossession. Plundering German Jewry, 1933–1953*, Ann Arbor 2016. Forthcoming.

2 Januszek is a diminutive of the once popular Polish name Janusz.

have my ring. Take it, take it back to Bełżec and leave it there, give it back. It belongs to me.”³

The dream evoked a seemingly obvious association between the golden ring and the former Nazi camp, where the extermination of almost 450,000 people persecuted as Jews occurred between March and December 1942.⁴ The man, whose family lived in the vicinity of the camp during the war and long afterwards, had strong memories of other peoples’ excursions to the site and of his own ‘treasure-hunt’ expeditions undertaken during summer visits to his grandparents’ house.

“On many occasions, I spent time on Kozielsk and its surroundings. I remember that as a child I used to collect a variety of beads, rinsed out of the so-called ‘ground’ by the rain. [...] As a child I did not really know what happened at the site. Bones and human skulls were scattered all over the place, I must have thought that this was just another cemetery. Only after many years did I learn that it was a death factory. [...] Everybody knew that Bełżec was a ‘gold mine’, that is why the majority of the inhabitants were in possession of various items of value, whose real value they could not even estimate. And so, on my eighteenth birthday my grandmother [...] gave me a ring – the protagonist of this story. [...] It is May 5th, 2006, I came from Szczecin to Bełżec to fulfil the request of the young Jewish girl from my dream, who had been cruelly deprived of her life. Why did she choose me? I feel relieved.”

Woven together from vague hints, puzzling evasions, unarticulated causalities and somewhat surprising political statements,⁵ the letter tells a fascinating story of the trajectories of travel of the property once belonging to the Jewish victim of the extermination camp. As such, it directs attention to the often marginalised aspect of the afterlife of the “Holocaust gold”⁶ whose fate has for some time now been a matter for both academic research and public, emotionally highly-charged debates.⁷ Centred around and in fact triggered by the controversies surrounding the problem of restitution in the last decade of the twentieth century, these discussions not only exposed the extent of the financial gains made by the “Third Reich” and by other European countries as a result of the continent-wide process of dispossessing European Jews but also brought to the fore the practice of robbing the victims of the extermination and concentration camps, considered the ultimate symbol of violence and dehumanisation perpetrated by the Nazis. Constituting the “dreadful endpoint in the long chain of dispossession”⁸ undergone by the Jewish victims of National Socialism from 1933 onwards, the organised theft of the possessions of people sent for extermination, including the utilisation of their corpses by robbing them of their

3 Archive Museum-Memorial Site Bełżec (PMM-B), PMM-B-3015; the ring was stored together with the letter for many years in the magazine of the State Museum at Majdanek, and has been kept in the archives of the Museum-Memorial Site at Bełżec since February 2014.

4 Robert Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu* [The Death Camp at Bełżec], Lublin 2010, 170-172.

5 At the end of the letter its author declares, for instance: “I will not hide the fact that I empathise with Israel in her struggle with Palestine.”

6 Instead of employing the widespread category of “Nazi Gold”, which (once more) discursively deprives the true owners of their property, I prefer to use the notion of “Holocaust gold” coined by Raul Teitelbaum and Moshe Sandbar. The German term *Opfergold*, the gold of the victims, would probably be the most appropriate. Raul Teitelbaum/Moshe Sanbar, *Holocaust gold from the victims to Switzerland. The Path of the Nazi Plunder*, Tel Aviv 2001.

7 See for instance Martin Dean/Constantin Goschler/Philip Therr (ed.), *Robbery and Restitution. The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe*, New York/Oxford 2008.

8 Bertrand Perz, *Die Verwertung des Opfergoldes aus den Vernichtungslagern der ‘Aktion Reinhard’*, in: *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes* (ed.), *Forschungen zum Nationalsozialismus und dessen Nachwirkungen in Österreich*, Vienna 2012, 131-153, here 131.

gold teeth, has since received a considerable amount of scholarly attention.⁹ The same is true of the controversial journeys of the expropriated property to various institutions and individuals in Germany and beyond, and those of the ‘dental gold’ acquired in the extermination camps to banks in the Reich and in Switzerland.¹⁰ Yet the material and cultural fate of the ‘Holocaust gold’ left behind at the sites of the former Nazi extermination camps – adding another link in the “long chain of dispossession” – still remains notably under-researched.¹¹

In this respect, while the letter deposited in the museum at Belżec cannot be considered representative, it seems incredibly valuable, because it is rare and particularly instructive. Recounted from the perspective of an individual who had in his possession for more than four decades an item taken from the site of the former Nazi extermination camp, and who was himself involved in the practice of collecting ‘abandoned’ objects at the site, it allows a deeper look into the afterlives of the ‘Holocaust gold’ at Belżec, both material and affective. The importance of the latter dimension for thinking about the ‘property transfers’ resulting from the Holocaust is, in this case, quite evident: not only did the young boy – as he was – perceive the visits to the site as “eerie” and anxiety-inducing, due to the uncanny atmosphere of the place permeated by the “sad rustle of the forest [...] [resembling] supernatural singing, and by the terror, fear, and sorrow”,¹² but also as a mature man he reached the decision to return the property of the “young Jewish girl” to the site from which it was taken, essentially driven by an affect discharged by the ring and mediated by an unexpected dream.¹³ The reconstruction of the route of the golden ring retraced in the jagged narrative of the middle-aged entrepreneur unveils, therefore, the dense web of meanings, interpretations, and affects surrounding the practices related to the objects found at the site of the former extermination camp.

The relevance of an affect-oriented approach to the fate of Jewish property taken by Poles during the war and in the immediate post-war years was also hinted at by historian Dariusz Stola. Focussing on the affective dimension of the recent Polish restitution debates and on the unquestionably moral and political – as opposed to merely legal – context of the material objects around which it revolves, Stola wrote about the power of post-Holocaust objects and, one can assume, ‘Holocaust gold’, to awaken unease among those who personally acquired them and the representatives of the second or third generations of their Polish owners. “If one takes shadows as a metaphor for the past, one could say that ‘formerly Jewish’ objects cast a deeper, darker shadow than others, as almost every one of them has a dramatic history”,¹⁴ he stated in an article titled *The Polish Debate on the Holocaust and the Restitution of Property*. Moreover, the fact that the objects “did not come into the possession of

9 See for instance Andrzej Strzelecki, The Plunder of Victims and their Corpses, in: Yisrael Gutman/Michael Berenbaum (ed.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, Bloomington/Indianapolis 1998, 246-269.

10 Ralf Banken, *Edelmetallmangel und Grossraubbirtschaft. Die Entwicklung des deutschen Edelmetallsektors im ‘Dritten Reich’ 1933–1945*, Berlin 2009.

11 Similarly, the afterlives of the *Opfergold* buried together with the victims of the *Einsatzgruppen* at the killing sites spread throughout Eastern Europe have yet to become the object of scholarly research. The fact that the mass graves resulting from the ‘Holocaust by bullets’ were plundered by the local populace is well documented by Patrick Desbois. Patrick Desbois, *Holocaust by Bullets. A Priest’s Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, New York 2008.

12 PMM-B-3015.

13 In conversations with the employees of the Museum-Memorial Site at Belżec, I learned about two other instances of the return of objects taken from the site which were triggered by dreams, namely a golden coin and a roll of barbed wire: see interviews conducted by the author, 16 October 2013 and 24 September 2014.

14 Dariusz Stola, *The Polish Debate on the Holocaust and the Restitution of Property*, in: Dean/Goschler/Therr (ed.), *Robbery and Restitution*, 240-258, here 251.

[their] new owners by the usual means of legal sale or inheritance” can, according to Stola, be a reason for strong affective responses.

Hypothetically ascribing this affective power to the fact that “collective yet subconscious knowledge of the crimes against the [rightful] owners clings to ‘former Jewish’ property”,¹⁵ the metaphor of “the objects with a shadow” in Stola’s article applies first and foremost to the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis from which, nevertheless, many Poles derived financial benefit. This phenomenon has been ‘rediscovered’ in recent Polish academic discourse¹⁶ and conceptualised through a broad and descriptive notion of the “appropriation of Jewish property”.¹⁷ It could therefore, indeed, be considered extremely shadow-generating. Gathering various forms of indigenous participation in the Nazi plunder of the Jews (for instance through trusteeship), the practice of taking possession of the real-estate and objects left behind by their owners deported to the extermination camps, of taking over the occupational positions held by Jews before the war, of *szmalcownictwo* [blackmailing], and of the widespread and normalised plunder of ‘post-Jewish property’, as it was commonly referred to even during the war, the ‘appropriation’ itself must have, as a result, had many affectively charged shades of grey.

Although Stola almost immediately dismissed his own interpretation of the affective afterlives of the ‘formerly Jewish’ objects as historically untestable and empirically unverifiable, there are theoretical approaches available to the scholar that render such an interpretation legitimate and productive. Yael Navaro-Yashin has written an ethnographic study of the Turkish-Cypriot experience of the properties left behind by the Greek-Cypriots expelled from Northern Cyprus in 1974 in the aftermath of the invasion of the island by the Turkish army and the consequent partition of the state. She shows, for instance, how the abandoned and plundered material objects continued to affectively *live on*, to this day influencing the daily interactions between people and the properties they acquired as a result of the war.¹⁸ Though the situation analysed by Navaro-Yashin differs significantly from the reality of post-Holocaust Poland – the former being an outcome of long-lasting ethnic tension forcefully resolved by invasion and the creation of an internationally unrecognised polity, resulting in expulsions on both sides of the ethnic divide – her reflection on the emotive afterlives of things acquired by the Turkish-Cypriots shows the direction in which an affect-oriented approach could lead. Of central importance for Navaro-Yashin is the practice of *ganimet* – a word with Ottoman roots referring to the looting of a defeated enemy – which in the aftermath of the 1974 invasion came to designate the violence entailed in taking over another community’s belongings. Though legitimised and supported by the newly established state, the practice and the resulting interactions with objects won through *ganimet* have brought about a lingering state of unease among Turkish-Cypriots dwelling in expropriated houses and with misappropriated objects: a feeling, in an anthropological view, inflicted upon them by plundered properties, and irreducible to merely subjective emotional landscapes.

15 Ibid.

16 Jan Tomasz Gross/Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest. Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*, Oxford/New York 2012; Jan Grabowski/Dariusz Libionka (ed.), *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* [Keys & Cash. The Fate of Jewish Property in Occupied Poland and in the Immediate Postwar Years, 1939–1950], Warsaw 2014.

17 Jan Grabowski/Dariusz Libionka, *Wstęp* [Introduction], in: Grabowski/Libionka (ed.), *Klucze i kasa*, 7–28, here 24.

18 Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects. Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge*, in: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2009) 15, 1–18; Yael Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space. Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*, Durham/London 2012.

This assumption, building upon Bruno Latour's theories of non-human agency and the ideas developed within the framework of contemporary affect theory, allows Yael Navaro-Yashin to construct affect as irreducible to human subjectivity. Rather, the category of affect has to be thought of as relational, establishing exchange between subjects and the environments which they inhabit.¹⁹ From this perspective, mediated by daily dealings with looted goods, the memory of the morally problematic, violent economy of *ganimet* prevents a full domestication of the misappropriated objects and thus constitutes the source of the affective dynamics of melancholia and abjection that underlie these interactions.

Interestingly, a notion similar to that of Turkish-Cypriot *ganimet* had already gained discursive prominence in Poland during the war. Referring initially to the plundering of Warsaw in the aftermath of the 1943 and 1944 uprisings, and popularised in the context of the looting of abandoned German properties in the so-called 'recovered lands', the notion of *szaber* – conceptualised nowadays as war-related plunder performed along ethnic or national lines on the abandoned property of 'the other'²⁰ – also encapsulates the earlier robberies of Jewish stores and houses in the wake of the war, of the ghettos vacated in 1942 to 1944, and of the property belonging to the exterminated Jews.²¹ Thus *szaber*, to a great extent feeding upon the outcomes of the violence perpetrated on the 'other' (the Jews) by the other (the Nazis), and itself considered a form of violence, was intrinsically entwined in the "Holocaust economy" in which "the platitude of the appropriation of the post-Jewish property corresponded with the platitude of the Jewish death",²² to slightly paraphrase Sławomir Buryła.

As the Belżec letter clearly suggests, an awareness of this unsettling connection was not lacking among the inhabitants of Belżec who were, after all, looting a 'gold mine' over which human bones and skulls were scattered. Moreover, its author explicitly acknowledged the entanglement of the practice of collecting items at the site of the former camp with the broader machinery of the Nazi dispossession of the Jews. Referring to the fact that his relatives lived in the immediate vicinity of the camp during the war and in its aftermath, he stated: "As a family they knew and 'felt' a lot. There was no difference between them and the French, Swiss etc. – while helping, they got rich."²³ Paradoxically, this in many respects puzzling and largely defensive statement has an uncanny resonance with a thesis advanced by Jan Gross and Irena Grudzińska Gross in *Golden Harvest: Events at the Peripheries of the Holocaust*, the first book to publicise the enormous scale and detrimental consequences of Polish participation in the wartime plunder of the Jews, published in Poland in 2011. Reflecting on indigenous consent and cooperation as preconditions for the possibility of the success of Nazi expropriation and extermination policies, and on the commonality of the experience of dispossessing Jews throughout war-torn Europe, Gross and Grudzińska Gross write ironically: "And if one were to ask what a Swiss banker and a Polish peasant had in common (besides that each had an immortal soul), the answer, with only a little bit of exaggeration, could be a golden tooth ripped

19 In Navaro-Yashin's view, both people and things "produce and transmit affect *relationally*"; see Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*, 172.

20 Marcin Zaremba suggests that *szaber* most probably derives from the Hebrew *shaber* [to break] appropriated by the nineteenth century Polish criminal slang to denote breaking in; see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* [The Great Terror. Poland 1944–1947. People's Response to the Crisis], Cracow 2012, 276–277.

21 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 225–306.

22 Sławomir Buryła, *Tematy (nie)opisane [(Un)Described Subjects]*, Cracow 2013, 156.

23 PMM-B-3015.

from the jaw of a Jewish corpse.”²⁴ While it would be difficult not to agree with the authors of *Golden Harvest*, an attempt to differentiate between the Swiss and Polish experiences of the appropriation of ‘Holocaust gold’ should nevertheless follow immediately. After all, the social and political context, the proximity to the extermination process and, most importantly, the mechanisms of expropriation have been of crucial importance for both the material and affective afterlives of ‘Holocaust gold’. The (collective) subject position occupied within the framework of the Europe-wide “Holocaust economy” to this day determines the trajectories of travels and the depth of the shadows cast by post-Holocaust objects.

It is unquestionable that the Bełżec-born entrepreneur refers in his letter to the grave-robbery undertaken at the former camp by local villagers searching for gold and other valuables allegedly hidden among and in the human remains. The practice, which developed immediately after the Nazis in authority left Bełżec in early July 1943, following the disposal of the bodies and the dismantling of the camp,²⁵ was widespread.²⁶ The accounts collected as early as 1945, the testimonies gathered since 2004 by the employees of the newly established Bełżec museum, and the interviews which I conducted, also affirm this assumption.²⁷ Moreover, they vividly portray the practices aimed at seizing ‘Jewish gold’: the demolition of built structures remaining at the site of the former camp, the burrowing of the grounds of the camp in search of burial pits, the digging out of corpses to divest them of golden teeth, the sifting of ashes to separate the gold, and prospecting the former camp’s latrine in pursuit of abandoned valuables.

The modes of violence perpetrated against the Bełżec victims, whose property and corpses were also violated at the site of the former extermination centre, were obviously highly problematic from all standpoints (officially) dominant in mid-twentieth-century Poland: moral and religious, legal and political. Even though the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland are far less restrictive with regard to exhumations and the transfer of the dead than Jewish religious laws are, they did not authorise any form of grave desecration, and naturally this extends to grave-robbery. On the contrary, the sanctity of burial sites and cemeteries, as well as the sacred status of the dead body, were well-established cultural convictions, symbolically and affectively structuring the handling of human remains in this highly religious coun-

24 Gross/Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest*, 121.

25 The SS officers immediately reacted to the alarming news from Bełżec by erecting a farmhouse for a *Volksdeutscher* and his family at the former camp in September 1943 as a means to protect its grounds from Polish villagers, but this intervention only temporarily suspended their activity. The looting resumed directly after the escape of the guards in the summer of 1944; see Sara Berger, *Experten der Vernichtung. Das T4-Reinhardt-Netzwerk in den Lagern Bełżec, Sobibor und Treblinka*, Hamburg 2013, 193.

26 Even though the looting of the former camp was not practised or accepted by all members of the local populace, it definitely took on a mass character. Marta Zawodna made a similar observation in her article *On the Clearing of the Post-Camp World*, devoted to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she conceptualised the practice of “digging in the human remains” at the site of the former camp in terms of a “peculiar social order” created by the local populace. Marta Zawodna, *O porządkowaniu poobozowego świata. Sposoby postępowania ze szczątkami ludzkimi na terenach byłego KL Auschwitz-Birkenau od momentu ostatecznej likwidacji obozu do powstania muzeum*, in: *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały [Holocaust. Studies and Materials]*, (2012) 8, 145-175, here 173.

27 I am referring here to the materials from the investigation carried out at Bełżec by the local branch of the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce [Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland] in 1945–1946, which are available in the archive of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [Institute of National Memory in Lublin – furthermore: AIPN Lu], 1/15/105, Akta Śledztwa w sprawie zbrodni popełnionych w obozie zagłady w Bełżcu, 1945–1949 [Records of the Investigations into the Crimes Committed in the Extermination Camp at Bełżec, 1945–1949]. In 2013, those materials were published in Dariusz Libionka (ed.), *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu w relacjach ocalałych i zeznaniach polskich świadków [The Extermination Camp at Bełżec in the Testimonies of Survivors and Accounts of Polish Witnesses]*, Lublin 2013.

try.²⁸ The desecration of corpses and burial sites constituted, furthermore, a crime carrying penalties under pre-war criminal law. Additionally, on 13 June 1946, a *Decree on Crimes Particularly Dangerous During the Reconstruction of the State* was passed, which increased the maximum penalty for the profanation of graves from two to five years or, in the case of crimes committed in particularly aggravating circumstances, to ten years of imprisonment.²⁹ The hegemonic and highly politicised heroic-martyrological narratives about the war that developed in the immediate post-war years and centred around the former Nazi camps – focussing on the ‘anti-fascist’ struggle and leaving ample room for the memory of Jewish suffering³⁰ – could moreover not have accommodated the controversial practices evolving at Bełżec.

Yet, for many years, the looters continued their prospecting at the site in search of ‘Holocaust gold’ with almost full impunity and one can assume this only led to further corruption. Even the efforts sporadically undertaken by local police to put an end to this practice failed. Resulting to a large extent from the social and political chaos after the war,³¹ and the fact that the actions of local police concentrated on fighting the “criminal gangs” recruited from the members of the anti-Communist ‘independence underground’ (active in the region up until the late 1950s),³² this state of affairs continued for many years. “This situation lasted until the 1950s and even longer, and the raids organised by the Department of Security and the police did not help much”,³³ one interviewee admitted. Another person, who had worked from 1951–1952 in the timber yard partially located at the former camp, recounted: “People were loitering around the site searching the ground [...] for the valuables left by the murdered Jews.”³⁴ My analysis of the post-war police reports from Bełżec and Tomaszów Lubelski from the years 1944 to 1954 confirms these findings: until the late 1950s, no grave-robber was arrested or brought to trial.³⁵ The first three Bełżec looters were sentenced in 1959 and 1960.³⁶

As a result, for many decades the ‘Holocaust gold’ and ‘formerly Jewish’ possessions were subject to almost unrestricted circulation. The statements given by inhabitants of Bełżec allow us to reconstruct some of their trajectories: “For the money gained through the sale or exchange of valuables people would buy cows and horses – the commodities [sic] most needed in the immediate post-war years.”³⁷ “Some of the prospectors hoarded the gold for a so-called rainy day or exchanged it for dollars as early as the 1970s.”³⁸ Interestingly, it was the presence of the ‘independence underground’, said to have been robbing local residents, which imposed temporary constraints on the villagers’ economic activity.

28 Joanna Żac-Bucholc, Śmierć w polskiej kulturze ludowej. Wyobrażenia, obrazy, znaczenia, in: *Racjonalista*, 2002, <http://www.racjonalista.pl/kk.php/t,1883> (20 August 2014).

29 Art. 26, 27, *Dziennik Ustaw* z dnia 12 Lipca 1946 [Official Gazette of 12 July 1946]. No. 30, poz. 192.

30 See for instance Zofia Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning. Memory of the Nazi Camps in Poland, 1944–1950*, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

31 See Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga*.

32 Archiwum Rady Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa [Archive of The Council for The Protection of the Memory of Struggle in Martyrdom (furthermore: ROPWiM)], 52/5, 7-10; Raport komendanta wojewódzkiej komendy milicji w Lublinie [The Report by the Commander of Regional Police Department in Lublin], 12 February 1962.

33 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 16, anonymised.

34 Ibid.

35 AIPN Lu 0295/1, 0295/2, 0295/3, 0295/10, 0295/14, 0295/18, 0295/23, 0295/30.

36 Police investigations were also conducted in the early 1960s under the operational cryptonym “Undertakers”; see also Raport komendanta.

37 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 34, anonymised.

38 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 16, anonymised.

“For a long time in the area of Brzeziny, a partisan group opposing the government was active. [...] K[...] was the leader of this gang. People were afraid of partisans, which is why the gold found at the site was hidden and not exchanged for money and bills. Only after 1957, when K[...] was captured, safety improved. People started investing gathered valuables in building residences, barns and outhouses.”³⁹

An anecdote recounted by one of the informants allows us to imagine the diversity of fates that could actually have befallen the ‘Holocaust gold’ and ‘formerly Jewish objects’:

“Among the inhabitants of Bełżec a story was often told that in the 1970s an elegant car with licence plates from western Poland arrived in front of one of the houses. Two men were inside and one asked the property owner for a spade, and then, before the eyes of the surprised host, without much searching and reflection, he dug out two huge jars full of gold jewels from under the apple-tree growing in the yard. Afterwards, the two gentlemen thanked him for the favour, cleaned soil off the jars, brushed the sand off their hands, said goodbye to the host, and after slamming the car doors shut went on their way.”⁴⁰

Most probably, as the history of the Bełżec ring tentatively suggests, many items taken from the site of the extermination camp changed owners as they travelled along family lines to diverse sites across the country, or until this day they embellish the houses – and the necks – of local inhabitants.

The seamless integration of ‘Holocaust gold’ into the fabric of the daily life of Polish villagers was certainly facilitated by the post-war economies of silence, both bottom-up and top-down, surrounding these controversial practices.⁴¹ The information on grave-robberies perpetrated by Poles on the mass graves of Jews exterminated by the Nazis reached broader audiences on an extremely rare basis, if indeed this ever happened. Already silenced in the official publication of the Centralna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce (Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland),⁴² it was discussed neither in local nor in the nationwide press. The first article to touch upon the issue “compromising the dignity of the nation” was the piece by Andrzej Muralczyk, *Bełżec – kopalnia złota. Raport z pustego pola* (Bełżec – A Gold Mine: A Report from an Empty Field), published in 1956 in the all-Poland weekly *Świat* (The World).⁴³ However, this text also employed a useful argumentative strategy, which for decades predominated in public discourse about the grave-robberies: Focussing on the dreadful character of the deeds perpetrated by the “cemetery hyenas”, as the people looting the extermination camp were called, the journalist almost unequivocally identified them as “degenerates”, consequently framing the looting of the Jewish graves as a marginal and exceptional be-

39 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 34, anonymised.

40 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 16, anonymised.

41 In the documentary *Bełżec* (2005), directed by Guillaume Moscovitz, an interviewed inhabitant of Bełżec says bluntly: “No one has really ever talked about that.” Fortunately for my research, this statement is not entirely correct.

42 Eugeniusz Szrojt, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, in: *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* [Newsletter of the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland], Warsaw 1947, t. 3. For an English translation, see Eugeniusz Szrojt, *Bełżec Extermination Camp*, in: *German Crimes in Poland*, vol. 2, Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Warsaw 1947.

43 Andrzej Muralczyk, *Bełżec – kopalnia złota. Raport z pustego pola* [Bełżec – A Gold Mine. A Report from an Empty Field], in: *Świat* [The World] (1956) 17, reprinted in Daniel Lis (ed.), *Wokół ‘Złotych Żniw’* [On the ‘Golden Harvest’], Cracow 2011, 49-55.

haviour.⁴⁴ But, as the analysed material indicates, this was not necessarily the case: although the grave-robbery most probably did not involve all members of the population living in the vicinity of Bełżec (and, for that matter, all Nazi extermination camps in occupied Poland), it could rightfully be depicted as a “community enterprise”.⁴⁵ Consequently, the *szaber* in extermination camps – misappropriation and exchange – laid the foundations for a local post-war economy created from the objects and valuables that had once belonged to the murdered Jews. The ‘post-Jewish gold’ has been appropriated, domesticated and incorporated into new a social order created on and out of the ‘leftovers’ of the war.

Nevertheless, as the letter written by the Bełżec-born entrepreneur suggests, in the long term and on an affective level, this integration must ultimately not have been smooth and unproblematic. The feelings of unease and guilt associated with the possession of an object belonging to the victim of an extermination camp was, in this case, readily apparent. Interestingly, other accounts have also emerged in recent years in which the inhabitants of Bełżec testify to the fact that the material circulation of ‘Holocaust gold’ has, indeed, a powerful if somewhat repressed affective counterpart. Travelling around in the form of rumours and – like in the story of the Bełżec ring – taking the form of ghost stories and uncanny narratives, the emotionally charged accounts throw some light on the shadows cast by ‘post-Jewish’ objects and on the affective dynamics inscribed in the daily interactions with the possessions bought with ‘Holocaust gold’. Taking as a vantage point the question posed by Yael Navaro-Yashin in relation to her Turkish-Cypriot ethnographic material, concerning the affect “generated in a community that has re-created its life and livelihood significantly on the basis of objects and properties belonging to another community”, one could therefore ask what kind of affects cling to the possessions of the ‘other’ stolen from mass graves at the sites of former extermination camps.⁴⁶

In the case study analysed by Navaro-Yashin, life in and among properties “assumed through an act of violation” from the expelled ‘enemy’ has been intrinsically entwined with a deep sense of melancholia (*maraz* in Turkish), which she interpreted as an affect discharged by ruin and left behind by a community which, though absent, has been an unconscious source of grief.⁴⁷ By contrast, the accounts given by the inhabitants of Bełżec suggest that their dealings with misappropriated objects have been tinged rather with a sense of fear and vulnerability. Both are easily detectable in a short, seemingly marginal sentence woven into a testimony stemming from 2004: “Rumours proliferated that the animals bought from found [sic] money and valu-

44 Such an interpretation was also omnipresent in the internal documents of the governmental Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa [Council for the Protection of the Memorials of Combat and Martyrdom], on whose initiative the site of the former camp was finally commemorated in 1963. Until very recently, the accounts of grave-robbers’ activities were presented mostly in historical publications and remained largely unknown to the wider public. They were rarely supplemented by efforts to clarify their underlying social dynamics and cultural consequences, or to locate them in a broader political or economic context. The interpretations put forward referred most often to curiosity, greed, total moral degradation, and the fact that the looters “did not perceive their actions in terms of evil”. Therefore, the release in 2011 of Jan Tomasz Gross’s and Irena Grudzińska Gross’s important book *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* not only publicised the problem of looting, but also created space for its critical investigation; the work being devoted, among other topics, to the post-war plunder of the former extermination camps. Most importantly, the book framed the phenomenon of looting not as a marginal behaviour or as an example of social deviance, but as a widespread and commonly accepted social practice.

45 Robert Kuwałek, *Obozy koncentracyjne i ośrodki zagłady jako miejsca pamięci* [Concentration Camps and Extermination Centres as Places of Memory], in: Feliks Tych/Monika Adamczyk-Grabowska (ed.), *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010* [The Effects of the Extermination of the Jews. Poland 1944–2010], Lublin 2012, 493–525.

46 Navaro-Yashin, *Affective spaces*, 1–18, here 4.

47 Navaro-Yashin, *Affective spaces*, 1–18, here 5.

ables died very quickly.⁴⁸ Induced by and inscribed into the recollections of sudden deaths or instances of madness among the most notorious ‘cemetery hyenas’, of the unexpected and severe illnesses suffered by their offspring, or of the general inability to ‘make money’ on the ‘Jewish gold’, the affects surrounding the practices related to the objects taken from the camp give voice to the long repressed, disturbing memories of the violent “economy of leftovers”.⁴⁹ The submerged anxiety which accompanies living life at the expense of the brutally murdered and posthumously robbed victims of the camp is experienced as, and translated into, the affectively potent phantasm of the cursed ‘Jewish gold’, unsurprisingly complementary to that of the ‘Jewish gold’ itself.⁵⁰ At the same time, by pointing out the fragility of ownership and the precarious nature of the economic order constructed from misappropriated possessions belonging to the dead, the uncanny narratives could be seen as an expression of a belated, semi-reflexive “local moral discourse”.⁵¹ Centred around the problematic dimension of the ‘appropriation’ of the property of the victims of the extermination camp, they are, after all, seen as bringing about the restoration of the sense of justice shaken by the grave-robbery.

Yet another way in which we could direct our thinking about the affective afterlives of the objects stolen from the former camp is strongly indicated by the discursive persistence of the phrase “post-Jewish valuables and gold”. In this regard, the analysis proposed by Navaro-Yashin again reveals itself as informative: just as the Turkish-Cypriots to this very day refer to the properties acquired after the war of 1974 as ‘Greek’, the Polish villagers personify and nationalise the loot by attributing to it the quality of ‘(post)-Jewishness’. This obstinate and largely unthinking practice in both cases maintains and carries on the relationship between the misappropriated objects and the people to whom they once belonged. It is through the objects left behind by the Greek-Cypriots, Navaro-Yashin claims, that the Turkish-Cypriots “relate to the other community in their absence”.⁵² Simultaneously, one could argue, by the same token this absence is also paradoxically removed. The immediacy of the ‘post-Jewish’ object, after all, testifies to the lingering, haunting, long repressed ‘presence’ of the radically dehumanised ‘other’ clinging to and affectively marking his or her former belongings.

However, from this perspective, a certain ambivalence attaches itself to the prefix ‘post’. While sustaining the affective dynamics of haunting and repression, it nevertheless suggests that the latter enjoys greater prominence. For it carries the morally justifiable implication that the death of the former owner results in a suspension of his or her ownership rights – “As if the murdered Jews left their possessions for Poles to inherit,” to quote from Piotr Forecki’s short interpretation of this problematic notion.⁵³ Based on a similar transferral of guilt as that inscribed in the workings of the ‘economy of leftovers’, the phrase ‘post-Jewish property’ again relegates the responsibility to the ‘other’, stripping the violent practice of robbing mass graves of its criminal and morally unacceptable content. Interestingly, the aftertones of this dubious

48 PMM-B, relacja [testimony] 34, anonymised.

49 Information provided by an employee of the Museum – Memorial Site at Belzec. Interviews conducted by the author, 16 October 2013 and 24 September 2014.

50 For an in-depth interpretation of the myth of the “(cursed) Jewish gold” in Polish post-war literary works, see Buryła, *Tematy (nie)opisane*.

51 Navaro-Yashin, *Affective Spaces*, 1-18, here 3.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Piotr Forecki, *Nasze mienie ‘pożydowskie’* [Our ‘post-Jewish’ property], *Dziennik opinii* [Opinion Daily], 14 December 2014, <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/artykuly/historia/20141214/forecki-nasze-mienie-pozydowskie> (16 December 2014).

logic still resonate in the letter written by the Belzec-born entrepreneur. Reflecting on the affect discharged by the ring, which used to belong to a young Jewish girl “who had been cruelly deprived of her life”, he fails to address the circumstances in which she was cruelly deprived of her personal belongings. Unsurprisingly then, the two sentences “Why did she choose me? I feel relieved” perfectly capture the parameters of affective afterlives befallen to ‘formerly Jewish’ objects misappropriated from the former extermination camp – they speak volumes about both the burden of guilt and the power of repression entwined in the possession of an object once belonging to an anonymous victim of the Holocaust.

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[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_ART_Dziuban/
ART_Dziuban02.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_ART_Dziuban/ART_Dziuban02.pdf)

Article

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Ines Koeltzsch

Die Anwesenheit des Abwesenden

Nostalgie und das kulturelle Gedächtnis böhmisch-mährischer Landjuden vor und nach der Shoah¹

Abstract

This paper deals with mostly published memories of Bohemian and Moravian Jews who were born and grew up in villages and small rural towns in the second half of the nineteenth or in the first decade of the twentieth century and who wrote down their histories before or after the Shoah. The first memories, mainly autobiographical fiction, recounting the end of the nineteenth century, were largely a reaction to the process of urbanisation which led to an important migration of Jews to the cities. After 1918, amateur historiography became important in the remembrance of rural Jewish life and was often triggered by feelings of nostalgia. Both forms of cultural memory – (partly autobiographical) fiction and popular historiography – also framed the patterns of remembering rural Jews after the Shoah. Nostalgia was often expressed in connection with sensation, for example in descriptions of religious traditions and habits. In contrast to the testimonies written before the Shoah the ambivalent longing for a place was now overlaid with the irreversible loss of people, the authors' mourning of their lost relatives, friends and neighbours, and with the emptiness of the remembered places.

„Nostalgia tells it like it wasn't.“² Das Zitat des Kulturgeographen David Lowenthal gilt mittlerweile als ein Gemeinplatz in der Diskussion des Begriffs ‚Nostalgie‘ in den Kulturwissenschaften. Es gehört zum Common Sense, dass Nostalgie ebenso wie alle andere Betrachtungsweisen der Vergangenheit keine Rekonstruktion der zurückliegenden Wirklichkeit leisten kann. Vielmehr stellt Nostalgie eine spezifische Form der Interpretation des Vergangenen dar, die an die jeweilige Gegenwart ihrer Entstehung gebunden ist und in der die Übergänge von Fiktion und Wirklichkeit fließend sind. Im Anschluss an die bisherige kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung verstehe ich daher unter Nostalgie die mehrdeutige, ortsgebundene Sehnsucht nach einer vergangenen Zeit, unabhängig davon, ob der Ort real existierte oder nicht.³

- 1 Ich danke Arno Pařík vom Jüdischen Museum in Prag für seine wertvollen Hinweise und Anregungen. Im Folgenden verwende ich der besseren Lesbarkeit halber das generische Maskulinum und stütze mich ebenso aus pragmatischen Gründen auf eine weite Definition von ‚Landjuden‘, die all jene Juden umfasst, die im ländlichen Raum, in Dörfern, Land- und Kleinstädten geboren wurden und/oder eine gewisse Zeit in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und den ersten Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts dort verbrachten. Wenngleich sich ihre Lebenswelten aufgrund der zunehmenden Verflechtung zwischen Stadt und Land, dem wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und kulturellen Wandel in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhundert von denjenigen in der Frühen Neuzeit grundlegend unterschieden und die Differenzen zwischen ländlicher, kleinstädtischer und großstädtischer Kultur abnahmen, betonten viele böhmische und mährische Juden ihre ländlich geprägte kleinstädtische oder dörfliche Herkunft. Zum Begriff der ‚Landjuden‘ im deutschsprachigen Raum: Barbara Staudinger, *Juden und Migration im ländlichen Raum vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung*, in: Lars Amenda/Ernst Langthaler (Hg.), *Kulinarische „Heimat“ und „Fremde“*, Innsbruck/Wien 2014, 198-202; sowie Stefanie Fischer, „Landjuden“, in: Wolfgang Benz (Hg.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*. Band 3: Begriffe, Ideologien, Theorien, München 2010, 185-189.
- 2 David Lowenthal, *Nostalgia tells it like it wasn't*, in: Christopher Shaw (Hg.), *The Imagined Past. History and Nostalgia*, Manchester 1989, 18-32.
- 3 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York 2001; Peter Fritzsche, *Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity*, in: *American Historical Review* 106 (2001) 5, 1587-1618.

Wenngleich es ein vormodernes Verständnis dieser Sehnsucht gab, ist die hier beschriebene Nostalgie ein modernes Phänomen, dessen Entstehung bis in die Frühe Neuzeit zurückverfolgt werden kann. Wurde Nostalgie Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts noch als Krankheit im Zuge eines realen Heimatverlusts – nämlich bei Soldaten, die aufgrund kriegerischer Auseinandersetzungen ihr Land verlassen mussten – beschrieben, geriet Nostalgie im 19. Jahrhundert zu einem weitverbreiteten Gefühl nicht nur, aber in erster Linie der adeligen und bürgerlichen Eliten in Europa.⁴ Wie unter anderem der Kulturhistoriker Peter Fritzsche herausarbeitete, hing dies langfristig mit dem fundamentalen Wandel des Zeitverständnisses seit der Französischen Revolution und dem Aufkommen des ‚historistischen Zeitalters‘ im Zuge der Romantik zusammen. Die neue Erfahrung zeitlicher Diskontinuität und die Sehnsucht nach Kontinuum führten laut Fritzsche Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts dazu, dass Nostalgie in den alltäglichen Sprachgebrauch Eingang gefunden hat „as a vague, collective longing for a bygone time rather than an individual desire to return to a particular place“.⁵ Für Fritzsche wie auch für die Soziologin Suzanne Vromen und vor allem die Kulturwissenschaftlerin Svetlana Boym ist dabei der ambivalente beziehungsweise paradoxe Charakter von Nostalgie wesentlich wichtiger, als der in der theoretischen Diskussion und im Alltagsverständnis ausschließlich betonte sentimentale, affirmative Zug. Fritzsche merkt in diesem Zusammenhang an:

„While nostalgia takes the past as its mournful subject, it holds it at arm’s length. The virtues of the past are cherished and their passage is lamented, but there is no doubt that they are no longer retrievable. [...] There can be no nostalgia without the sense of irreversibility, which is often lost on those critics who simply deride its sentimentality.“⁶

Gerade wegen dieses Bewusstseins von der „Anwesenheit des Abwesenden“ – „the presence of absence“ – wohnen Fritzsche zufolge der Nostalgie nicht nur Blindstellen, sondern auch kritische Momente inne:

„[I]t has had the effect of repeatedly scribbling up the clean slates of modern development and raising unbidden questions about the origins of social identity, the givenness of the here and now, and the possibility of contrary movement in the flow of history.“⁷

Auch in der jüdischen Historiographie und den Kulturwissenschaften ist Nostalgie kein unbekannter Begriff. Er wird hier deskriptiv oder analytisch angewendet im Hinblick auf die Auseinandersetzungen der bürgerlichen Eliten mit dem voremanzipatorischen Judentum im Ghetto oder im Shtetl, beziehungsweise mit den Formen traditionellen Judentums im ländlichen Raum nach 1848/1867,⁸ der osteuropäisch-jüdischen Einwanderer mit dem Shtetl in der amerikanischen Populär-

4 Auf eine ausführliche Begriffsgeschichte wird an dieser Stelle verzichtet. Einen konzisen Überblick über den Wandels des Nostalgie-Begriffs seit der Frühen Neuzeit bietet z. B.: Suzanne Vromen, *The Ambiguity of Nostalgia*, in: *YIVO Annual* 21 (1993), 69–86.

5 Peter Fritzsche, *Specters of History*, 159f.

6 Ebd., 159f.; siehe auch Boym, *The Future*, insb. XVII–XVIII u. 49–50; Vromen, *The Ambiguity*.

7 Peter Fritzsche, *Specters of History*, 159f.

8 Vgl. u. a. Richard Cohen, *Nostalgia and the ‚Return to the Ghetto‘. A Cultural Phenomenon in Western and Central Europe*, in: Jonathan Frankel/Steven J. Zipperstein (Hg.), *Assimilation and Community. The Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Cambridge et al. 1992, 130–153; Paula E. Hyman, *Traditionalism and Village Jews in 19th Century Western and Central Europe. Local Persistence and Urban Nostalgia*, in: Jack Wertheimer (Hg.), *The Uses of Tradition. Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, New York/Jerusalem 1992, 191–201; Miriam Gebhardt, *Das Familiengedächtnis. Erinnerung im deutsch-jüdischen Bürgertum 1890–1932*, Stuttgart 1999, insb. 117–119; Klaus Hödl, *Jüdische Identität und Museum. Das Wiener jüdische Museum im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Transversal* 3 (2002) 1, 47–67; Allison Schachter, *The Shtetl and the City: The Origin of Nostalgia in Bayamim ha-hem and Shloyme reb khayims*, in: *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (2006) 3, 73–94.

kultur⁹ sowie der Überlebenden der Shoah mit dem Shtetl in den *Yizker Bikhern*¹⁰ und der Juden und Nicht-Juden mit dem materiellen Erbe der osteuropäisch-jüdischen Kultur seit den 1970er- und 1980er-Jahren.¹¹ Aus diesen Studien geht trotz ihrer Unterschiedlichkeiten hervor, dass Nostalgie im jüdischen kulturellen Gedächtnis der Moderne eine wichtige identitätsstiftende Funktion einnimmt. Einige Autoren arbeiten jedoch mit einem traditionellen Nostalgie-Verständnis und interpretieren Nostalgie als simple Verklärung der Vergangenheit, um mit dem Verlust der Heimat zurecht zu kommen. In jüngster Zeit plädierte vor allem Ilse Josepha Lazaroms in ihrem Buch *The Grace of Misery* über Joseph Roth und sein Werk für einen komplexeren Umgang mit Nostalgie. Sie macht im Anschluss an Fritzsche und andere Autoren deutlich, dass Nostalgie ein „existentielles Paradox“ enthält und gerade wegen ihrer Vergangenheitsfixierung Aufschluss über Gegenwarts- und Zukunftsentwürfe gibt.¹²

Dieser Doppelcharakter von Nostalgie, restaurativ-verklärend und kritisch-aufklärend zugleich, ist für meine Fallstudie insofern von Bedeutung, als die verschiedenen Formen der Erinnerung von und an Landjuden und deren Lebensweise seit dem Beginn der Urbanisierung von Zeitgenossen wie späteren Interpreten nicht selten als sentimental beschrieben worden sind. Im Folgenden möchte ich daher nostalgische Repräsentationen ländlich-jüdischer Lebenswelten vor und nach der Shoah – in der Spätphase der Habsburgermonarchie, der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik sowie in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei und im Exil nach 1945 beziehungsweise 1948 – untersuchen und zeigen, dass nostalgische Darstellungen zwar keine verlässliche Quellen für die Rekonstruktion ländlich- und kleinstädtisch-jüdischen Lebens in der Vergangenheit sind, jedoch Aufschluss über Identitätswürfe in der jeweiligen Gegenwart geben. Zu fragen ist also, wer, wie, wann und warum sich an ländlich-jüdische Lebenswelten erinnerte. Es wird gezeigt, dass sich die Formen der Nostalgie – hier insbesondere literarische und dokumentarische – im Wesentlichen nicht änderten, dass aber der durch die Shoah erzeugte Bruch in den Erinnerungszeugnissen zentral, und die Sehnsucht nach den Orten der Vergangenheit vom endgültigen Verlust der Menschen und der dadurch entstandenen Leere geprägt ist.

Literarische Formen der Nostalgie im Kontext der Urbanisierung. Erinnerungen von und an Landjuden in der späten Habsburgermonarchie

Die Länder der Böhmisches Krone und insbesondere ihr westlicher Landesteil gehörten am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts zu den am stärksten industrialisierten und urbanisierten Regionen innerhalb der Habsburgermonarchie. Ländlich geprägte kleinstädtische und dörfliche Lebenswelten prägten zwar weiterhin die böhmisch-

9 Mit Hinweisen auf weitere Literatur: Marianne Windsperger, Narrative der Nacherinnerung. Spuren Galiziens in der amerikanischen Gegenwartsliteratur, in: *Chilufim. Zeitschrift für Jüdische Kulturgeschichte* 13 (2012), 93-114, hier 94-96.

10 Natalia Aleksiu, Images of Women in Early Yizker Bikhern, in: *Jewish Culture and History* 5 (2002) 1, 69-90.

11 Sławomir Kaprański, Amnesia, Nostalgia, and Reconstruction. Shifting Modes of Memory in Poland's Jewish Spaces, in: Erica Lehrer/Michael Meng (Hg.), *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*, Bloomington/Indianapolis 2015, 149-169.

12 Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, *The Grace of Misery. Joseph Roth and the Politics of Exile, 1919-1939*, Leiden 2013, 43-44.

mährische Gesellschaft,¹³ dennoch durchlief die nichtjüdische wie jüdische Bevölkerung einen beschleunigten Urbanisierungsprozess. Lebte die Mehrheit der jüdischen Bevölkerung der böhmischen Länder bis in die zweite Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts im ländlichen Raum, waren es zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts lediglich jeweils noch ein Fünftel der böhmischen und mährischen Juden.¹⁴ Diese (trans-)regionale Migration lief weder geradlinig, noch bedeutete der Wegzug vom Land immer zwangsläufig einen radikalen Bruch; familiäre Bindungen zu Eltern oder Großeltern blieben auch dank neuer Infrastrukturen bestehen. Dennoch erforderte der Umzug in die Großstädte Wien und Prag sowie in die neu aufstrebenden Industriestädte Nord- und Westböhmens und Nordmährens erhebliche Anpassungsleistungen ebenso wie übrigens auch das Zurückbleiben auf dem Land. Dies betraf nicht zuletzt die Sprache. Waren die Juden in der böhmischen Provinz in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts überwiegend zweisprachig sozialisiert, veränderte sich allmählich das Sprachverhalten in Folge der Migrationsbewegungen und des zunehmenden Nationalisierungsprozesses. Zwar blieb die zweisprachige Kompetenz durchaus erhalten, nahm aber tendenziell ab. Langfristig setzte sich das Tschechische als Verkehrssprache in überwiegend tschechischsprachigen Gegenden bei der Mehrheit der böhmischen Juden durch. In Mähren blieb hingegen das Deutsche die dominante Verkehrssprache.¹⁵

Den mit dem Weggang in die Stadt wie auch mit dem Zurückbleiben auf dem Land verbundenen Anpassungsleistungen gingen Verlustgefühle einher. Diese sind etwa Gegenstand der Erzählung *Die zwei Letzten* des tschechisch-jüdischen Schriftstellers Vojtěch Rakous (alias Adalbert Östreicher, 1862–1935), der zum literarischen Chronisten der jüdischen Land-Stadt-Migration Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts avancierte. Rakous beginnt seine Erzählung, die vom Verbleib zweier älterer Juden in ihrem Dorf Leschan (Lešany) handelt, wie folgt:

„Leschan ist ein kleines Dorf, war aber seit undenklicher Zeit der Sitz einer selbständigen jüdischen Gemeinde und die Gemeinde verwalteten oft berühmte Rabbiner. In das alte Bethaus hinter dem Dorf pilgerten an Samstagen und Feiertagen Juden und Jüdinnen aus den zahlreichen Dörfern der weiten Umgebung und nach dem Tode fanden sie alle auf dem jüdischen Leschaner Friedhof ihre letzte Ruhestätte. Dieser schönen Zeit gedachten Abend für Abend der alte Schames und der alte Totengräber. Wohin war das alles gekommen?“¹⁶

13 Aufgrund der wachsenden Mobilität Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts ist ohnehin von einer immer engeren Vernetzung von ländlichen und städtischen Räumen und vom Nebeneinander urbaner und ruraler Elemente in der Stadt wie auf dem Land auszugehen. Zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialtopografie der böhmischen Länder siehe u. a. Helmut Rumpler/Martin Seger (Hg.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*. Band IX: Soziale Strukturen. 2. Teilband: Die Gesellschaft der Habsburgermonarchie im Kartenbild. Verwaltungs-, Sozial- und Infrastrukturen nach dem Zensus von 1910, Wien 2010.

14 Gustav Fleischmann, *Židé v československém státě podle sčítání lidu v roce 1930* [Die Juden im tschechoslowakischen Staat nach der Volkszählung von 1930], in: *B'nai B'rith Monatsblätter* 13 (1934) 8, 357–366, hier 362–364; Jana Vobecká, *Demographic Avant-Garde. Jews in Bohemia between the Enlightenment and the Shoah*, Budapest/New York 2013, 48–54.

15 Zu Böhmen und Prag siehe v. a. Hillel J. Kieval, *Czech Jewry. National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870–1918*, New York 1988; Kateřina Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia*, New York 2012; dies., *Raum und Zeit als Faktoren der nationalen Identifikation der Prager Juden*. In: Peter Becher/Anna Knechtel (Hg.), *Praha-Prag 1900–1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, Passau 2010, 21–31. Zu Mähren siehe Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity. The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*, New York 2001 und dies.: *Creating Jewish Space. German-Jewish Schools in Moravia*, in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 44 (2013), 108–147.

16 Vojtěch Rakous, *Die zwei Letzten*, in: *Menorah*, 6 (1928) 8, 455–462; die Erzählung wurde von Anna Auřednicková ins Deutsche übersetzt. Veröffentlichung des tschechischen Originals siehe: *Dva poslední* [Die beiden Letzten], in: *Kalendář česko-židovský* [Tschechisch-jüdischer Kalender] 51 (1931/32), 57–63.

Der Literatur kam bei dem Verarbeitungsprozess der sozialen, kulturellen und politischen Transformationen und bei der Schaffung moderner jüdischer Identitäten im postemanzipatorischen Zeitalter eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle zu. Sie wurde zum grundlegenden Medium des kulturellen Gedächtnisses von und an Landjuden. Im Anschluss an das Mitte des 19. Jahrhundert von Leopold Kompert und anderen Autoren geschaffene Genre der ‚Ghettogesichte‘, entstanden Ende des 19. Jahrhundert jüdische Dorf- und Kleinstadterzählungen in der tschechisch- und deutschsprachigen Literatur Böhmens und Mährens. In diesen reflektierten die Schriftsteller die sozialen, kulturellen und politisch-nationalen Transformationsprozesse der jüdischen Gemeinschaft und ihre sich wandelnden Beziehungen zur nichtjüdischen Umwelt in der postemanzipatorischen Zeit. Den größten Erfolg feierten zweifelsohne Vojtěch Rakous‘ tschechischsprachige und zum großen Teil auch ins Deutsche übersetzten Dorfjudenerzählungen,¹⁷ insbesondere die in mehreren Auflagen vor und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg erschienene Sammlung *Vojkovičtí a přespólní* (Die Wojkowitzer und die Auswärtigen). Die teils illustrierten Ausgaben wurden auf Betreiben der tschechisch-jüdischen Bewegung, und hier insbesondere des Akademický spolek Kapper, des Akademikerbundes Kapper, herausgeben. Die bedeutendste und umfangreichste Ausgabe stellt die in drei Bänden vom Prager Verlag Obelisk herausgegebene siebente Auflage dar.¹⁸ Diese enthält zudem mehrere Illustrationen des Malers Alfréd Justitz, eines der führenden Persönlichkeiten der tschechischen Moderne. Justitz wurde 1879 in die Familie eines jüdischen Landarztes geboren und wuchs im Dorf Nová Cerekev, in der Region Vysočina (Böhmisch-Mährische Höhe) auf. Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts studierte er Kunst in Prag, Karlsruhe, Berlin und Paris. Seine farbigen Aquarellzeichnungen zur Sammlung *Vojkovičtí a přespólní* tragen einen für Justitz typischen melancholischen Charakter und setzen dadurch einen interessanten Kontrapunkt zu den überwiegend humoristischen Geschichten Vojtěch Rakous‘.¹⁹



© Jüdisches Museum in Prag

Abbildung 1: Illustration von Alfréd Justitz zur Erzählsammlung *Modche a Rezi*.

17 Die Erzählsammlung ist auch auf Deutsch erschienen: Vojtěch Rakous, *Die Geschichten von Modche und Rezi und anderen lieben Leuten*, 2 Bde., Prag 1922.

18 Vojtěch Rakous, *Vojkovičtí a přespólní* [Die Wojkowitzer und die Auswärtigen], 3 Bde., 7. erw. Aufl., Prag 1926.

19 Zu Alfréd Justitz siehe Marie Dohnalová, *Alfréd Justitz*, Prag 1988; sowie mit teils fehlerhaften Angaben David Chaloupka, *Buchillustrationen von Alfréd Justitz*, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 32 (1997), 145-151.

Mit den mehrfachen Auflagen seiner Erzählungen vor und nach 1918 wurde der Erfolg des Schriftstellers Vojtěch Rakous besiegelt, der im Unterschied zu Justitz aus einfachen dörflichen Verhältnissen stammte. Rakous wuchs in dem mittelböhmischen Dorf Starý Brázdim (Alt-Brazdim) bei Brandýs nad Labem (Brandeis an der Elbe) auf, absolvierte eine Lehre als Kurzwarenhändler in Prag und ließ sich nach mehreren Rückkehrversuchen aufs Land in den 1880er-Jahren endgültig in der Prager Industrievorstadt Libeň (Lieben) als Mitinhaber des Schuhgeschäfts seines Bruders nieder. Gleichzeitig begann er zu schreiben und wurde von Karel Fischer, einem führenden Repräsentanten der tschechisch-jüdischen Bewegung gefördert. In seiner Prosa skizziert Rakous nostalgisch-pittoreske, jedoch häufig ironisch gebrochene Bilder böhmischer Landjuden in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Sie beruhen häufig auf seinen eigenen Erlebnissen. Rakous' literarisch interessantes Werk ist trotz des zeitgenössischen Erfolgs heute weitgehend in Vergessenheit geraten und wenig erforscht.²⁰ Es wird vor allem auf seine Verbindungen zur tschechisch-jüdischen Bewegung hingewiesen, die in den böhmischen Landjuden das Fundament des tschechisch-jüdischen Assimilationskonzepts erblickte und ihre führenden Repräsentanten selbst häufig diesen ländlich-kleinstädtischen Hintergrund hatten. Dennoch sind Rakous' Erzählungen vielschichtiger, und er lässt sich nicht nur auf den zweifelsohne wichtigen tschechisch-jüdischen Kontext reduzieren. Sie zeichnen sich vor allem durch Alltagsnähe, sinnliche Erfahrung und Authentizität, durch einen „erfahrungshaftigen Modus“²¹ aus: Rakous beschreibt den Alltag der ländlich-jüdischen Bevölkerung, der von der Arbeit, dem Sabbat und den Feiertagen strukturiert war, sowie die sozialen Probleme und die Kontakte zu den nichtjüdischen Nachbarn. Darüber hinaus problematisiert er den Wegzug der jungen Generation in die Stadt.²² Rakous war zweifelsohne der erfolgreichste Autor jüdischer Dorfgeschichten in der böhmischen Literatur Ende des 19. und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts und wurde von Zeitgenossen mit dem in Böhmen geborenen deutsch-jüdischen Schriftsteller Leopold Kompert, dem Mitbegründer der Ghettogesichte verglichen. Während bei Kompert somit die voremanzipatorischen Verhältnisse beziehungsweise der Wandel zur modernen jüdischen Gesellschaft in kleinen Städten und Dörfern im Vordergrund stehen, beschreibt Rakous hingegen die postemanzipatorische jüdische Gesellschaft.²³

20 Die prägnanteste literaturhistorische Interpretation stellt immer noch dar: Oskar Donath, Vojtěch Rakous, in: ders.: *Zidé a židovství v české literatuře 19. a 20. století*. Díl II. Od Jaroslava Vrchlického do doby přítomné [Juden und das Judentum in der tschechischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Teil II. Von Jaroslav Vrchlický bis in die Gegenwart], Brünn 1930, 219-222; dt. Ausgabe: Ders.: Vojtěch Rakous, in: ders., *Jüdisches in der tschechischen Literatur*, Prag 1931 (tschech. Original 1930), 113-117.

21 Astrid Erll, *Literatur als Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisse*, in: Dies./Ansgar Nünning (Hg.), *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, Berlin 2005, 249-276, hier 268.

22 Neben der Erzählsammlung *Modche und Resi* [Modche a Rezi] siehe auch z. B. die Serie *Dědeček a babička* [Großvater und Großmutter]; hier insbesondere die Erzählung *Zázrak* [Das Wunder], in: Vojtěch Rakous, *Vojkovičti a přespolní* [Die Wokowitzzer und die Auswärtigen], Bd. II, 7. erw. Aufl., Prag 1926, 44-59. Deutsche Übersetzung: Vojtěch Rakous, *Das Wunder*, in: *Menorah* 8 (1930) 3-4, 179-191.

23 Zu Kompert liegt eine Fülle von Forschungsliteratur vor, allein die Untersuchung des Transfers mit der tschechisch-jüdischen Literatur bleibt ein Forschungsdesiderat; siehe u. a.: Thomas Winkelbauer, *Leopold Kompert und die böhmischen Landjuden*, in: Hans Otto Horch/Horst Denkler (Hg.), *Conditio Judaica. Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Interdisziplinäres Symposium der Werner-Reimers-Stiftung Bad Homburg*, 2. Teil, Tübingen 1989, 190-217; Jonathan M. Hess, *Leopold Kompert and the Pleasures of Nostalgia. Ghetto Fiction and the Creation of a Usable Past*, in: Ders., *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity*, Stanford 2010, 72-110; Ingrid Steiger-Schumann, *Jüdisch-christliche Liebesbeziehungen im Werk Leopold Komperts: Zu einem Zentralmotiv des böhmisch-jüdischen Schriftstellers (1822-1886)*, Berlin 2015. – Einen Vergleich zwischen Kompert und Rakous deutet an: Pavel Eisner, *Před stolety* [Vor hundert Jahren], in: *VŽNO* 13 (1951) 51/52, 615.

Neben Rakous gab es noch weitere, weniger bekannte Autoren, die vergleichbare Themen auf Tschechisch oder Deutsch, teils auch ihre eigenen Erlebnisse literarisch verarbeiteten. Zu ihnen gehörten insbesondere Max Lederer (1875–1937), der wie Rakous Anhänger der tschechisch-jüdischen Bewegung war, und der deutschsprachige mährische Autor Max Grünfeld (1856–1933).²⁴ Unabhängig voneinander schufen Rakous und seine Schriftstellerkollegen mit ihren Erzählungen einen ‚medialen Rahmen‘. Die von ihnen Ende des 19. und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts hervorgebrachten teils nostalgisch konnotierten Erinnerungsmuster und -figuren, wie zum Beispiel die Figur des Hausierers sowie die alltagsnahe Schilderung jüdischer Feiertage und familiärer Bräuche, entfalteten eine breite Wirkung: In der Zwischenkriegszeit und nach der Shoah knüpften Autobiographen, Schriftsteller und Publizisten an diese Darstellungen an. Der Literatur kam durch ihre Speicherungs-, Zirkulations- und *cue*-Funktion eine Schlüsselrolle bei der Herausbildung des modernen kulturellen Gedächtnisses an die ländlich-/kleinstädtisch-jüdischen Lebenswelten zu.²⁵

Nostalgie und populärwissenschaftliche Geschichtsschreibung. Erinnerungen von und an Landjuden in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik

In den 1920er- und 1930er-Jahren war die Urbanisierung der böhmischen und mährischen Juden weitgehend abgeschlossen. Es lebte nur mehr eine Minderheit im ländlichen Raum, und der jüdischen Gemeinschaft fiel es immer schwerer, die kulturellen Infrastrukturen aufrecht zu erhalten. Gemeinden wurden jetzt häufiger zusammengelegt, da die Zahl der Gemeindemitglieder stetig sank. Nur noch wenige Gemeinden in der Provinz konnten es sich leisten, eigene Rabbiner und Kantoren zu beschäftigen und die Kosten für den Erhalt jüdischer Gebäude und Einrichtungen aufzubringen.²⁶

Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg und der Gründung der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik, mit der sich die meisten Juden in den böhmischen Ländern identifizieren konnten, kam es zu weiteren Versuchen, Erinnerungszeugnisse ländlich-/kleinstädtisch-jüdischer Kultur zu schaffen, zu sammeln und zu dokumentieren. So entstanden weiterhin literarische und autobiographische Texte, im Unterschied zu den letzten Jahrzehnten der Habsburgermonarchie entstanden nun aber vor allem populärwissenschaftliche Darstellungen an der Schnittstelle von (Literatur-)Geschichte, Ethnologie und Folkloristik. Zudem gab es erste Versuche, die Denkmäler, Archivalien und Ritualgegenstände der kleineren Gemeinden systematisch zu erfassen.²⁷

24 An dieser Stelle wird auf die nach 1918 herausgegebenen Buchausgaben hingewiesen, die meisten Erzählungen sind jedoch bereits vor 1918 entstanden und teils auch einzeln publiziert. Max Lederer, *Za zrezavělymi dráty. Příběhy pravdivé a skoro pravdivé* [Hinter verrosteten Zäunen. Wahre und beinahe wahre Geschichten], Prag 1924; Max Grünfeld: *Mährische Dorfjuden*, Brünn 1928.

25 Mit *cue* meint Erll Abruflinweise wie Bilder, Texte oder Gegenstände, die Erinnerungsprozesse auslösen: Erll, *Literatur als Medium*, 254-256.

26 Der Schrumpfungprozess ist bislang kaum systematisch erforscht, weshalb an dieser Stelle auf keine Literatur verwiesen kann. Zur Situation der jüdischen Gemeinden siehe Národní archiv, Ministerstvo školství, Nejvyšší rada Svazů židovských obcí náboženských v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku, 24. 1. 1928 [Nationalarchiv, Ministerium für Bildung, Oberster Rat der Union der jüdischen Religionsgemeinschaften in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien, 24. 1. 1928], Sign. 47 VIII Nejvyšší rada [Oberster Rat], K. 3922.

27 Diese standen vor allem im Zusammenhang mit dem 1927 gegründeten Nejvyšší rada svazů náboženských obcí židovských v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku [Höchster Rat der jüdischen Kultusgemeinden in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien]; siehe Magda Veselská: *Archa paměti. Cesta pražského židovského muzea pohnutým 20. stoletím* [Die Arche der Erinnerungen. Das Prager Jüdische Museum im bewegten 20. Jahrhundert], Prag 2012, 34-35.

Aufgrund der mangelnden Institutionalisierung einer jüdischen Historiographie und Soziologie in der Tschechoslowakei der Zwischenkriegszeit kam es jedoch zu keiner tiefer greifenden wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit der jüngsten jüdischen Geschichte und den Folgen der Landflucht. Auch Oral-History-Projekte beziehungsweise autobiographische Schreibwettbewerbe im beziehungsweise über den ländlichen Raum, wie sie im Polen der 1920er- und 1930er-Jahre stattfanden,²⁸ sind nicht bekannt. Und so beklagte Oskar Donath, ein aus der ostmährischen Kleinstadt Újezd u Přerova (Aujest bei Prerau) stammender zweisprachiger Literaturhistoriker, in seiner Anthologie *Böhmische Dorfjuden* aus dem Jahr 1926:

„Es ließen sich Bände füllen, wollte man die Berichte und Erzählungen unserer Eltern und Großeltern, die auf dem Lande lebten, aufzeichnen; es ist bedauerlich, daß es bisher nicht geschah, daß sich mit ganz geringen Ausnahmen fast gar keine derartige Memoirenliteratur erhalten hat. Wir würden aus ihr ersehen, daß es unwahr ist, was so viele tschechische Romanschriftsteller [...] behaupten, nämlich daß der Dorfjude nichts anderes war als ein geldgieriger und habsüchtiger Ausbeuter der übrigen Dorfbevölkerung, dessen Streben dahinging, sein Schäfchen ins Trockene zu bringen, um dann das Dorf wieder zu verlassen.“²⁹

Donaths Feststellung, dass sich fast keine Memoirenliteratur erhalten habe, trifft zwar aus heutiger Sicht nicht ganz zu, denn am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts sind einige innerfamiliäre Memoiren entstanden. Manche von ihnen wurden jedoch erst viele Jahrzehnte später entdeckt und teilweise veröffentlicht,³⁰ andere gerieten wohl ganz in Vergessenheit beziehungsweise wurden zerstört. Donaths Buch richtet sich an jüdische Zeitgenossen – vor allem jene, die selbst aus ländlich-jüdischen Familien stammten, ihre Herkunft aus überwiegend ärmlichen Verhältnissen aber häufig verdrängten. Die Landjuden seien zwar mehrheitlich arm gewesen, so Donath, dennoch hätten sie es auf redliche und tüchtige Weise geschafft, das Leben ihrer Familie zu erhalten. Zugleich helfe ihnen ihre Frömmigkeit bei der Bewältigung des Alltags, wie Donath es im Abschnitt *Im Kreislauf des Jahres* folgendermaßen beschreibt:

„Der Sabbath und die jüdischen Feiertage wurden von Dorfjuden den Verhältnissen entsprechend geheiligt. Vor Beginn des Sabbaths, gewöhnlich Freitag mittags oder nachmittags, kehrte der Hausierer von seiner Wanderschaft zurück, von Frau und Kindern mit den Worten ‚S’ Gott’ willkumm, S’ Gott’ willkumm’ begrüßt. [...] Wenn im Orte keine Synagoge war, so betete die Familie am Freitag Abend das Maarivgebet zu Hause, wobei L’cho daudi laut gesungen wurde. Nach dem Kiddusch ging man zur Mahlzeit, die je nach den Vermögensverhältnissen reicher oder bescheidener war. Selbst der arme Jude, der während der Woche mit seiner kargen Kost vorlieb nehmen mußte, trachtete für den Sabbath sich ab und zu eine Gans zu beschaffen, an deren knusperigen Grieben oder an deren mit Knofel gespicktem ‚Belek’ er sich ‚Freitag zu nachts’ gütlich tat.“³¹

28 Katherine Lebow, *Autobiography as Complaint. Polish Social Memoir Between the Two World Wars*, in: *Laboratorium. Russian Review of Social Research* 6 (2014) 3, 13-26.

29 Oskar Donath, *Böhmische Dorfjuden*, Brunn 1926, 9.

30 Siehe z. B.: Simon Wels, U „Bernatü“ [Bei den „Bernats“], 2Prag 2011; Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen am Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Universität Wien, Adolf Ornstein, *Narodil jsem se ...*, undatiertes Manuskript einer Autobiographie (ins Deutsche übersetzter Teilabdruck in: Wilma Iggers (Hg.), *Die Juden in Böhmen und Mähren. Ein historisches Lesebuch*, München 1986, 251-262); LBI Memoir Collection, ME 890, Josef Schulz, *Já se narodil ...* [Ich wurde geboren ...], Nymburk 1903; ebd., ders.: *A nyní vám budu vypravovat ...* [Und jetzt werde ich Euch erzählen ...], 1924.

31 Donath, *Böhmische Dorfjuden*, 21-22.



Abbildung 2: Titelblatt des Buches von Oskar Donath, *Böhmisches Dorfjuden*.

Donaths Buch, die bis heute umfangreichste, essayistisch geschriebene, sozial- und alltagshistorische Darstellung ländlich-jüdischer Lebenswelten im Böhmen des 19. Jahrhunderts, stellt den Versuch dar, eine positiv konnotierte ländlich-/kleinstädtisch-jüdische Identität zu stiften und so indirekt zwischen den verschiedenen Strömungen innerhalb der böhmisch-mährischen Judenheit sowie zwischen Juden, die ihre Heimat verlassen und jenen, die geblieben sind, zu vermitteln. Darüber hinaus wendet es sich auch an eine nichtjüdische Leserschaft und hat einen politischen Auftrag: Zwar erwähnt Donath in seinem Werk Konflikte mit der nichtjüdischen Bevölkerung, alles in allem zeichnet er aber – ähnlich wie bereits Rakous in seinen Erzählungen – ein überaus positives Bild zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden in der ländlichen Region. Dies setzte er den antisemitischen Zerrbildern entgegen, die vor allem im tschechischen Dorfroman um 1900 präsent waren, um so die nichtjüdischen Leser über deren Vorurteile und Stereotypen aufzuklären. Dies unterstrich auch Salomon Ehrmann (1854–1926), ein Wiener Medizinprofessor, der aus einem kleinen böhmischen Dorf stammte, in seinem Vorwort zu Donaths Buch.³²

Neben Donaths *Böhmisches Dorfjuden* sind vor allem die von Hugo Gold herausgegebenen Sammelbände über die mährischen und böhmischen Judengemeinden von 1929 respektive 1934 zu nennen,³³ die eine Form der vor der Shoah entstandenen Gedenkbücher darstellen und teilweise Ähnlichkeiten mit der in der jiddischsprachigen Kultur des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts bekannten *Zamlbukher* aufweisen.³⁴ Gold

32 Salomon Ehrmann, Vorwort, in: Ebd., 3-5; kurz vor seinem Tod hatte Ehrmann sich auch basierend auf seinen Erinnerungen den böhmischen Dorfjuden gewidmet; Salomon Ehrmann, *Böhmisches Dorfjuden. Erinnerungen aus früher Jugend*, in: *B'nei B'rith* 4 (1925) 8, 217-223; 4 (1925) 9, 235-244; 4 (1925) 10, 261-268.

33 Hugo Gold (Hg.), *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. Ein Sammelwerk, Brünn 1929; Ders. (Hg.), *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. Ein Sammelwerk, Brünn/Prag 1934.

34 Ein wesentlicher Unterschied liegt darin, dass viele Autoren in den von Gold herausgegebenen Sammelbänden über die böhmischen und mährischen Gemeinden nicht mehr das gegenwärtige Leben beschreiben, sondern bereits die Auflösung bzw. den Rückgang einzelner Gemeinden thematisieren. Zum Genre des *Zamlbukh*, das zur Darstellung des jüdischen Gemeindelebens in der Gegenwart diente, siehe Anne Lipphardt, „*Vilne, Vilne unzer heymstot...*“ Imagining Jewish Vilna in New York. The *Zamlbukh* Project of Vilner Branch 367 Arbeter Ring/Workmen's Circle, in: Marina Dmitrieva/Heidemarie Petersen, *Jüdische Kultur(en) im Neuen Europa: Wilna 1918–1939*, Wiesbaden 2004, 85-97, insb. 86-88.

(1895–1974), einem gebürtigen Wiener mit mährischen ‚Wurzeln‘, zufolge, entstanden die Gedenkbücher vor dem Hintergrund,

„dass unsere Landgemeinden in kurzer Zeit durch Entvölkerung und Auflösung vollständig verschwinden werden und dass wir noch im letzten Augenblick alles daran setzen müssen, um wenigstens in Wort und Bild alles jüdische Volksgut zu retten und unseren Nachkommen zu erhalten.“³⁵

Gold unternahm mit seinen Gedenkbüchern erstmals den Versuch, die noch existierenden böhmischen und mährischen Gemeinden und deren Geschichte in ihrer Gesamtheit zu erfassen und zu beschreiben. Im Unterschied zu Donaths Buch, der eher die Alltagsgeschichte ländlicher Juden auf literarischen Zeugnissen basierend zu dokumentieren versuchte, sind Golds Bücher eindeutig einer ‚monumentalen‘ Geschichtsschreibung zuzuordnen. Die Autoren der verschiedenen Beiträge waren jüdische und nichtjüdische Lokalhistoriker, Archivare und Lehrer sowie Rabbiner. Wenn gleich einige Artikel auch sozialgeschichtlich wertvolle Informationen enthalten, konzentrieren sie sich überwiegend auf die Geschichte berühmter Gemeindeglieder insbesondere in der Frühen Neuzeit und kulturgeschichtlich wertvolle Baudenkmäler (siehe Abbildung 3). Dieser monumentale Charakter ist nicht überraschend, dienten doch Golds Bände nicht zuletzt der Konstruktion einer ethnisch, historisch und territorial einheitlichen jüdischen Gemeinschaft Böhmens und Mährens.³⁶



Abbildung 3: Auszug aus Hugo Golds Gedenkbuch *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens*.

35 Hugo Gold, Geleitwort, in: ders. (Hg.), *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens*, 1.

36 Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia. Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*, Bloomington 2016, 133-134; siehe auch Michael Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution. The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation*, Stanford 2011, 341.

Einige Autoren bedauern in ihren Beiträgen in den von Gold herausgegebenen Gedenkbüchern den Rückgang jüdischer Tradition und den Niedergang einzelner Gemeinden, manche verweisen aber auch auf den Fortbestand jüdischen Lebens in der böhmischen und mährischen Provinz. Wenngleich die Mehrheit der Beiträge keinen explizit nostalgischen Charakter tragen und plastische, die Sinne ansprechenden Darstellungen der Vergangenheit fehlen, bildet Nostalgie, die Sehnsucht nach verschwundenen, respektive sich im Schwinden befindenden Orten, ein wesentliches Motiv bei der Entstehung dieser Gedenkbücher. Golds Werk, das auf manchen heutigen Leser sperrig wirken möge, trug nicht zuletzt zum wachsenden Bewusstsein für den Erhalt jüdischer Kulturdenkmäler in den ländlich-kleinstädtischen Regionen der böhmischen Länder in den 1920er- und 1930er-Jahren bei.³⁷

Die vor und nach 1918 entstandenen Erinnerungszeugnisse an die ländlich-jüdischen Lebenswelten transportierten zwar nicht selten idealisierte Bilder der unmittelbaren Vergangenheit, dennoch ging es den überwiegend bürgerlichen Autoren, die vielfach noch aus einem ländlich-kleinstädtischen Milieu stammten, nicht um eine Rückkehr aufs Land. Vielmehr dienten ihnen die literarischen (teils autobiographischen) und populärhistorischen Darstellungen der Formulierung, Legitimierung und Festigung jüdischer Identitäten in der sich im Umbruch befindenden Gegenwartsgesellschaft. Wenngleich die böhmischen und mährischen beziehungsweise später tschechoslowakischen Juden ein hohes Maß an Integration in den böhmischen Ländern beziehungsweise in der Tschechoslowakei erlebten, war ihre Position in der postemanzipatorischen Gesellschaft durchaus fragil, wie etwa die Hilsner-Affäre Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts sowie die gewalttätigen Ausschreitungen am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges und in der Gründungszeit der Tschechoslowakei deutlich machten.³⁸ Die fragile Position war nur selten Gegenstand expliziter Auseinandersetzung: Donath deutet sie beispielsweise in seinem Buch an, betont aber zugleich immer wieder die gelungene Integration. Bei Gold ist vielmehr in der Konstruktion einer einheitlichen jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Böhmen und Mähren eine mögliche Reaktion auf deren Fragilität zu sehen. Während bei Donath Nostalgie vor allem in ihrer literarischen Form, in den alltagsnahen Beschreibungen zum Ausdruck kam, stellte sie bei Gold in erster Linie eine wichtige Motivation dar, die jüdischen Orte der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zu erfassen und zu beschreiben. In den Beschreibungen der Orte selbst spielt sie kaum eine Rolle. Hier steht die dokumentarisch-monumentale Perspektive im Vordergrund. Sowohl Donath als auch Gold schrieben mit ihren jeweils ganz unterschiedlichen Büchern das kulturelle Gedächtnis der ländlich-kleinstädtischen Juden in Böhmen und Mähren nach 1918 fort, an die nachfolgende Autoren direkt oder indirekt anknüpften.

³⁷ Ebd., 180.

³⁸ Michal Frankl, „Prag ist nunmehr antisemitisch“. Tschechischer Antisemitismus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts, Berlin 2011; Ines Koeltzsch, Antijüdische Straßengewalt und die semantische Konstruktion des ‚Anderen‘ im Prag der Ersten Republik, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 46 (2011) 1, 73-99; Michal Frankl/Miloslav Szabó, Budování státu bez antisemitismu? Násilí, diskurz loajality a vznik Československa [Staatsgründung ohne Antisemitismus? Gewalt, Loyalität und die Gründung der Tschechoslowakei], Prag 2015.

Nostalgie nach der Shoah. Erinnerungen von und an Landjuden in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei und im Exil

Von den rund 375.000 in der Tschechoslowakei der Zwischenkriegszeit lebenden Juden wurden zwischen 250.000 und 270.000 Personen während der Shoah ermordet. Unmittelbar nach Kriegsende lebten noch etwa 40.000 Juden in der Tschechoslowakei, die Mehrheit von ihnen stammte aus dem ehemaligen, nunmehr der Sowjetunion zugeschlagenen Landesteil der Karpato-Ukraine. Die Zahl sollte sich infolge der Emigrationswellen von 1948 und 1968 auf weniger als 10.000 Personen reduzieren.³⁹ In den 1950er-Jahren existierten lediglich noch neun Kultusgemeinden im böhmisch-mährischen Landesteil der Tschechoslowakei. Die daneben noch existierenden kleineren Gemeinden, die als Synagogalgemeinden den Kultusgemeinden untergeordnet waren, hörten mehrheitlich in der zweiten Hälfte der 1950er-Jahre auf, zu existieren.⁴⁰

Wenngleich die Formen und Praktiken der Erinnerung an die Shoah ebenso wie an das Leben vor der Katastrophe in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei erheblich eingeschränkt waren, fanden die Überlebenden und ihre Familien neben privaten und halböffentlichen Formen der Erinnerung auch verschiedene Wege öffentlicher Repräsentationen des Gedenkens an die verlorenen Menschen und Orte.⁴¹ Öffentliche Foren stellten beispielsweise das Jüdische Museum in Prag und der *Věstník židovských náboženských obcí v Československu* (Anzeiger der jüdischen Religionsgemeinden in der Tschechoslowakei, VŽNO) dar, die sich im besonderen Maße um die Dokumentation und Erinnerung an die ländlichen und kleinstädtischen jüdischen Gemeinden vor der Shoah bemühten. Dies ist im Fall des Jüdischen Museums insbesondere auf die Direktorin, die Kunsthistorikerin Hana Volavková (1904–1985) zurückzuführen, die selbst aus der böhmischen Provinz stammte. Während für sie ihre ländliche Herkunft vor der Shoah kaum eine Rolle spielte und sich als Akademikerin im Prag der Zwischenkriegszeit von der urbanen Kultur angezogen fühlte, setzte sie sich während des Krieges für die Rettung jüdischer Kulturgüter aus den ländlichen Regionen und nach 1945 für deren Erhalt und Ausstellung im Museum aktiv ein. Am Beginn der 1940er-Jahre wurde sie in das Expertenteam des Jüdischen Museums geholt und war am Aufbau der von den NS-Besatzern erzwungenen Sammlung jüdischer Kulturgüter insbesondere aus dem ländlichen Raum beteiligt. Zahlreiche kleinere und mittlere, sich in gewaltsamer Auflösung befindenden Gemeinden waren vor allem den beiden Aufrufen vom Mai und August 1942 gefolgt, und sandten Hunderte von Kartons und Kisten mit Archivalien, Ritualgegenständen und Fotografien nach Prag.⁴² In ihrem auf Tschechisch, Deutsch und Englisch

39 Peter Hallama, *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer. Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust*, Göttingen 2014, 11–12.

40 Kultusgemeinden gab es nunmehr noch in Praha/Prag, Karlovy Vary/Karlsbad, Liberec/Reichenberg, Ústí nad Labem/Aussig, Plzeň/Pilsen, Brno/Brünn, Olomouc/Olmütz, Ostrava/Mährisch-Ostrau und Kyjov/Gaya); siehe Monika Hanková, *Die jüdische Religionsgemeinschaft nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, in: Martin Schulze Wessel/Martin Zückert (Hg.), *Handbuch der Religions- und Kirchengeschichte der böhmischen Länder und Tschechiens im 20. Jahrhundert*, München 2009, 741–755, insb. 743 und 747.

41 Zu privaten und halböffentlichen Formen des Gedenkens in der Tschechoslowakei nach 1945 siehe bspw. Sarah A. Cramsey, *Saying Kaddish. Memorialization, the Jewish Tragedy and the tryzna*, in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 7 (2008) 1, 35–50. Zu den öffentlichen Formen v. a. Hallama, *Nationale Helden* sowie in stark vereinfachender Perspektive Alena Heitlinger, *In the Shadows of the Holocaust and Communism. Czech and Slovak Jews since 1945*, New Brunswick/London 2006, 47–65.

42 Wie Magda Veselská jüngst überzeugend nachwies, war die Rettung der jüdischen Kulturgüter bis 1942 in erster Linie eine Eigeninitiative der Prager jüdischen Gemeinde und des jüdischen Museumsteams gewesen und nicht das Ergebnis einer gezielten nationalsozialistischen, rassenideologischen Museumspolitik. Veselská, *Archa paměti*, 64–80.

publizierten Hauptwerk *Schicksal des Jüdischen Museums in Prag* beschreibt Hana Volavková rückblickend die emotionale Zwiespältigkeit der parallel zu den Deportationen im Herbst 1942 stattgefundenen Rettungsaktion jüdischer Kulturgüter durch die unter Aufsicht der nationalsozialistischen Besatzer agierenden Mitarbeiter des Jüdischen Museums in Prag:

„Damals war den Juden das Reisen längst untersagt. Mit dem Stadtrand von Prag endete die Welt. Das frühere Leben auf dem Lande, zuerst in der Kindheit und dann während der Sommerferien, gehörte endgültig der Vergangenheit an. Und nun begann die Hoffnung zu keimen, von dieser verlorenen Welt würde wenigstens etwas zurückkehren. [...] Das Bild der Landschaft aber, auf das man in Prag so sehnsüchtig gewartet hatte, stellte sich freilich nicht ein. Es schwebte nur über jenen armseligen Photographien. Die bekannten Bilder von Flüssen, Feldern und Wiesen waren eng und schmal geworden. [...] Die weite, freie Landschaft hatte zu existieren aufgehört. Die gesamte Natur wurde einzig und allein vom Friedhofsgras mit seinen Blumen, von den Bäumen und Sträuchern der Friedhöfe verkörpert.“⁴³

Volavková, die als eine der wenigen des jüdischen Museumsteams die Shoah überlebte und nach 1945 langjährige Direktorin des Museum wurde, deutet hier die emotionale Bindung ihrer Kollegen zur böhmischen und mährischen Provinz an. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt wurde ihnen klar, dass eine Rückkehr aufs Land nun definitiv ausgeschlossen war. In ihrem Buch stellt Volavková das Eintreffen der Kartons in Prag den Deportationslisten einiger Gemeinden gegenüber. Der Schmerz und die Trauer um die ermordeten Menschen und die Sehnsucht nach den mit ihnen verbundenen Orten, in Prag und in der Provinz, die durch den Verlust nicht mehr dieselben waren, stehen somit im Mittelpunkt von Volavkovás Buch. Sie verbindet hier literarische Texte von Leopold Kompert, Vojtěch Rakous und Karel Poláček, eines in Terezín (Theresienstadt) ermordeten tschechisch-jüdischen Schriftstellers, der in der Zwischenkriegszeit mit seinen Kleinstadt- sowie Fußballgeschichten einem größeren, jüdischen wie nicht jüdischen Lesepublikum in der Tschechoslowakei bekannt wurde. Volavková zitiert hier aus Poláčeks Erinnerungen an seine Kindheit in der ostböhmischen Kleinstadt Rychnov nad Kněžnou (Reichenau an der Knieschna):

„Geboren wurde ich in einer Gemischtwarenhandlung. Spielkarten, Brennspiritus, alles, was man für die Küche benötigt, Gewürze, Mehl, Zucker, Kaffee, hier wird Wäsche gemangelt, alle Arten in- und ausländischer Weine. Heute wird es das kalt Kolonialwarenhandlung genannt, aber damals verkündeten Aufschriften an der Fassade des Hauses, was hier alles feilgeboten wird. Solche Aufschriften waren der Stolz des Firmeninhabers, und man hatte an ihnen eine Menge Lesestoff; damals wurden ganze Häuser von oben bis unten beschrieben. Kurz, die Menschen hatten damals nicht nur mehr Zeit, sondern auch mehr Raum. Zugetragen hat sich das in Reichenau am Adlergebirge.“⁴⁴

Volavková kombiniert die literarischen Texte mit künstlerischen Abbildungen, Fotografien von Friedhöfen und Museumsobjekten, die an das religiöse Leben erinnern, sowie mit dokumentarischen Textteilen. Gegenüber von Poláčeks Text ist beispielsweise ein Ausschnitt eines Thoravorhanges aus der ländlich geprägten Kleinstadt Boskovice (Boskowitz) zu sehen; neben einer weiteren Erzählung František Gellners eine Fotografie der Boskowitzter Judenstadt (siehe Abbildung 7). Auf dem

⁴³ Hana Volavková, *Schicksal des Jüdischen Museums in Prag*, Prag 1965, 32-33.

⁴⁴ Ebd., 51.

Klappentext des Buches heißt es in Bezug auf die Sammlungen des Jüdischen Museums, und im übertragenen Sinne auch auf die Aneinanderreihung von Texten und Objekten im Buch: „Jedes Stück, ob es nun kostbar ist oder nicht, hat den gleichen Wert, den Wert eines Symbols. Es symbolisiert den Tod dieser wie jener. Aller.“⁴⁵ Volavkovás Buch stellt also keine konzise Geschichte des Museums dar, sondern entspricht vielmehr einem Gedenkbuch, einer Sammlung von Texten verschiedener Autoren und Stile, die an die zerstörten jüdischen Gemeinden – in diesem Fall neben Prag vor allem der böhmischen und mährischen Landgemeinden erinnern. In der böhmisch- und mährisch-jüdischen Kultur sind zwar im Unterschied zur osteuropäisch-jüdischen Diaspora keine *Yizker Bikher* im engeren Sinne überliefert, das heißt Sammelwerke mit literarischen, autobiographischen und dokumentarischen Texten sowie Bildmaterial verschiedener Art von einer Gruppe unterschiedlicher Herausgeber, Autoren und interessierter Laien, die den zerstörten jüdischen Gemeinden ein Denkmal setzten.⁴⁶ Gleichwohl gab es jedoch vergleichbare Formen wie das Buch von Hana Volavková oder Hugo Golds 1974 in Tel Aviv veröffentlichtes *Gedenkbuch der untergegangenen Judengemeinden Mährens*.⁴⁷ Volavková setzt jedoch nicht wie Gold allein auf eine dokumentarisch-monumentale, sondern auch auf eine alltagsnahe, erfahrungsgeschichtliche Perspektive, wobei sie wie bereits Oskar Donath in den 1920er-Jahren insbesondere literarische Quellen heranzieht. Die Sehnsucht nach den verlorenen jüdischen Orten in der böhmischen und mährischen Provinz spielt sowohl in Volavkovás eigenen kurzen als auch in den von ihr zitierten Texten eine wichtige Rolle, wobei Landschaftsbeschreibungen, Beschreibungen religiöser Bräuche und Sinneseindrücke wie Gerüche eine Rolle spielen. Diese Sehnsucht steht nie für sich allein, sondern im Kontext der im Buch allgegenwärtige Trauer über den Verlust der Menschen und die dadurch entstandene Leere.

Volavkovás Buch war Teil der Ende der 1950er-Jahre einsetzenden und ambivalent verlaufenden kulturellen Liberalisierung in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei, die eine partielle öffentliche Auseinandersetzung mit der jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur in Prag und in der böhmisch-mährischen Provinz vor der Shoah wie auch mit dem ‚Genozid‘⁴⁸ selbst ermöglicht hatte. Es wurden zahlreiche neue literarische Werke und Filme jüdischer Autoren, die sich mit dem Erlebten vor und während der Shoah und dem Verlust auseinander setzten, veröffentlicht, wie auch Klassiker der tschechisch- und europäisch-jüdischen Literatur. So erschienen beispielsweise 1958 und 1968 eine Auswahl von Vojtěch Rakous’ Dorfjudenerzählungen in den großen Staatsverlagen Československý spisovatel (Der Tschechoslowakische Schriftsteller) und Mladá fronta (Junge Front) in hoher Auflagenzahl.⁴⁹ Zudem widmete das Jüdische Museum auf Initiative von Hana Volavková 1959 dem tschechisch-jüdischen

45 Ebd., Klappentext.

46 Zum Genre der *Yizker bikher* siehe vor allem Jack Kugelmass/Jonathan Boyarin, Introduction, in: dies. (Hg.), *From a Ruined Garden. The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, New York 1983, 1-19; Anne Lipphardt, „Vilne, Vilne unzer heymshot ...“ und dies.: Vilne. Die Juden aus Vilnius nach dem Holocaust. Eine transnationale Beziehungsgeschichte, Paderborn 2010, 241-245. Im Unterschied zu Böhmen und Mähren sind für die Slowakei und Transkarpatien *Yizker bikher* überliefert. Siehe hierzu die Liste der nach der Shoah entstandenen Gedenkbücher aus der ehemaligen Tschechoslowakei in: Abraham Wein, *Memorial Books as a Source for Research into the History of Jewish Communities*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies*, 9 (1973), 255-321, hier 274.

47 Hugo Gold, *Gedenkbuch der untergegangenen Judengemeinden Mährens*, Tel Aviv 1974.

48 Im tschechoslowakischen Kontext wurde der Begriff ‚Genozid‘ bereits sehr früh verwendet, und insbesondere Überlebende benutzten ihn für den Völkermord an den Juden, für die Shoah. Zur Verwendung und Kritik des Begriffs siehe Hallama, *Nationale Helden*, 39-44, hier 43. Auch Hana Volavková verwendet den Begriff für die Vernichtung der Juden: Volavková, *Schicksal*, 29.

49 Vojtěch Rakous, *Modche a Rezi a jiné příběhy* [Modche und Resi und andere Geschichten], Prag 1958 und ders., *Modche a Rezi. Výbor* [Modche und Resi. Eine Auswahl], Prag 1968.

ihm die Knoblauchsuppe und das süße, mit Mohn bestreute
Weißbrot auf den Tisch, den sogenannten Barches.
„Hätt ich am Schabbes
nicht meinen Barches,
könn' ich an den andren Tagen
meinen Ranzen nicht ertragen“
brumnte der Alte vor sich hin, wenn er in guter Stimmung war.

Die Schriften František Gellners, II. Teil — Erzählungen und Satiren. Verlag Fr. Borový, Prag 1927.



Abbildung 4: Auszug aus Hana Volavková's Buch *Schicksal des Jüdischen Museums*.

Schriftsteller Vojtěch Rakous eine Sonderausstellung, die jedoch während ihrer mehrmonatigen Laufzeit dreimal umgearbeitet wurde. Neben der Topographie seines Heimatkreises Brandýs nad Labem (Brandeis an der Elbe) und seinem Leben stand in erster Linie seine Verankerung in der tschechischen Kultur im Mittelpunkt. So wurden vor allem die Illustrationen des volkstümlichen Malers Josef Lada zu Rakous' Erzählungen, die keine Bezugnahme zur jüdischen Tradition enthalten, präsentiert sowie Rakous' Beziehungen zu seinen Schriftstellerkollegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts ausführlich thematisiert. Wenngleich die Konflikte um die Ausstellung anhand mangelnder Überlieferung nicht detailliert rekonstruiert werden können, werden dennoch in den überlieferten Fotografien der Ausstellung die Zugeständnisse deutlich: Rakous wird vornehmlich als tschechischer Autor präsentiert, der jüdische Kontext bleibt häufig unter der Oberfläche. So stellen Ladas Illustrationen die Sehnsucht nach einem einfachen, überschaubaren und tief in der tschechischen Volkskultur verankerten bäuerlichen Leben dar und verdeutlichen, dass Rakous auch dadurch einem breiteren, nichtjüdischen Publikum bekannt wurde. Die jüdische Tradition, die in Rakous' Erzählungen eine wichtige Rolle spielt, kommt jedoch in diesen Illustrationen nicht vor. Allein der Ausstellungsort wie auch einige Exponate – etwa eine Auswahl der Illustrationen von Alfréd Justitz – verweisen auf den jüdischen Kontext des Autors und den Inhalt seiner Erzählungen.⁵⁰

50 Zur Ausstellung sind einige wenige schriftliche wie auch fotografische Quellen im Archiv des Jüdischen Museums überliefert; einen Katalog oder eine Ausstellungsbroschüre gibt es jedoch nicht: AŽMP, Fond Židovské muzeum v Praze 1945–1960, hier z. B. Titulky z výstav, nezprac., ev.č. 153; AŽMP, Fond Dokumentace, Signaturen CH 50, K 43, E 50 sowie Fotoarchiv des Jüdischen Museums. Siehe auch: Památce Vojtěcha Rakouse [Zum Gedenken an Vojtěch Rakous], in: VŽNO 21/7 (1959), 9. Die überlieferten Quellen bestätigen Katalin Demes unlängst geäußerte Feststellung, dass die Museumsdirektorin Hana Volavková ein doppeltes Leitprinzip, ein allgemeines gesellschaftspolitisches und ein spezifisch jüdisches erinnerungspolitisches verfolgte. Katalin Deme, *Jüdische Museen in Ostmitteleuropa. Kontinuitäten – Brüche – Neuanfänge*: Prag, Budapest, Bratislava (1993–2012), Göttingen 2016, 45–46.

Das vielleicht wichtigste Erinnerungszeugnis des ‚offiziellen‘ kulturellen Gedächtnis an die ländlich-kleinstädtischen jüdischen Lebenswelten zur Zeit der Urbanisierung stellt Norbert Frýds erster Teil seines autobiographischen Familienromans *Vzorek bez ceny a pan Biskup aneb začátek posledních sto let* (Muster ohne Preisschild und Herr Bischof oder der Beginn der letzten einhundert Jahre) dar. Dieser erschien 1966 und wurde in den 1970er-Jahren noch ein weiteres Mal vom großen Verlag des Schriftstellerverbandes *Československý spisovatel* (Der Tschechoslowakische Schriftsteller) aufgelegt.⁵¹ Er basiert auf den Erinnerungen seines Großvaters und den von seinem Vater zu Beginn des Protektorats verfassten Memoiren, die Frýd um weitere Quellenrecherchen ergänzte. Frýd beschreibt hier ausführlich und alltagsnah die dörfliche Lebenswelt seiner Großeltern mütterlicherseits, die in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts in dem nordböhmisches Dorf Drmoul (Dürrmaul) lebten sowie die kleinstädtische Lebenswelt seiner Großeltern väterlicherseits, die aus der Provinzhauptstadt Budweis und ihrer Umgebung stammten. Auch bei Frýd stellt die Liebe zur Landschaft ein wichtiges Motiv seiner Erinnerungen dar:

„Ich selbst bin in der Heimat meines Vaters, im flachen Südböhmen auf die Welt gekommen, ich muss aber zugeben, dass es mir selten besser gefallen hat, als in den duftenden Wäldern und Hügeln in der Umgebung von Tachau und Marienbad [der Heimat meiner Großeltern, I. K.].“⁵²

Zwar bemüht sich Frýd in seiner Familienbiographie um einen unsentimentalen Ton, wenn er beispielsweise die Härten des Alltags seines Großvaters auf dem Land beschreibt, dennoch lassen sich insbesondere bei der Beschreibung der Landschaft und der jüdischen Feiertage und Traditionen nostalgische Züge erkennen. Ähnlich wie Rakous und Donath macht auch Frýd den Leser mit dem Ablauf des jüdischen Kalenders und den jüdischen Bräuchen detailliert bekannt. So beschreibt er beispielsweise den Sabbatausgang in seiner Kindheit wie folgt:

„Zuhause gab uns der Vater eine Gewürzbüchse zum Riechen, um uns noch einmal an den Duft dessen zu erinnern, was gerade vergeht. Auf die braune Tischplatte tröpfelte er Hagebuttenwein, und er neigte die Flamme der Festtagskerze in die Flüssigkeit. Es zischte und die Pracht war vorbei. Vorerst kehrte die Pracht aber jede Woche verlässlich zurück.“⁵³

Mit dem letzten Satz deutet Frýd an, dass die nostalgische Erinnerung immer nur mit dem Wissen um das definitive Ende erfolgt. Frýds dokumentarischer Stil trug vermutlich dazu bei, dass das Werk erscheinen konnte,⁵⁴ denn er machte deutlich, dass es sich um eine unwiderruflich vergangene, ferne und für die Mehrheit des Lesepublikums ‚exotische‘ Welt handelte.⁵⁵ Die nostalgisch konnotierten Passagen sind jedoch weit mehr als nur ein rückwärtsgewandtes Gefühl, sie stellen vor allem eine emotionale Verbindung zur Gegenwart her. Sie unterstreichen, wie schmerzlich dieser endgültige Verlust für den Autor wie auch für einige seiner Leser ist. Trotz des

51 Norbert Frýd, *Vzorek bez ceny a pan Biskup aneb začátek posledních sto let* [Muster ohne Preisschild und Herr Bischof oder der Beginn der letzten einhundert Jahre]. Prag 1966. Die zweite Auflage erschien zusammen mit dem zweiten Teil seiner autobiographischen Triologie: Ders., *Hedvábné starosti. Románová kronika I/II* [Seidene Sorgen. Eine Romanchronik I/II], Prag 1976.

52 Frýd, *Vzorek bez ceny*, 5.

53 Ebd., 25.

54 Zum Entstehungshintergrund ist wenig bekannt, da Frýds Nachlass sich wahrscheinlich in Familienbesitz befindet. Die einzige Biographie beruht ebenfalls nur auf veröffentlichten Quellen: Věra Menclová, Norbert Frýd, Prag 1981.

55 Siehe z. B. Miroslav Petříček, *Zdravá injekce* [Eine gesunde Injektion], in: *Literární noviny*, 4 (1967) 16, Štěpan Vlašín, *Od zážitku k uměleckému tvaru* [Vom Erlebnis zur künstlerischen Form], in: *Impuls* 2 (1967) 3, 202-204; Jiří Marek, *Hedvábná kronika* [Eine seidene Chronik], in: *Impuls* 3 (1968) 8, 578-579.

scheinbaren Erfolgs Frýds, der als Überlebender der Shoah es geschafft hatte, zum kulturellen Establishment der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei zu zählen, war seine Existenz wie die anderer Überlebender alles andere als eine Selbstverständlichkeit: Sie waren "stranded in the present", „in der Gegenwart Gestrandete“ wie Fritzsche die Träger nostalgischer Gefühle im 19. Jahrhundert beschrieb.⁵⁶ Dieser zeitliche und räumliche Bruch galt umso mehr für die Überlebenden der Shoah. Die Familienbiographie sei eine „Reise zu sich selbst“, wird Frýd auf dem Klappentext zitiert. Neben der indirekten Auseinandersetzung mit seiner personalen Identität stellt Frýds autobiographischer Roman zugleich den Versuch dar, am Beispiel seiner Familie eine übergreifende Geschichte der böhmischen Juden außerhalb des Zentrums Prag seit Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts zu erzählen. Er setzte damit nicht nur seinen Verwandten, von denen auf der Buchinnenseite der ersten Auflage einige Fotografien veröffentlicht wurden (siehe Abbildung 5), sondern der gesamten böhmischen Judenheit ein Denkmal.



Abbildung 5: Buchinnenseite mit Familienfotos aus Norbert Frýds Buch *Vzorek bez ceny*.

Einen ähnlichen, wenngleich nicht ganz so ambitionierten Versuch unternahm Robert Ehrmann mit seinen auf Tschechisch verfassten Erinnerungen *Strakoničtí souvěrci. Ze života Židů na malém městě* (Die Strakonitzer Glaubensbrüder. Aus dem Leben der Juden in einer Kleinstadt) bereits in den 1950er-Jahren. Sie entstanden im kanadischen Exil, wenngleich Ehrmann auch ein Lesepublikum in der Tschechoslowakei vor Augen hatte.⁵⁷ Ehrmanns Erinnerungen, die er kurz vor seinem Tod 1956 niederschrieb und mit mehreren farbigen Illustrationen ver-

⁵⁶ Fritzsche, *Specters of History*, 1592.

⁵⁷ Robert Ehrmann, *Strakoničtí souvěrci. Ze života Židů na malém městě* [Die Strakonitzer Glaubensbrüder. Aus dem Leben der Juden in einer Kleinstadt], Prag 1998; zum Entstehungshintergrund von Ehrmanns Memoiren siehe Arno Pařík, *Odlesk vzdálených světů* [Der Abglanz vergangener Zeiten], in: ebd., 123-129; Jiří Daniček, *Ediční poznámka* [Editorische Notiz], in: ebd., 131-132. Zu Ehrmanns Biographie siehe auch KFK [František Kafka], *Medailon o Robertu Ehrmannovi* [Ein Porträt über Robert Ehrmann], in: *VŽNO* 43 (1981) 11, 6.

sah,⁵⁸ erschienen erstmals ausschnittsweise Anfang der 1980er-Jahre im *Věstník židovských náboženských obcí v Československu*, in dem offiziellen Anzeiger der jüdischen Gemeinden der Tschechoslowakei.⁵⁹ Sie erreichten damit einen wesentlich kleineren Leserkreis als Frýds autobiographischer Roman. Erst Ende der 1990er-Jahre wurden Ehrmanns Erinnerungen in Buchform, einschließlich der zahlreichen Illustrationen, veröffentlicht. In dieser Gesamtheit lassen sich Ehrmanns Erinnerungen ebenfalls als Form eines nach der Shoah entstandenen Gedenkbuchs lesen.⁶⁰

Ähnlich wie Frýds Familienbiographie basieren Ehrmanns Erinnerungen auf Überlieferungen seiner Familie, insbesondere auf den mündlichen Aussagen seines Bruders Leopold. Neben einer kurzen ‚soziologisch gefärbten‘ Skizze der Strakonitzer Kleinstadtgesellschaft, die er von der Beschreibung der sommerlichen Gemeinschaft im städtischen Freibad ausgehend entfaltet, sind seine Memoiren nach dem jüdischen Jahreskalender gegliedert und erinnern hier wiederum stark an Oskar Donaths Buch *Böhmische Dorfjuden* von 1926. Auch das Motiv des Hausierers ist bei Ehrmann ebenso präsent wie bei Donath:

„Als ich noch ziemlich jung war, gab mir mein Uronkel Reb Jükev Kraus (er starb 1919 im Alter von 97 Jahren) Einblick in die Sterbematriken, die er zusammen mit anderen Büchern für die jüdische Gemeinde führte. Mir ist besonders im Gedächtnis geblieben, dass in den Matriken eine Reihe mir unbekannter Namen stand, offenbar aus den umliegenden Dörfern [...], dass die Mehrheit Hausierer von Beruf war. Auch meine Großväter waren Hausierer. [...] Wenn ich vom Sabbat spreche, dann denke ich vor allem an die Hausierer. Sie plagten sich von Dorf zu Dorf, in unter ihnen streng aufgeteilten Gebieten, täglich von Sonntagmorgen bis Freitagmittag [...].“⁶¹

Auch Ehrmann bemüht sich meist um einen dokumentarischen Stil, bei der Beschreibung religiöser Traditionen und vor allem der mit ihnen verbundenen Küche kommen jedoch nostalgische Gefühle zum Vorschein:

„Freitagabend bin ich gern in den Tempel in Strakonitz gegangen. Der Kantor Menkes empfing dort den Sabbat mit einem funkelnden ‚Lecho Daudi‘, dessen Melodie unverändert blieb seit der Zeit, als meine Mutter um das Jahr 1880 herum noch Sängerin auf der Empore war. Auch andere Melodien änderten sich nicht, einschließlich die der Weinsegnung. Es gehörte übrigens auch zu einer althergebrachten Gewohnheit, dass danach der Schames

58 Das Manuskript von Ehrmanns Erinnerungen trägt den Titel *Strakoničtí souvěrci slavili svátky. Ze života židů na malém městě* [Die Strakonitzer Glaubensbrüder begangen die Feiertage. Aus dem Leben in einer Kleinstadt] und wird im Archiv des Jüdischen Museums in Prag (Sign. 178.373) aufbewahrt. Leider wurden die Illustrationen vom Manuskript getrennt, die in den Kunstsammlungen des Museums unter dem Titel *Židovští usedlíci před padesáti léty* [Jüdische Einwohner vor fünfzig Jahren] zu finden sind. Sie sind Online über die Datenbank der Museumssammlungen zugänglich: http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/216065 (13. Juli 2016).

59 Die von František Kafka, Schriftsteller und Redakteur des Anzeigers, bearbeitete Publikationsserie begann mit Heft 3/1980 und endete mit Heft 11/1981: Robert Ehrmann, Jak jsme kdysi ve Strakonících slavili Pěsach [Wie wir einst in Strakonitz Pessah feierten], in: VŽNO 42 (1980) 3, 6 sowie ders.: Simchas tóra – ve Strakonících i ve snu [Simchat Tora – in Strakonitz und im Traum], in: ebd. 43 (1981) 11, 6.

60 Dies trifft etwa auch zu auf: Heinz Jakob Tauber, *Atlantida holičských Židů* [Atlantis – der untergegangene Kontinent der Juden aus Holič], Prag 2003; weitere jüdische Erinnerungszeugnisse aus dem dörflichen Kontext, die sich stärker auf die Familie als auf eine konkrete jüdische Gemeinde (in der Umgebung) beziehen: Wilma Iggers, *Geschichte einer ländlichen jüdischen Familie zwischen Deutschen und Tschechen*, in: Marek Nekula/Walter Koschmal, *Juden zwischen Deutschen und Tschechen. Sprachliche und kulturelle Identitäten in Böhmen 1800–1945*, München 2006, 19–32; Karel Lamberk, *Můj dědeček Jakub Lachs* [Mein Großvater Jakub Lachs], Prag 2001.

61 Ehrmann, *Strakoničtí souvěrci*, 39.



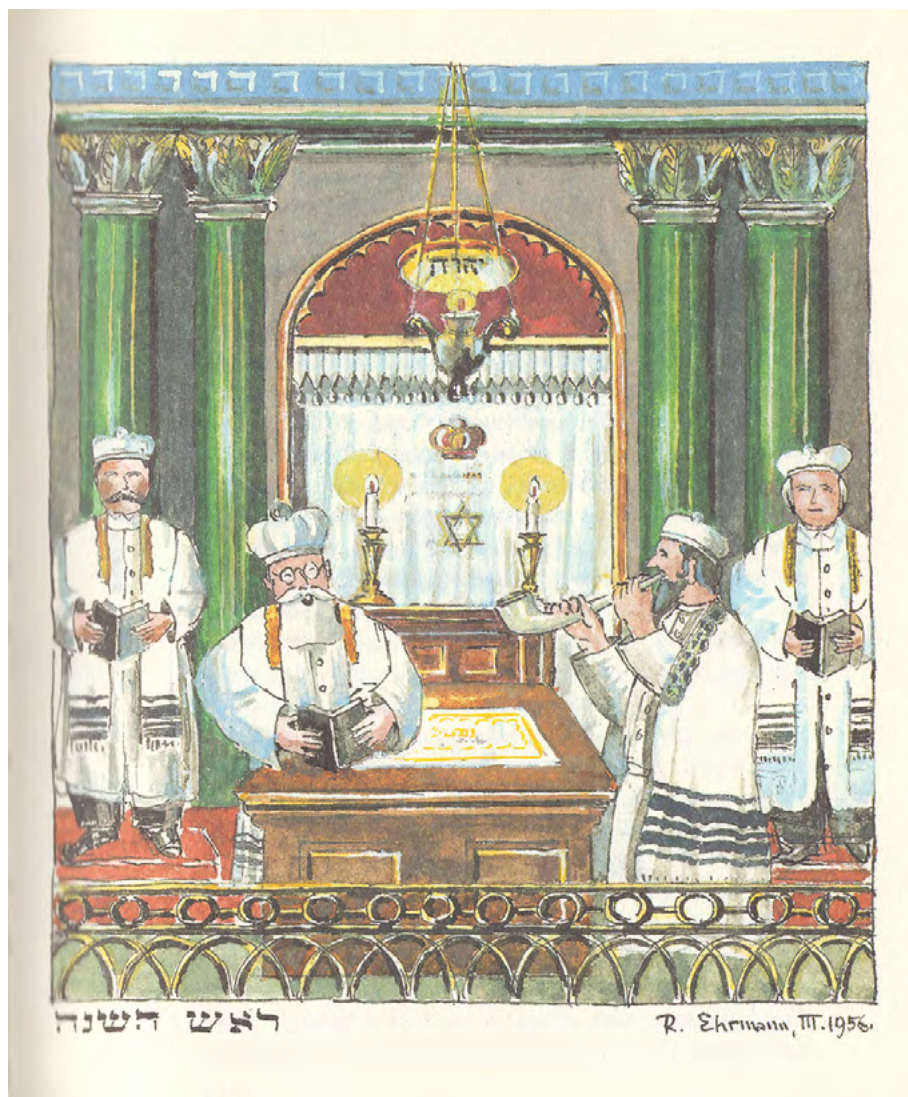
Abbildung 6: Illustration *Židovští starousedláci před 50. léty* [Jüdische Alteingesessene vor 50 Jahren] aus Robert Ehrmanns *Strakoničtí souvěrci*.

© Jüdisches Museum in Prag

Popper mit gnädiger Miene uns Buben den Wein zum Kosten gab, sich jedoch sofort verfinsterte, wenn einer von uns versuchte, einen unerlaubt großen Schluck zu nehmen.⁶²

Nostalgie spielt bei Ehrmann nicht nur in seinen schriftlichen Beschreibungen jüdischen Lebens in Strakonice (Strakonitz) eine wichtige Rolle, sondern wird auch durch seine farbenfrohen Illustrationen deutlich hervorgehoben. Die Bunt- und Schlichtheit der Bilder der Vergangenheit scheinen im Gegensatz zur schwierigen Existenz der Überlebenden zu stehen, unabhängig davon, ob diese ihr Leben im Exil oder der alten Heimat neu aufzubauen versuchten. Gerade durch diesen augenfälligen Gegensatz verweist der Autor nicht zuletzt auf die Leere in der Gegenwart, die durch den Verlust der Menschen entstanden ist.

62 Ebd., 41.



© Jüdisches Museum in Prag

Abbildung 7: Illustration *Troubení šofaru o Nový rok* [Schofarblasen zum Neuen Jahr] aus Robert Ehrmanns *Strakoničtí souvěrci*.

Resümee

Bereits in der Hochphase der Urbanisierung entstanden Erinnerungen an ländlich-jüdische Lebenswelten in den böhmischen Ländern, zunächst vornehmlich literarische Texte, die nostalgischen Charakter trugen. Die Erinnerungen zeugen von dem Integrationsprozess in der postemanzipatorischen Gesellschaft und dienen nach Innen wie nach Außen der jüdischen Selbstvergewisserung in einer sich im Umbruch zwischen Monarchie und Republik befindenden Gesellschaft. Die Autoren, die überwiegend den ländlich-kleinstädtischen Raum verlassen und zu diesem häufig nur noch sporadischen Kontakt hatten, schöpften ihre Erinnerungen an Kindheit und Jugend in einem Dorf oder einer Landstadt beziehungsweise ihre kulturelle Gedächtnisarbeit in Bezug auf die ländlich-jüdische Kultur überwiegend aus einem großstädtischen Kontext heraus. Dies geschah immer mit dem Bewusstsein, in den ländlichen Raum zurückkehren zu können, wenngleich diese Möglichkeit eher hypothetisch war.

Während und nach der Shoah gab es diese theoretische Rückkehrmöglichkeit nicht mehr. Die Land- und Kleinstadtgemeinden waren unwiederbringlich zerstört

und die Mehrheit der böhmischen und mährischen Juden ermordet. Die nostalgischen Erinnerungen der wenigen Überlebenden verweisen auf diesen Verlust und die entstandene Leere. Sie setzten damit dem offiziellen Geschichtsbild der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei, in dem jüdische Opfer weitgehend unbenannt blieben,⁶³ konkrete Alltagsgeschichten jüdischen Lebens vor der Shoah entgegen. Diese dienen Historikern nicht als wirklichkeitsgetreue (Re-)Konstruktion jüdischer Lebenswelten zur Zeit der Urbanisierung, sondern vor allem als Befund jüdischer Selbstverortung in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei beziehungsweise im Exil nach der Shoah. Die Autoren schreiben gegen das Vergessen an und erinnern an ermordete Familienangehörige, Freunde und Nachbarn, die oft auch symbolisch für alle ermordeten Juden der böhmischen Länder stehen. In Inhalt und Form knüpften die nach der Shoah entstandenen Texte an kulturelle Erinnerungsmuster aus der Zeit vor der Shoah an und schufen somit Kontinuitäten, die den Bruch überdauern sollten. Nostalgie war hierbei ein wichtiges Hilfsmittel, die Anwesenheit des Abwesenden, die anfänglich erwähnte *presene of absence*, in der Gegenwart deutlich zu machen. Nostalgie kam insbesondere in den detaillierten Beschreibungen religiöser Traditionen, durch die Darstellung von Sinneswahrnehmungen zum Ausdruck. Im Unterschied zu den Erinnerungen aus der Zeit vor der Shoah war die Sehnsucht nach den vergangenen Orten nun jedoch vom unwiederbringlichen Verlust menschlichen Lebens gezeichnet.

Abbildungsverzeichnis

Abbildung 1: Vojtěch Rakous, Vojkovičtí a přespolní [Die Wojkowitzter und die Auswärtigen], Band I, 7. erw. Aufl., Prag 1926, 32-33; Original ohne Titel und Datum in: Sammlungen des Jüdischen Museum Prag, Inv.Nr. P1996/0108/1.

Abbildung 2: Oskar Donath, Böhmisches Dorfjuden, Brünn 1926.

Abbildung 3: Hugo Gold (Hg.), Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Ein Sammelwerk, Brünn 1929, 318.

Abbildung 4: Hana Volavková, Schicksal des Jüdischen Museums in Prag, Prag 1965, 114.

Abbildung 5: Norbert Frýd: Vzorek bez ceny a pan Biskup aneb začátek posledních sto let [Muster ohne Preischild und Herr Bischof oder der Beginn der letzten einhundert Jahre], Prag 1966.

Abbildung 6: Robert Ehrmann, Strakoničtí souvěrci. Ze života Židů na malém městě [Die Strakonitzer Glaubensbrüder. Aus dem Leben der Juden in einer Kleinstadt], Prag 1998, 13; Original von 1956 in: Sammlungen des Jüdischen Museums Prag, Inv.Nr. 176.203/1.

Abbildung 7: Robert Ehrmann, Strakoničtí souvěrci. Ze života Židů na malém městě [Die Strakonitzer Glaubensbrüder. Aus dem Leben der Juden in einer Kleinstadt], Prag 1998, 57; Original von 1956 in: Sammlungen des Jüdischen Museums Prag, Inv.Nr. 176.203/2.

⁶³ Zur uneindeutigen Benennung der jüdischen Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung in der Tschechoslowakei siehe Hallama, Nationale Helden, 29-44.

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Intervention. Methods. Documentation 3 (2016) 2, 37-58.

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Article

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Gábor Szegedi

The “Double” of Erika B.

Sexual Conduct and Honour in a Hungarian Race Defilement Case

Abstract

This paper introduces the everyday realities of ‘race defilement’ practices in early 1940s Hungary through a case study. I argue that race defilement was an integral part of the Hungarian *őrségváltás*, ‘the changing of the guards’, in which the so-called ‘Christian’ middle class tried to push their ‘Jewish’¹ male rivals away from economic and political opportunities and this included access to ‘honourable, Christian women’. The case of a well-to-do and influential lawyer exemplifies that the judicial system was especially keen on enforcing *őrségváltás* by handing out punitive measures for Jews who were in a position of power and therefore seemed more of a threat to the non-Jewish elite. The case study also shows that playing with the gendered notion of ‘honour’ and with the resources still available to Jews in Horthy-era Hungary in the early 1940s, the outcome of cases could be swung. I here employ an emotional history approach and Michel Foucault’s concept of the psychological-ethical ‘double’ to indicate how emotions and readily available stereotypes were used by the actors of this particular case for various, often game-changing purposes.

Until recently, there has been fairly little research done on race defilement in Horthy-era Hungary. In 2014, András Lugosi published a case study in *FONS* that focussed on how urban spaces and networks in Budapest structured race defilement and its surveillance.² In 2015, Sándor Nagy presented a statistical overview of and an analysis of how the judiciary dealt with cases that can be found in the Budapest Metropolitan Archives.³ I have written both on race defilement and its relationship to sex-education and on the importance of the concept of ‘honour’.⁴ In a case study that I analysed, I pointed to the possibilities of resistance, and I would maintain that in many Hungarian race defilement cases there has been a strange entanglement of centre and periphery.⁵ In this paper, I contribute a further element to this research by

- 1 For the sake of simplicity, I will refrain from using quotation marks in the remainder of this paper for ‘race defilement’, ‘honourable’, ‘dishonourable’, ‘Jews’ or ‘Christians’ and related terms that can be used for racial segregation. I have used them in the first sentences to indicate that I do not accept these categorisations as reality.
- 2 András Lugosi, ‘Sztalin főhercege’. Kohn báró vacsorái a Falk Miksa utcában a fajgyalázási törvény idején [‘Stalin’s Duke’. The Dinners of Baron Kohn in Falk Miksa Street at the Times of the Race Defilement Law], in: *FONS* 17 (2010) 4, 527-576.
- 3 Sándor Nagy, A fajvédelem útvesztőjében: bírói gyakorlat a ‘fajgyalázási’ perekben, (1942–44) [In the Labyrinth of Race Protection. Judicial Practice in the ‘Race Defilement Law Suits’, (1942–44)], in: *FONS* 22 (2015) 4, 487-532.
- 4 Gábor Szegedi, Tisztaság, tisztesség, fajgyalázás: Szexuális és faji normalizáció a Horthy-korban [Tidiness, Respectability, Race Defilement. Sexual and Racial Normalisation in the Horthy-Era], in: *Socio.hu* 5 (2015) (1) 57-76; http://www.socio.hu/uploads/files/2015_1/szegedi.pdf, DOI: 10.18030/socio.hu.2015.1.57, (28 September 2016); Let there be blood! Forging the concept of race, sex and the nation in interwar Hungary (Forthcoming).
- 5 The longer version of the case study can be accessed under: <http://holocaust.archivportal.hu/tanulmanyok>, (26 September 2016).

analysing another detailed case study and showing how through sexuality certain forms of 'honour' could be publicly constructed in the race defilement cases. I argue that the performances that constructed certain sexualities in these race defilement cases built upon pre-existing, stereotypical knowledge on the 'honour/dishonour' of Jews and of the imaginary figure of the prostitute and that these eventually became a tool for Christian middle class men to retain and strengthen their positions of power.

The 1941 Hungarian Marriage Law – officially *Law No. XV of 1941* – that banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews and the resulting race defilement cases differed significantly from the much better known 1935 German *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*, the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour*. In both cases, punitive race defilement clauses served a dual role: to preserve the 'honour' of the nation from Jewish influence and to keep the body of the nation pure in a biological sense. However, as I have pointed out in a previous article in which I wrote about honour and race defilement, the difference was a result of the fact that in Hungary the term honourable woman was included in the wording of the law.⁶ In Germany, it was 'German honour' in general that needed protection and therefore extramarital sex between Jews and non-Jews was completely off-limits. By contrast, in Hungary the focus was on keeping away women that truly belonged to the body of the nation because of a sense of honour. This resulted in an incessant defining and redefining of what 'female honour' meant, while Christian male honour remained ambiguous.

In another study I argued that the Marriage Law, *Law No. XV of 1941* was a logical extension of the first two major antisemitic laws in Hungary.⁷ These two (Law No. XV of 1938 and Law No. IV of 1939) were centred around the *őrségváltás*, 'the changing of the guard' in economy and public life, and therefore set limitations on the extent of Jewish participation in private and public companies and in many intellectual occupations. The idea of the *őrségváltás* originated in the antisemitic sentiments of the Christian middle class. The term denoted the rolling back the influence of Jewish middle class men and taking over their possessions, which was portrayed as absolutely necessary for the revival of a 'true' Hungary.⁸ In this sense, the 1941 Marriage Law complemented the first two. Keeping non-Jewish women away from Jewish men was an economic issue, as well, one of possession. If Jewish men were to give up their positions at newspapers or as doctors and lawyers, they would need to give up their claim to Christian women as well, as the latter duly belonged to their race brethren.

The 1941 Marriage Law, which became more known as the so-called 'Third Antisemitic Law', stipulated as follows:⁹

§9. Non-Jews are not allowed to marry Jews

[...]

§15. A Jew who has sexual intercourse with an honourable, non-Jewish woman of Hungarian origin or attempts or succeeds in getting an honourable, non-Jewish woman of Hungarian origin to engage in intercourse with

6 Gábor Szegedi, Stand by your man: Honor and "Race Defilement" in Hungary, 1941–44, in: *Hungarian Historical Review* 4 (2015) (3), 577–605.

7 The as yet unpublished "Let there be blood!".

8 There is a chilling, extremely detailed account of the economic aspect of this 'changing of the guard', in which the author, István Hegedűs tried to collect all information on major corporations and important public positions where Jews were pushed to the sidelines; see: István Hegedűs, *Őrségváltás [Changing of Guards]*, Budapest 1942; http://mtdaportal.extra.hu/books/hegedus_istvan_orsegvaltas.PDF, (26 September 2016).

9 It was a general marriage law that replaced the 1894 law on marriage, introducing, aside from the antisemitic passages, mandatory premarital health checks and marriage loans for eugenically 'apt' couples.

himself or another Jew, commits a misdemeanour and is liable to an imprisonment of up to three years, loss of office and political rights.¹⁰

Paragraph 15 laid the basis for what became known as race defilement in the court cases. The term ‘honourable’ complicated many cases, as the judges had to decide whether the woman involved in the case was to be labelled as ‘honourable’ or ‘dishonourable’. Since various actors had different motives, ‘honour’ became a matter of intense struggle. As I have shown in the case of a young Budapest waitress and waiter, by playing one’s cards right it was possible even for those who were designated to the periphery to use this terminology to their advantage. However, race defilement was primarily about limiting the options for Jewish men and about keeping female sexuality under patriarchal control. In a country with conservative sexual ethics, having one’s private affairs subject to public scrutiny was more than embarrassing. It affected social standing, economic status and it reinforced gendered and racial stereotypes about sexuality. In this paper, I discuss an extremely well-documented case that involved a 52-year-old Jewish lawyer and an 18-year-old non-Jewish maid. Before detailing the case, I will first briefly discuss theories on using emotions like ‘love’ and ‘honour’ in history.

Emotions in History

In order to analyse what was meant by honour or an honourable woman in sexuality in a more general sense in Hungary in the 1940s, it is first necessary to reflect on how theoreticians approach the history of emotions and the emotion of honour in particular. In *Emotions in History: Lost and Found?*, Ute Frevert offered a panoramic history of the concept honour, her main claim being that this lost emotion was intrinsic to maintaining social stratification and gender differences in pre-1945 Western cultures.¹¹ The custom of duelling enabled men of the middle and upper classes to save or redeem their honour in case it was under threat, whereas lower-class men were not given access to this organised manner of taking revenge on people who had allegedly violated their honour. While working class men could still protect their honour violently, with their bare fists, women’s honour tended to be deeply sexualised. It was closely linked to their sexual ‘purity’ and put them in positions of passivity, as they did not possess any means of retaining or recovering their honour themselves, but needed male family members as protectors to do so in their stead. Moreover, lost premarital virginity was the kind of loss of honour that could not be redeemed; this dishonour marked a woman forever. This resonates with what Luisa Passerini wrote in *New Dangerous Liaisons: Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century*, namely that transgressions in love can be “dangerous for the oppressive aspects of the existing social and cultural order”.¹² In Europe, transgressions in love have been historically varied, but Passerini points to an important aspect of the idea of romantic love: transgressions are especially dangerous if they involve non-Europeans. Thus, “love in inter-racial relationships was considered particularly

10 1000 év törvényei. 1941. évi XV. tc. a házassági jogról szóló 1894: XXXI. törvénycikk kiegészítéséről és módosításáról, valamint az ezzel kapcsolatban szükséges fajvédelmi rendelkezésekről [The Laws of a Thousand Years. On the Supplements and Amendments of Law No XXXI. of 1894 on Marriage Concerning the Marriage Law No. XV of 1941]; <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=8168>, (26 September 2016).

11 Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History. Lost and Found*, Budapest, 2011, 87-149.

12 Luisa Passerini/Liliana Ellena/Alexander C.T. Geppert (ed.), *New Dangerous Liaisons. Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century*, New York, 2010, 3.

impossible and therefore doomed to a disastrous end”.¹³ Both Frevert and Passerini aim to historicise emotions, an aspect of history that, due to its seemingly volatile nature, has long been neglected.

As for the focus on emotions in history, I would like to refer first to Barbara Rosenwein’s definition, according to which emotional communities were “by and large the same as social communities – families, neighbourhoods, syndicates, academic institutions, monasteries, factories, platoons, princely courts”. Rosenwein suggests that research on these communities should seek to uncover “systems of feeling” to see “the modes of expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate and deplore”.¹⁴ Rosenwein’s conception of her research subject closely resembles William Reddy’s idea of “emotional regimes”, that is “the set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime”.¹⁵ Reddy claims that as emotions are “associated with the dense network of goals that give coherence to the self”, it is essential for a community to provide a “coherent set of prescriptions about emotions”.¹⁶ Reddy also introduced further concepts for the study of emotions, such as “emotional refuge”, which refers to the emotional safe spaces or outlets where those who feel oppressed by the dominant emotional regime can properly express their emotions. Reddy believes that the scrutiny of emotional regimes can be politicised by bringing in the concept of “emotional liberty”. In other words, tyranny can be detected (and critiqued) by examining the pressures that are put on individuals living in a certain emotional regime. If there is strict emotional discipline, then the individuals whose emotional build-up differs from the norm can potentially become subject to physical violence, forced exile, excommunication, etc. Or, alternatively, their protests against the norms can take extreme forms.¹⁷

How can we use these theoretical underpinnings for Hungary and sexual politics during the period of 1941 to 1944? Firstly, just as Frevert indicated, female honour was constructed solely through sexuality. Christian women were not honourable if they were acting as prostitutes, that is, when they had sex with more than one man and accepted money in exchange. Moreover, they were unable to defend or redeem their honour and classifying them in one category or another was solely dependent on the state administration. Secondly, love was an especially dangerous transgression: this would produce an integration which the system would not tolerate. Sexual relations with a dishonourable woman were by default not perceived as a love-relationship, as they involved a financial transaction and were assumed not to be exclusive and long-lasting. Therefore, it appeared logical that this love had to be punished. The court cases reveal that Jewish men in unmarried mixed couples, even if they were living as a normative family with children, were punished for continuing to live with their families.¹⁸ Thirdly, the law and the court practice most vividly demonstrated the limits that the community set on the emotional liberty of its members. Not only were Jewish men discouraged from falling in love with honourable Christian women, but friendly emotions between Jews and non-Jews were suspicious in

¹³ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴ Barbara H. Rosenwein, Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions, in: *Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1 (2010), 11; http://www.passionsincontext.de/uploads/media/01_Rosenwein.pdf, (28 September 2016).

¹⁵ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, New York, 2001, 129.

¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹⁷ For this theoretical part, I used the introduction of my previous study: Gábor Szegedi, *Stand by your man*.

¹⁸ E.g. Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest Metropolitan Archives] (BFL) VII-5-c- (Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék [Royal Court of First Instance, Budapest]), 3172. Doboz [Box], Case: 11193/1942.

general. Several cases testify that non-sexual relations were also under suspicion as they carried the potential of intimacy.¹⁹ In this essay, I have selected a case study to touch upon the various issues brought up in the above paragraphs.

According to *Law No. XV of 1941*, a Jewish man could receive a maximum of three years imprisonment for race defilement, which could become a maximum of five years in special cases involving for example the use of force or engaging in sexual activity with a woman who was below 21 years of age. In practice, the sentences handed out were much milder in most cases. In over 90 per cent of the cases, I have reviewed, the men received prison sentences between one month and one and a half years. It was a well-to-do Budapest lawyer that received the most severe sentence from the over one hundred race defilement cases I have analysed. The man, whom we shall call Dr. András Fal, received a three-year prison sentence from the Budapest Court of First Instance on 30 September 1942, a decision that then resulted in a legal struggle that lasted well into 1944 and produced a court file of over 170 pages.

Dr. Fal and Erika B.: Honour Regained, Honour Demolished

Based on the court documents, Dr. Fal was a lawyer with a prosperous business in the early 1940s. He had proof of about 4,000 Pengő in cash and outstanding payments and, although at the time he was taken into custody he was suspended from practising his business, he seems to have had a solid background both in terms of social networks and financial resources (at the time 4,000 Pengő equalled approximately two years of income of a factory worker).²⁰ According to reports of the inter-war press, Dr. Fal briefly worked for the legal assistance bureau of the Social Democratic Party and was later involved in various court cases in all of which, except for a minor libel case, he was acquitted.²¹ Two issues are of particular significance. First, at the time of his arrest for race defilement, he was banned for one year from practising as a lawyer by the Chamber of Lawyers.²² Second, the Budapest District Court had already convicted him in 1933 to four months imprisonment for embezzlement and forging documents although he was acquitted following appeals.²³ The bottom line is that Dr. Fal, who was Jewish, could be associated with the Social Democratic Party, and had past confrontations both with the Chamber of Lawyers and the Budapest Court of First Instance.

In March 1942, two hand-written letters arrived at the Budapest police, both reporting Dr. Fal's relationship with Erika B. They were very different in style, as one used elegant expressions and well-formulated sentences, while the other teemed with mistakes. The first letter referred to Dr. Fal as an "ugly, fat Jew" and a "Zionist".²⁴ It stated that Erika B., who was living with another lawyer, a friend of Dr. Fal, was having a sexual relationship with him and received clothes and jewellery in exchange,

19 Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest Metropolitan Archives] (BFL) VII-5-c- (Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék [Royal Court of First Instance, Budapest]), 3176. Doboz [Box], Case: 11632/1942.

20 Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest Metropolitan Archives] (BFL) VII-5-c- (Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék [Royal Court of First Instance, Budapest]), 3151. Doboz [Box], Case: 9246/1942.

21 Pártügyek. Nyilatkozat [Matters of the Party. Statement], in: Népszava [People's Voice], 15 March 1921, 7.

22 Több ügyvéd ügyvédi gyakorlatának felfüggesztése [Several Lawyers Suspended], in: Fővárosi Közlöny [Gazette of the Capital], 28 October 1941. 1209.

23 Atlasz Gyula dr. ügyvédet sikkasztásért és okirathamításért elítéltek [The Lawyer Dr. Gyula Atlasz Convicted for Embezzlement and Forgery of Documents] in: Budapesti Hírlap [Budapest News], 17 May 1933, 7.

24 Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest Metropolitan Archives] (BFL) VII-5-c- (Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék [Royal Court of First Instance, Budapest]), 3151. Doboz [Box], Case: 9246/1942.

“even though she had a job”. The author claimed she was boasting that a race-defilement investigation had already begun but that “smart Fal has taken care of it”. The second letter discussed the life of Erika B. in more detail, saying that she was a maid until 1941 and that since she had met Dr. Fal she had acquired a fur coat and that she had brought her mother and sister to her flat in Budapest. This letter mentioned that “men go to her place and finance her” and referred to the fact that she and her sister were learning typing and that this must have been financed by men, since they could not afford this. The author added that the mother of Erika B. used to have a little store in a small town called Nagykáta, but that they had had to give it up and thus did not have to work since the two lawyers supported them, especially Fal, who was Erika B.’s boyfriend. There was a reference to Erika B. stating that “she would be crazy to work, as she has money and she does not like to work”.

The Budapest police set up a team of detectives, who intervened after six weeks of surveillance, interrogated a number of people, and arrested Dr. Fal. In these first interrogations, Erika B. claimed that she was Dr. Fal’s girlfriend and that they had been together for a year. She admitted that he had provided regular financial assistance (100 Pengős a month) and a fur coat and clothes. He had even promised to help out with their financial problems back in Nagykáta. In the detective’s report, she revealed surprisingly intimate details about their sexual life, details that are rarely to be found in other race defilement cases. She said that they had intercourse once or twice a week, the last time having been a week before the interrogation, mostly with a condom, sometimes without, and that Dr. Fal always brought the condoms. She added that Dr. Fal “had attempted several times to have intercourse with her in various forms and even wanted to perform cunnilingus but that she was not willing to do so at any time”.²⁵ Her sister at first denied that she had had any sexual contact with the other Jewish lawyer, the owner of the flat, and stated that she was ready to prove with a medical examination that she was a virgin. She stated that she knew about the relationship between Dr. Fal and her sister and attested to the fact that he provided financial support. Her mother confirmed these assertions, saying that Dr. Fal and her daughter had a very intimate, day-to-day relationship and that she had good clothes and things, despite having no income. Dr. Fal acknowledged that they had had a relationship and that he visited her every day, but claimed that they stopped having sexual contact after the race defilement clause took effect in October 1941. The detectives had the three women sign a paper that contained a short summary of their accounts, which they justified with the assumption that these would be changed later on.

When Dr. Fal gave his account of events a day later at the police station, he maintained that the couple had not had intercourse since September 1941 as he did not want to take a risk, “even though I believed that based on her previous life she does not count as an honourable woman”.²⁶ He referred to the fact that she had had sex for money with various men and that, in his version of the story, he offered to help educate her to get out of this miserable situation, that since April 1941 she had reformed as she had “given a very strong promise”, and that there was no indication of her not having kept it.²⁷ The same day, the three women amended their original reports, Erika B.’s mother and sister both asserting that they “did not know of her currently having sexual relations with Dr. Fal”. Erika B. told the police that she had stopped

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

having sex with him in October 1941, that she had only told the detectives that he was her boyfriend because she was intimidated (“I found their energetic intervention rough.”) and that she believed that they came from vice department and wanted to charge her with secret prostitution. She claimed that she was an honourable woman.²⁸

From these two rounds of reports it seems that the detectives worked under the strong assumption that Dr. Fal was in fact Erika B.’s sexual partner and that eventually the two would work together in order to avoid punishment for race defilement. This is why they had the three women sign their initial confessions, to be able to prove that these were later changed and that there was a pattern to these changes. Examining the confessions closely, Erika B. was evidently positioned as a woman who went through episodes of working as a prostitute, but was reformed thanks to the gallantry of Dr. Fal. The main line of defence against the race defilement charge was Dr. Fal’s cautious approach, claiming that they discontinued sex after October 1941. Their relationship, so the suggestion, transformed into a non-sexual, friendly association where the woman cooked for Dr. Fal and kept him company, while he guaranteed that she and her family would have a secure financial future. Structuring the story this way promised benefits both to Erika B. and to Dr. Fal: She could argue that she had changed her ways and therefore could not be under suspicion by the moral police, while he could defend himself with the hardly refutable assertion that they had not slept together since the Marriage Law took effect. At the main hearing, Erika B. added that she did not believe that she was an honourable woman, because she had carried on with secret prostitution until March 1942.

A bitter surprise came on 30 September 1942, when the Budapest District Court handed out a three-year prison sentence to Dr. Fal, dismissing the second round of confessions with the argument that Erika B.’s inconsistency made her testimony incredible. She was to be taken as an honourable woman since there was no trace of her among the files of the moral police and because she had initially claimed to be one. The amended, second confessions of her mother and sister were also dismissed, since it was assumed that they had coordinated in order to help the defense. In addition, the court saw as proof of their continued liaison the fact that Dr. Fal had bought her a fur coat and kept visiting her just as before October 1941. They did not accept any mitigating circumstances and as aggravating circumstances cited the following:

“[...] the fact that the accused is married, that it happened repeatedly, that he committed the deed as a lawyer, and that partly in order to satisfy his lust, partly for his own protection, he contaminated spiritually a whole family and E.B., who is practically still a child whose moral value depreciated to such an extent that she claimed that she was a prostitute without thinking, almost as if she were boasting.”²⁹

The court’s draconian sentence shocked Dr. Fal and he began to build up a much more comprehensive case for the hearing at the Court of Second Instance. He wrote several petitions exceeding twenty pages and containing a thorough and solid story that no longer focussed on the fact that they had not had sexual relations after October 1941, but on Erika B. being a dishonourable woman. He invited the court to question the porter of a sex hotel, four clients of Erika B., and one of her friends who had also worked as a prostitute. This woman confessed (as did Erika B.) that Erika B. once had sex with a client while she had to watch, upon the client’s request. Dr. Fal used this as a key argument to her being an utterly dishonourable woman. His re-

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

lentless efforts resulted in positive outcomes: On 19 December 1942 the Budapest Appeals Court decided to let him out of prison pending a final verdict. Half a year later, on 20 May 1943, the same court acquitted him, accepting her claim that she had had over 500 clients over her years as a secret prostitute, as well as the confessions of the four clients who were ready to testify.

Dr. Fal did not stop at this, because while he was in prison he had been dismissed of the Chamber of Lawyers. In prison he did not get a letter that demanded the payment of a minor sum to the Chamber and as he did not pay, he was excluded. By that time, a previous antisemitic law had introduced a quota for the admittance of new Jewish lawyers to the Chamber and so he did not stand a chance of being readmitted. In short, the race defilement case provided a chance for the Chamber of Lawyers to prevent an already established lawyer from practising his profession. Dr. Fal therefore submitted another lengthy petition in which he demanded full compensation for his financial losses (including being excluded from the Chamber) from the court. In this petition, he compared the court's mistake to grave medical malpractice and he focussed, again, on the details of Erika B.'s dishonour. We know that his compensation case was still on-going in February 1944. There was probably no conclusion to that case, or at least it did not matter anymore: Dr. Fal is listed among the victims in the Yad Vashem Shoah Victims Database; he was deported to Auschwitz in September 1944 and died there in January 1945.³⁰

Honour, Sexuality and Abnormality

In an essay on race defilement and honour, I used Foucault's *Abnormal* to argue that in many race defilement cases, the courts created patterns of personality traits, from which I identified two distinctive types: the 'village girl' and the 'seductive Jew'.³¹ That is, courts were often looking for a story of personality leading up to the deed and as such their work resembled what Michel Foucault referred to as the "psychological-ethical double of the offense".³² This, Foucault claimed, went hand-in-hand with the appearance of the psychological expert opinion, which analysed the psychological profile of the accused, and from the eighteenth century on, the judiciary gradually started to rely heavily on these expert opinions. The 'double' is a delegalised version of the deed. It likens the person to his or her crime. In other words, committing a crime is characterised as the natural outcome of the alleged criminal's irregular personality, which is also manifested in extravagant, non-criminal behaviour.³³ In the race defilement cases, this double appeared without the need for psychological expert opinion. The judiciary often seemed ready to indulge in the construction of psychological profiles of both criminal and victim, and the 'psychological expert knowledge' was found in the works of antisemites.

This is also evident in the case of Dr. Fal and Erika B., especially when the Court of First Instance dismissed all confessions and found that the 'seductive Jew' poisoned the soul of a whole family, especially that of a young (village) girl. However, the 170-page material evinces a similar attempt by Dr. Fal. The clearest example is one of his petitions in which he provided 'snapshots' of Erika B.'s life:

³⁰ The Yad Vashem Shoah Victims Database can be found under: <http://yvngyadvashem.org/index.html?language=en>, (15 August 2015).

³¹ Gábor Szegedi, *Stand by your man*.

³² Michel Foucault, *Abnormal*. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–75, London, 2003, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 19.

1) In Autumn 1933 – she is not yet ten years old – as a fourth-year pupil she receives a serious punishment in elementary school, because in one of the recesses she lines up the boys and shouts: ... show (here she shouted the well-known Hungarian equivalent of the word “penis”). I remember that when I was a volunteer in the artillery – as a husband and father – I got all red when I first heard this expression. Only the intervention of the teacher was able to prevent this from actually taking place. Very educational start!

2) In May 1938, as you might have (correctly) guessed as you will rightly suppose, at the age of fourteen years and three months, she appeared as a seller on the market. The goods: the virginity of the then still untouched child girl. Price: 100 Pengős.

[...] She has two older brothers, who have been in prison for years for various crimes against private property, one of them is still in the Ungvár [today Uzghorod in the Ukraine, GSz.] prison, serving his 4.5-year sentence.³⁴

The attempt here is clear: Erika B. was basically born to be a prostitute. These snapshots of her early life show that she had an inherent tendency towards sex and debauchery, which showed already at the early age of nine. This lack of control and immorality ran deeply in her family: Her mother was ready to sell her virginity, while her brothers were in prison. This juxtaposition was very much in line with contemporary theories on the sources of prostitution. Béla Bíró, a medical expert on prostitution, published a 320-page book called *A prostitúció* in 1933.³⁵ In this book, he praised Parent-Duchâtelet's *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, in which the nineteenth-century French medical expert was looking for the ‘species’ of the prostitute. Bíró also quoted Cesare Lombroso, the Italian anthropologist, who believed that one could detect ‘criminal types’ based on anthropological features and then ‘found’ the female version of the criminal man in the ‘type’ of the prostitute. Bíró, who represented the thinking of contemporary medical and administrative authorities, quoted several other experts, who believed that prostitution was rooted in biological degeneration. He himself concluded:

“It must still be some kind of inborn quality (lack of feelings of shame, weakness of moral senses, moral insanity) that brings one woman to immorality and to an irresponsible way of life, even if external circumstances do not justify it, while the other, coming from a similar background, tolerates her hard fate and does not sell herself.”³⁶

Dr. Fal was thus playing on deeply rooted beliefs about prostitutes when he implied that if Erika B. had brothers who were serving time in prison, this obviously underlined that she was prone to be a prostitute. He played on the same beliefs when he tried to reach back to her childhood to show that she had already had a “moral insanity” that led her to such actions. That Erika B. was presented as an ‘abnormal’ could have contributed to Dr. Fal’s success at the Appeals Court. Even if it had not worked, the very attempt demonstrates two issues. First, the psychological-ethical double was clearly at work in race defilement court cases and not just in court interpretations of the ‘village girl’ or the ‘seductive Jew’ but also in sketching the silhouette of ‘the prostitute’. Second, although honour was a vague and hotly debated category in these court cases, one could use medical determinism and the theory of eugenic degeneration to argue for or against the honour of a woman. This further

34 Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest Metropolitan Archives] (BFL) VII-5-c- (Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék [Royal Court of First Instance, Budapest]), 3151. Doboz [Box], Case: 9246/1942.

35 Béla Bíró, *A prostitúció* [Prostitution], Budapest 1933.

36 *Ibid.*, 55.

colours the types of honour I pointed to in another study: Even though Christian honour was set up as spiritually superior to Jewish honour, female honour was in the hands of an all-male jury. Moreover, when deciding on one's honour, the male decision-makers would draw upon a *scientia sexualis* that would demand in-depth confessions from the women involved (and from others) with regard to their sexual conduct and/or profile of honour. These were then used to push individuals into the dual categories of 'normal/abnormal'.

I refer back to Erika B.'s initial confession where she mentioned (according to the detectives, at least) that Dr. Fal wanted to perform cunnilingus on her on occasions and to have intercourse in "various forms". This was before they/she realised that this could become a race defilement case and wanted to convince the detectives of her being an honourable woman. At this point, presenting Dr. Fal as abnormal seemed logical, as it would have evoked the 'village girl' versus the 'seductive Jew' prototypes and she could have hoped to avoid being fined by the police. Just as Dr. Fal could build on common knowledge concerning the image of the prostitute thanks to authors such as Lombroso or Parent-Duchâtelet when implying Erika B. belonged to a dishonourable type, Erika B. could in this initial confession draw on, among other things, the sex education materials in interwar Hungary. I will not go into detail here as I have analysed these elsewhere, but it is worth noting that these constructed a "debauched Jewish sexuality", which on the one hand paved the way for the race defilement legislation, and then after 1941 served as a framework of interpreting the sexual acts under scrutiny.³⁷ One famous author, József Koszterszitz, for example, referred to the Jews as having a "bohemian and heavily egoistic influence and strongly erotic Eastern style" which has "seriously loosened the otherwise hard and pure morality of Hungarians".³⁸ In the light of this background knowledge, it is not surprising that Erika B. initially told the detectives (most probably having also been pushed to do so) so much detail about her sexual life with Dr. Fal.

Conclusion

The race defilement cases, as I have claimed above, were used by the Christian middle class in Hungary to help accomplish what they called the 'changing of the guard'. Dr. Fal's travails show that these private sexual cases provided an excellent opportunity to take economic rivals out of competition. Here a lawyer received the highest sentence possible from the jurors, upon which the Chamber of Lawyers could easily discontinue his membership, which eventually meant that he could not return to the market. Treating Christian woman as property was another economic aspect of this approach: Jewish men were to be excluded from competition in this sense as well and thus major restraints on emotional liberty were introduced in order to keep certain women away from Jewish men. Love and closeness were much more punishable in this emotional regime than casual, non-binding, transaction-based sex.

Moreover, the cases served to enforce pre-existing stereotypes that were grounded in expert and popular knowledge. These included the 'seductive Jew', the 'village girl' and the 'degenerate prostitute'. The law only prohibited and punished extramarital

³⁷ Gábor Szegedi, Tisztaság, tisztesség, fajgyalázás.

³⁸ József Koszterszitz/Ádám György et. al., *Nos Rector ... a magyar főiskolai hallgatók könyve* [Nos Rector ... The Book of Hungarian University Students], Budapest 1943, 400.

sexual relations between Christian women and Jewish men and therefore Christian male sexuality remained unproblematic, while Jewish men and Christian women had to deal with stereotypes. In fact, in some court cases, as exhibited here, they were often motivated to use these existing stereotypes against each other. Dr. Fal, the Jewish lawyer's honour was more or less restored in 1943 but this went together with the moral deconstruction of Erika B., presenting sexual details about her life that fixed her as the 'prostitute type'. She cooperated and did not show signs of protest, for which she might have had personal as well as financial reasons. The nature of Dr. Fal's defense was, however, centred around the emotions of outrage and disgust concerning her life and her being. Thus, in future she could surely not count on a continued affair with Dr. Fal and she must have had to endure the widespread contempt of all who knew about the case, as what Dr. Fal 'revealed' about her was certainly in the 'repugnant and filthy' category according to Hungarian sexual ethics in 1943.

What does this then tell us about emotions, honour in particular, in interwar Hungary? It indicates that there were unquestioned and unquestionable carriers of honour, while people belonging to other categories had to prove their honour and that for 'suspect categories' like Jewish men or lower-class women this was intimately tied in with sexuality. The core emotional community was supposed to be formed of honourable non-Jewish women and non-Jewish men. The ones beyond this borderline were not expected or encouraged to reproduce or to engage in 'normal' family life. The court cases in part served the goal of separating honourable from dishonourable and thereby keeping the emotional community fixed, closed, and coherent.

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http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_ART_Szegedi/ART_Szegedi02.pdf

Article

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Roumen Avramov

The Microeconomics of State Antisemitism

Expropriating the Jews under Bulgarian Rule, 1941–1944

Abstract

While the Jews inhabiting Bulgaria proper survived the Holocaust, the Jews from the Greek and Yugoslav lands administrated by the Bulgarian authorities in the years 1941 to 1944 were deported by those into German custody and murdered in Treblinka. The economics of this Holocaust story has attracted scant attention. The lecture draws evidence from the Bulgarian archives and addresses the Government's spoliation policies carried out in the realm under its control. They nurtured behavioural patterns, mobilised social actors and fostered institutional networks. Reduced to its basic economic terms, the expropriation of the Jews boiled down to a forced offer of assets and personal belongings, which engendered strongly biased customer's 'markets'. This operation remapped segments of the economic tissue and further enhanced the role of the State through the arbitrary interventions of the Commissariat for the Jewish Affairs. In a broader perspective, the myriad of induced economic transactions contributed largely to the banalisation of antisemitism among different strata of the society.

The fates of the Jews of Bulgaria and of the territories it occupied from 1941 to 1944 present a striking ambiguity. While those inhabiting the Kingdom of Bulgaria proper were persecuted but survived, the Jews from the Greek and Yugoslav lands administrated by the Bulgarian authorities were deported by them into German custody in March 1943 and were murdered in Treblinka. Although the accompanying expropriation policies nurtured behavioural patterns, mobilised social actors and fostered institutional networks, the economics of this episode of the Holocaust have attracted scant attention.¹

¹ This paper is based on my research on the topic published in: „Spasenie“ i padenie. Mikroekonomika na darjavnia antisemitizam v Balgaria 1940–1944 [“Salvation” and Abjection. Microeconomics of State Antisemitism in Bulgaria, 1940–1944], Sofia 2012; Les spoliations des Juifs de Bulgarie et des territoires sous administration bulgare [The Plundering of the Jews of Bulgaria and the Territories under Bulgarian Administration], in: Nadège Ragaru (ed.), La Shoah en Europe du Sud-Est. Les Juifs en Bulgarie et dans les terres sous administration bulgare (1941–1944). Actes du colloque des 9 et 10 juin 2013 [The Shoah in South-Eastern Europe: The Jews in Bulgaria and in the Territories under Bulgarian Administration (1941–1944). Proceedings of the Conference of 9-10 June 2013], <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/fr/programme-des-activites/colloques/actes-de-colloques> (12 September 2016). The only two other publications devoted exclusively to this issue are: David Cohen, Ekspropriatziata na evreiskite imushtestva prez perioda na hitleristkata okupatzia [The Expropriation of Jewish Property During the Hitlerist Occupation.], in: GOKPOENRB [Yearbook of the Organisation of the Jews in the People's Republic of Bulgaria], 1967; Nadège Ragaru, La spoliation des biens juifs en Bulgarie pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Un état des lieux historiographique [The Plundering of Jewish Property in the Second World War. Inventory of Historiographical Sites], in: Questions de recherche/ Research Question, Centre de Recherche Internationales, Sciences Po, (March 2016) 48.

Foundational Myth and Moral Capital

The survival of the Jews in Bulgaria proper has been an important source of political legitimation. It was first exploited to enhance the position of the country during the negotiations of the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty. In the communist period, it was fully credited to the Party, this official version becoming a decorative element of its glorification, even a personal jewel of its long-ruling leader Todor Zhivkov. Since 1989, memory wars on the subject have raged continuously, seeking to appropriate the moral capital from what is presented by all sides as *the Salvation of the Bulgarian Jews*. The story is either a claim in favour of the pre-communist political order, a plea with a strong monarchist impetus which adds to the legend of King Boris III, or a didactic show-case of the potential of civil society. Whatever the point of view, the tale constitutes a self-laudatory and self-exempting mass therapy in a society prone to despise itself. It has coagulated into a foundational myth, permeating the tone of official commemorations, is utilised as a foreign-policy tool and celebrated as the 'Bulgarian Exception'.² Even if the chain of events which led to the survival of the Bulgarian Jews was actually the achievement of a handful of individuals, an elitist manoeuvre and partly the outcome of circumstance, it is nowadays packed into a well-established, canonical, politically correct, simplified narrative with a happy end and a moral message about the allegedly ontological tolerance of the Bulgarian people.

What happened in the kingdom differed radically from the situation in the *de jure* occupied and *de facto* annexed 'new lands'. At an early stage, in 1945, the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia, Thrace and Pirot (hereafter abbreviated as MTP) was exploited in the accusation of the 'bourgeois regime' and justified the first ever tribunal against antisemitism, which pronounced its verdict on 2 April.³ However, the Bulgarian authorities eventually obstinately opted, for various reasons, to transfer responsibility and to avoid any form of excuse. Consecutive governments have turned a blind eye to relevant precedents such as, for instance, the remarkable evolution that has taken place in France since 1995 in attitudes vis-à-vis a similar dilemma. A notorious recent example is the bluntly misleading, nearly negationist parliamentary declaration of 2013.⁴ At the same time, some significant breakthroughs have been made lately by civic organisations and the research community.⁵

2 The general understanding among public opinion and among officials in Bulgaria is that this country and Denmark were the only two to have prevented the deportation of their local Jewish populations. It is widely ignored or omitted in this context that Jews were not deported also from other countries allied to Germany, such as Italy and Hungary (until their occupation by the Nazi German forces in September 1943 and March 1944 respectively), or from part of Romania (the *Regat*). For an early problematisation of the issue see: Nissan Oren. *The Bulgarian Exception: A Reassessment of the Salvation of the Jewish Community*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 7 (1968), 83-106.

3 A collection of documents from the tribunal can be found in: Varban Todorov/Nikolay Poppetrov (ed.), *Sedmi sastav na Narodnija sad. Edno zabraveno svidetelstvo za antisemitizma v Balgarija prez 1941-1944* [The Seventh Chamber of the People's Court. A Forgotten Testimony on Antisemitism in Bulgaria, 1941-1944], Sofia 2013.

4 The unanimously adopted Deklaratzia po povod 70 godishninata ot spasiavaneto na Balgarskite evrei i pochitane pametta na jertvite ot Holokosta [Declaration on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews and in memory of the Holocaust victims], March 8, 2013.

5 Here one can cite, among others, the conference *To Know about our Past*, organised by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in October 2012, and two publications: Nadia Danova/Roumen Avramov (ed.), *Deportiraneto na evreite ot Vardarska Makedonia, Belomorska Trakia I Pirot. Mart 1943. Dokumenti ot balgarskite arhivi* [The Deportation of the Jews from Vardar's Macedonia, Western Thrace, and Pirot. March 1943. Documents from the Bulgarian Archives], Volumes 1-2, Sofia 2013; Zdravka Krasteva, *Pravni aspekti na darjavnata antievreiska politika v Tzarstvo Balgaria, 1940-1944* [Legal Aspects of the State Antisemitic Policy in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, 1940-1944], in: Albena Taneva (ed.), *Antievreiskoto zakonodatelstvo v Evropa i Balgaria* [Anti-Jewish Legislation in Europe and Bulgaria], Institute of Modern Politics, Centre for Jewish Studies, Sofia 2015.

Instruments

The Bulgarian government never ignored the economic aspects of the antisemitic policies. In 1942, the Reich's ambassador in Sofia, Adolf Heinz Beckerle, observed that the authorities were fastidious in pursuing materialistic goals – to *bulgarise* Jewish capital and to provide the corresponding room for personal benefits – but clement with the other goals.⁶ He condescendingly complained that the local mentality could not grasp the deep racial and ideological dimensions of the 'Jewish question'. In fact, the prevailing mood resulted from an economically non-sophisticated mythology about the occult Jewish pecuniary power, blended with autochthonous nationalism. This ideology was clearly on the rise during the 1930s and its advocates did not refrain from employing distorted statistics or fake numbers overstating the economic power of the Jewish community. The truth was that just before the war the Jewish community represented barely 0.7 per cent of the country's inhabitants (0.6 per cent in the annexed territories and four per cent from the urban population [nine per cent from that in Sofia]), the majority thereof was composed of modest merchants or producers, and there were relatively few prominent figures among the liberal professions and the upper-middle bourgeoisie. In this article, I present some stylised facts about their expropriation.⁷

The implementation of the antisemitic economic policies in Bulgaria evolved through two distinct phases.

From January 1941 to June 1942, they did not yet possess a clear-cut ultimate perspective. The intention was to change the ethnic topography of the capital, i.e. to crowd out the Jewish economic presence by limiting property rights and squeezing the scope of allowed activities. Decisions were based on legislative initiatives which adopted most of the Nuremberg Laws' rules with a key difference: origin was attested on the basis of Orthodox faith, not on blood.

The pillar of these policies was the *Law for the Protection of the Nation* (hereafter LPN), voted upon in December 1940 amidst vocal public opposition. It introduced compulsory wealth declarations of Jewish households, with over 15,000 files (which nowadays constitute a precious database) being deposited at the Bulgarian National Bank (hereafter BNB). Total interdiction was introduced concerning the possession or renting of agricultural land and of buildings in rural areas by Jews. Such properties had to be sold to the state at fifty per cent of the 1932 market price and to be paid with three per cent bearing government bonds with maturity of twenty years. In a few 'open' sectors, Jews were subject to a *numerus clausus* pro rata based on their share in the population. This meant only 84-150 vacancies in six cities for the liberal professions, 400-700 in trade, zero to 34 in the industry. They were totally banned from the 'closed' sectors (education, culture, armament), while in the 'semi-closed' sectors (finance) the ban concerned majority stakes. Trade with government bonds was forbidden and management positions restricted. The government could reduce the scope of the activities exerted by Jews in whatever branch it deemed necessary and later on this happened via concentric extensions of the interdictions.

The obligatory *Bulgarisation* consisted of the liquidation or transfer of stakes. The procedure between particulars was instigated and regulated by the state, but the state

6 Report of Adolf Heinz Beckerle to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, 14 December 1942, in: Obrecheni I spaseni. Balgaria v antisemitskata politika na Tretia Reich [Fated and Rescued. Bulgaria in the Antisemitic Programme of the Third Reich], Sofia 2007, 327.

7 If not indicated otherwise, the circumstances mentioned hereafter are documented in the archives published in: Danova/Avramov, *Deportiraneto na evreite ot Vardarska Makedonia*.

did not participate directly. Smaller firms were liquidated through direct deals, whereas the arrangements for more important companies were subject to oversight and approval by a commission (including representatives of the branch associations) at the Ministry of Industry. The mandatory Bulgarian counterparts were (in order of priority) the partners in the company, businessmen in the same, or businessmen in other branches. In case of suspected under-pricing, the difference was paid to the state, not to the owner. The proceeds were deposited in blocked accounts of the Jewish vendor put under control of the BNB. Furthermore, in a strongly inflationary environment, the allowed interest-free deferred payments constituted an obvious handicap for the former owners.

The second legislative support of the antisemitic policies was the *Taxation of Wealth* enacted in July 1941. It consisted of a one-time, progressive tax at 20-25 per cent rates on the assets declared by Jews according to the LPN. The blocked accounts were also taxed at 12 per cent. The deadline for submission of declarations was set at merely one month. If not met, the assets were confiscated.

Finally, the third major instrument of the expropriation was the *Law against the Speculation with Real Estate* enacted in February 1942, which targeted essentially the more wealthy. It prohibited all citizens from *acquiring* – but prohibited Jews from *owning* – “excessive” living space. The excess was nationalised, upon government decision and again with three per cent interest, 20 years treasury bonds. Additional budget credits had to be approved for those acquisitions. Eventually, the real estate of the Jewish religious communities, schools and civic organisations was confiscated in favour of the municipalities.

During the summer of 1942, the antisemitic economic policies entered a new stage. The decisive turning point was reached when the implementation of the Wannsee Conference’s agenda embraced the Balkans. Berlin initiated contact in July 1942 and was faced with a willing partner. During the next two months, a restricted circle of ministers and officials including the pronounced antisemite and Germanophile, Alexander Belev, shaped a strategic vision which anticipated and espoused the German wishes. By the end of August, the goal to deport the entire Jewish population was publicly declared and presented as a Bulgarian initiative and priority.

This move was not completely surprising. In 1941, the Bulgarian foreign minister had already proposed a pan-European policy towards the ‘foreign Jews’. At that time, Bulgaria (together with Slovakia and Romania, but not with Italy, Hungary and Spain) was classified by Germany as an unproblematic country on this issue. In June 1942, and not by coincidence, citizenship status in the ‘new territories’ was codified. Contrary to the law of war, the possibility to acquire Bulgarian citizenship was offered to the populations in the occupied lands.⁸ Only Jews were not allowed to opt for it and thus they were intentionally reduced to statelessness. Meanwhile, Bulgaria had agreed its Jewish subjects living in Germany and in the Protectorate being deported ‘to the East’ and refused to protect them.

By the summer of 1942, voluntary displacement was discarded as a plausible solution to the ‘Jewish question’. Organised internal movements were considered only as an intermediary stage in total deportation. In the early draft plan, no difference was made between the Jews in Bulgaria and in MTP. However, from October 1942 to January 1943, a three-step deportation schedule beginning in the ‘new territories’

⁸ Danova/Avramov, *Deportiraneto na evreite ot Vardarska Makedonia ...*; Krasteva, *Zdravka. Pravni aspekti na darjavnata antievreiska politika v Tzarstvo Balgaria ...*

was adopted, with the Bulgarian authorities carefully monitoring the corresponding precedents all over Europe. The government was aware of changing attitudes and hesitations in various countries, even in Romania, but nevertheless hardened its policy even as other states were slightly loosening theirs. The final design of the plan was completed after the arrival in Sofia in January 1943 of Theodor Danekker, one of the key perpetrators of the July 1942 Vel' d'Hiv Roundup in Paris. On February 22, he signed a formal agreement with the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (hereafter CJA) concerning the deportation of 20,000 Jews, including all the roughly 12,000 Jews from MTP and 8,000 "unreliable" subjects from the kingdom.

According to this strategy, the 'Jewish question' was defined as an essentially economic problem and sending them to the eastern territories of the Reich was presented as a chance to accelerate its solution. Thus, the Bulgarian government asked for German 'assistance' and expressed its readiness to pay for the 'service' in exchange for the benefits of the spoliation of Jewish property. The only objection was the allegedly high price of 250 Reichsmark per person demanded by Germany. The Jews under Bulgarian control had to be stripped radically of their property and capital in order to cut every economic bond with the country. To leave them with more than the minimum necessary for existence was judged "redundant sentimentality". Finally, the deportation would be financed by the Jews themselves through their expropriation.

A much more detailed institutional and operational setting was put in place with the *Ordinance* of 29 August 1942. The document relied on the legally inconsistent and unconstitutional law empowering the executive to take all the measures concerning the 'Jewish question' without prior consent from the parliament. Accordingly, the CJA was established. It was directed until September 1943 by Alexander Belev. The institution's tasks, including the deportations in MTP, were funded by the money extorted from the Bulgarian Jews.

The new master plan intended not just (as was the aim of the LPN) to economically crowd the community out, but to suffocate it. The scope of permitted activities was further squeezed. To start new and enlarge current businesses in trade and industry was prohibited. Credits were strictly limited. In MTP the liberal professions, trade and industry were completely closed; the Jews there had to pay a tax as foreigners. Concerning capital participations, the role of the state evolved from that of a regulator to that of the decisive player. The government (not a ministry's commission) oversaw and finally approved all the *Bulgarisation* deals above a certain threshold. Liquidators appointed by the CJA managed the assets until their transfer or liquidation. All the shares were deposited in the BNB and sold by the CJA through mandatory auctions where any excess over the fiscal value, that is the value declared according to the LPN and the Taxation on Wealth Law, went to the government's budget. Total discretion was left to the government to attribute ownership by choosing the beneficiary according to "the interests of the economy". The state was granted the statute of a privileged buyer who could nationalise (with the standard bonds) any company owned by Jews. The deadlines for the liquidation or transfer of the businesses were so exorbitantly short (two months in the kingdom; initially two weeks in MTP) that they had to be tacitly prolonged and accounting sequels of the operation could be detected months later.

Assets

It is important to stress that there was a single plan which obeyed the same rules but reached different degrees of realisation. In March 1943, and during the following months, a full-fledged expropriation of deportees was organised in MTP where the final goal of deportation was attained. At the same time – in Bulgaria proper – the plan was aborted due to political and civic opposition and the 8,000 designated Jews remained at home. Two months later, in May 1943, 25,000 were expelled from Sofia and from a few larger cities in the kingdom. The ultimate objective there was realised only partially and those Jews were expropriated as ‘displaced people’. The preserved archives provide abundant micro-evidence about the events and allow for a *tour d’horizon* according to types of assets.

The lowest level concerned the intimacy of *personal belongings*. Although the essentials were not the object of direct spoliation, a forced offer was engendered by the pauperisation of the Jewish community and the external or internal mass movements. The organised sales were meticulously documented and entailed impressive volumes of records disclosing the sordid reality of a huge flea market. A sole auction of the modest property of a family ousted from Sofia (5,744 auction files are preserved) produced, for example, 75 pages of reports. The more expensive objects (carpets and pianos in particular) received the strongest interest.

For the deportees from MTP this was a liquidation of movables *in absentia*, i.e. the property of annihilated people. During the roundup, within thirty minutes, they could take with themselves forty kg per adult and twenty kilograms per child. The rest of the effects were sold at auctions and/or distributed by special commissions employing personnel of the CJA, the municipality, the tax offices, town notables, intelligentsia and (often) teachers. The non-declared items or those without clear ownership were confiscated, which explains the intentional chaos kept in the CJA’s storehouses. The proceeds of the sales had to enter the blocked accounts of the identified Jews, but since July 1943 they went directly into the accounts of the CJA. Manipulation of the prices were widespread.

The persons displaced from Sofia were subject to a larger, albeit less radical, operation. The main difference was that some access to protective networking was possible. In theory, they could sell their belongings personally, but the short deadlines and the absence from the city made it impossible. Thus, a plethora of guardians and liquidators was involved. Meanwhile, the authorities hunted down non-declared valuables all over the country. Raids were organised by BNB teams and lists of wealthy Jews were established in February 1943 in view of the planned deportation from the kingdom.

The *real estate* of the deportees from MTP was effectively confiscated. Although, on paper, the state assumed the servicing of the homes’ mortgages, it did not issue the foreseen compensatory bonds. The houses were rented to the population and/or to public institutions.

Officially, the repartition of the nationalised ‘redundant’ living space in Sofia from April 1942 was supposed to benefit government employees, young couples and numerous families. Some politicians even proposed selling all the apartments on credit to homeless civil servants. In fact, the use of this real estate boiled down to a clientelist distribution by the CJA, where Belev had almost absolute power. By July 1943, a pool of more than 3,100 apartments was available for rent, with a sample showing that, out of 360 rentals, 44 per cent went to government employees; sixteen per cent to military personnel, and seventeen per cent to diplomats, MPs, professors,

teachers, journalists, doctors and artists.⁹ The towns which received the displaced Jews from Sofia after May 1943 were faced with a severe housing crisis. At the beginning, the newcomers were accommodated only by local Jews but were soon allowed to be hosted by other minorities as well.

From September 1942 to May 1943, *small businesses* of the Jewish community in 'old Bulgaria' were definitively dismantled. In MTP the entire community disappeared. Silent liquidations by gentlemen's agreements with Bulgarian neighbours, partners or friends were common. For the remaining cases, however, the archives attest recurring points of conflict in the procedures. They included the accuracy of the lists of items, price-fixing, thefts, unfaithful intermediaries, manipulated auctions and so forth. As time was extremely short, the deals were mostly completed by liquidators in the absence of the owners. Despite the widespread suspicion against the liquidators, only six out of some 1,500 were convicted in 1945.

The negotiations surrounding the transfers of *limited liability companies* were mere pretence. The stakes were evaluated by auditors appointed by the CJA without the approval of the Jewish owners and the final decisions were taken by the CJA. Even benevolent agreements between the parties were never optimal for the seller as those were forced deals with obviously asymmetrical positions of the counterparts. In a sample of 69 companies, eighty per cent went to the Bulgarian partners and, as a rule, the expropriation led to concentration of ownership.¹⁰

The *shareholding companies* were the most important segment of the targeted assets. A study of 172 auctions reveals elusive criteria and no clear principles for the attribution, ad-hoc decisions, and a number of unattractive companies entailing failed or repetitive procedures.¹¹ The fiscal goals were evident: only two thirds of the proceeds went to the blocked accounts of the Jewish owners because the excess over the declared value was appropriated by the state. A particularly relevant set were the 56 partially or entirely nationalised firms. The motives for these decisions varied: lacking or abandoning candidates; low prices proposed at the bids; tax arrears; industrial policy considerations and so forth. Ultimately, well above half of the shareholding capital owned by Jews was acquired by the state; 25 companies were fully nationalised. Expropriation was accompanied by paranoiac enquiries about concealed collusions with Jewish partners. The operation often provided opportunities to settle internal rivalries in the company or to organise political denunciations.

Calibration

The data contained in the archives allow for the expropriation to be mapped and scaled. According to the number of cases, the 3,800 transfers of family businesses clearly exceeded the 525 limited liability companies and the 270 shareholding firms. The structure of the proceeds, however, was inverted with a clear predominance of the shareholding companies. By far the most affected field of activity was trade, at ninety per cent, followed by industry at ten per cent.

The *Bulgarisation* of the major firms as of September 1943 can be calibrated in different ways. The value of those transfers represented in 1943 0.2 per cent of the

⁹ Avramov, „Spasenie“ i padenie, 224.

¹⁰ Avramov, „Spasenie“ i padenie, 148.

¹¹ Ibid, 143-149.

national income, 1.8 per cent of the government revenues, 4.6 per cent of the collected direct taxes, and 24 per cent of the state enterprises' revenues.¹²

Any aggregate estimate of the liquidation of the 'Jewish assets' is tentative. In 1967, David Cohen assessed the overall expropriation to at least 3.1 per cent of the national income, but this number is statistically inconsistent and contains both substantial double counting and omissions.¹³

Regarding the wealth tax, only sixteen per cent of the declared property was above the exemption threshold. The efficiency, however, was high and 82 per cent of the tax base was collected. This represented 1.2 per cent of the national income in 1943 and 6.6 per cent and 5.5 per cent in 1941 and 1942 respectively of the government revenues. This represented an extreme tax burden to the extent that the figures exceeded seven to eight times the weight of the Jews in the country's population.

Economic Effects

In a nutshell, the economic effects of the antisemitic policies were twofold. Their immediate and easily established *direct* impact included the important wealth redistribution, fiscal consequences or the additional liquidity provided to the state via the control of the blocked accounts.

The key, however, were the *indirect* effects incorporating the simplest, technical formulation of the microeconomics of antisemitism. It could be reduced to the induced massive offer of productive and personal assets triggered by bankruptcies, forced transfers, taxation, professional interdictions and deportations. Or, in other words, to the emergence of a customer's market, which generated offers at low prices under strong time and personal constraints. This further distorted the markets that were already heavily biased by the special regimes for war rationing.

There was a substantial *strategic long-term* consequence too. The measures taken fostered the strong pre-war trend of state grip on the economy; they enhanced the role of the politico-bureaucratic establishment, provided additional tools for discretionary, arbitrary and interventionist decisions, and strengthened authoritarian and nationalist policies.

Social Logic

The social logic behind economic antisemitism put in motion very different actors. Broadly speaking, the legislation activated chiefly the social extremes – the high society and common people – while the middle class remained (in general) on the sideline. The 'elites' inspired, instigated, organised and capitalised on the anti-Jewish measures. 'The people', in turn, was excited by the offer of 'free goods' which incited latent predatory instincts and unleashed a specific kind of organised pogroms.

The archives illuminate the beneficiaries. In first place were the businesses. Unexpected opportunities arose for the guilds and the corporatist interests. Government institutions were particularly favoured so that there was urgent need to temper and channel their demand. They were persuaded that the 'Jewish assets' appertain to them and perceived those goods as a chance for convenient procurement. The initial

¹² Ibid, 147.

¹³ Cohen, Ekspropriatziata na evreiskite imushtestva, 109-110.

wish to receive for free the belongings of Jews deported from MTP was rejected, but some privileges (first choice of quality goods; avoiding auctions; attractive prices) were sanctioned. The problem faced by the public bodies was rather their limited budget credits for such acquisitions. The employees also lobbied for special treatment such as closed auctions, special selection of luxury goods, reduced prices or access to the abandoned homes. A shocking reality was the frenetic rush of ‘civil society’ (cultural and religious institutions, non-governmental organisations, charity organisations, the Red Cross and political movements) eager to seize the opportunity.

The institutional core of the overall process was the CJA. On the one hand, this was an excessively powerful institution escaping (at least until September 1943) any serious control. The CJA demonstrated exceptional efficiency and bureaucratic accountability when compared to other Bulgarian administrations. On the other hand, the CJA provided the ‘legal veil’ for the expropriation; imitated rights in an unlawful world. Liquidation was presented as an operation in favour of the public good, as a grand state mission. Spurious protection of Jewish private property was imitated through the blocked accounts, the issued bonds, the appointed liquidators and the scrupulous procedures or internal controls. The CJA tried to effuse the corresponding law-obeying image and work ethic by encouraging bureaucratic zeal and pedantism amongst its more than 110 civil servants. It trivialised its goals and was proud to report its achievements, of course without commenting on their substance.

The reality, however, was completely different. The CJA’s authentic and easily recognisable face was that of the main logistical support of the Holocaust in MTP. In fulfilling this mission and in implementing the antisemitic legislation in Bulgaria proper, it swiftly turned into a real estate, employment, and procurement agency; a wholesale trader and services provider; a redistribution hub; and a coveted market for the exchange and barter of mutual favours. No wonder that the CJA was an institution of bad repute surrounded by rumours, scandals and general suspicions of corruption. A wide-open window to this realm is the insight provided by its files, namely by the reports of the local liquidation commissions in MTP.

Normalising Antisemitism

The heroic narrative of the *Salvation* to which Bulgarian society is accustomed ignores the ongoing normalisation of the antisemitism of the early 1940s. When commenting on the Bulgarian case, Tzvetan Todorov rightly wrote about the “fragility of goodness”.¹⁴ However, we have to go further and to acknowledge that the reverse side of this formula is *the strength of evil and the permeability of moral filters*.

One of the most telling documents I came across during my work was the extraordinary collection with demands for intercessions addressed to the CJA.¹⁵ The genre had its scriptural protocols: the requests were written on business cards or as manuscript notes (phone calls were not documented); the style was either velvet and mundane or ostensibly familiar; the wording used either respectable codes or brutal language.

These files introduce a clear taxonomy. A number of interventions seem at first glance to have been benevolent. The successful mediations changed the destination

¹⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *La fragilité du bien. Le sauvetage des juifs bulgares. Textes commentés par Tzvetan Todorov.* Paris 1999; English translation: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness. Why Bulgaria’s Jews Survived the Holocaust*, London 2001.

¹⁵ This is detailed in: Avramov, „Spasenie“ i padenie.

of more than 600 Jews displaced from Sofia by referring to ‘legal’ arguments (because they were christened, were foreign subjects, were mobilised, or were ill) or to special decisions (such as by Alexander Belev, the Interior Minister Peter Gabrovski, or other ministers). In fact, those cases reproduced to a great extent the social texture. They reflected personal bonds, former services rendered, established networks, old debts to settle, a certain way to understand loyalty, and so forth. Yet none of the gestures questioned the foundations of antisemitism. They followed a mere case-by-case, ad-hoc approach.

The second set of intercessions illustrates how the classical capitalisation on power (via traffic of influence, protection, opportunism, or parasitism) was performed in a racist context. The most desired goods and services were real estate or valuable personal assets and appointments (sinecures or state employment). The records identify the small world around the CJA, an inner circle of brokers and lobbyists of all kinds – high and middle nomenklatura, employees, MPs, and politicians of different levels. Paradoxically, a couple of the latter were among the parliamentarians who stood against the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews. Similarly ambiguous behaviour is observable with high-ranking members of the Orthodox clergy. Although the Church undeniably sought to protect the Jews as a minority and, in particular, the Christians of Jewish descent, the six letters written by its head (the Metropolitan of Vidin and a close acquaintance of Belev) are among the most direct demands for favouritism. The attraction of the CJA was prone to blur moral criteria.

Whilst reading the archives, one cannot but conclude that the most efficient tool and milieu for the normalisation of antisemitism was the economy. It operated through different channels.

The institutional nexus relied on the assumed ‘respectability’ of the state establishments. The majority of them were associated with those policies and with the corresponding myriad of compulsory economic acts required by the laws, deadlines and obligatory contacts with the CJA, mandatory administrative procedures, and everyday announcements in newspapers. All this produced a noticeable shift in the politically correct language. Antisemitism became a prized business argument and to declare loyalty to that ideology was rewarded.

But the key channel was *the corrupting economic logic, both personal and of the state*. The economy does not tolerate void and so the expropriated wealth was not annihilated. It was just redistributed according to new (ethnic) outlines. *The economics of state antisemitism was a perverse and infamous corroboration of the so well-known among economists Say’s law¹⁶ according to which the offer creates its own demand*. New possibilities appeared within reach and the justification for the spoliation became simple: there were problems and needs; the ‘Jewish assets’ provided a solution and were fortunately next door; the new opportunities (it is imperative) had to be seized. Otherwise, one was in danger of being economically marginalised and eliminated by the competition, and market shares would be lost. This is, in substance, the main microeconomic message conveyed by the archives of the Bulgarian (though not exclusively) state antisemitism. Due in grand part to the economy, transgressing the moral demarcation line ceased to be an event for a great deal of people; the normally intolerable became acceptable; the divide between decent and indecent was more tenuous than ever. It is thus not surprising that the vigorous initial protests of the autumn of 1940 faded away and turned sporadic afterwards. With the outstanding exception of the towering figures of Dimiter Peshev, Petko Stainov, Nikola

¹⁶ Formulated by the liberal French economist Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832).

Moushanov, and Sofia's Metropolitan Stephan, whose public action in March 1943 contributed decisively to making deportation from the kingdom politically too costly.¹⁷

The economics of antisemitism was premonitory as well. In a parliamentary discourse in July 1943, Nikola Moushanov formulated a lucid prophecy.¹⁸ The anti-Jewish laws – he said – were deeply demoralising. They were laying the ground for communism because they violated property rights and thus provided precedents justifying an ideology that demonised private ownership, capital, and the bourgeoisie. The course of history validated his prediction. Following the September 1944 coup and the ensuing communist takeover, overwhelming nationalisation was enacted in late 1947.

More unexpectedly, foreshadows of post-communism could be found, too. 'Jewish assets' were de facto treated and distributed as state property, in many respects comparable to privatisation. It is thus understandable that some technicalities were similar. The financial privileges granted then to selected buyers, such as deadlines, grace periods, and credit, were reminiscent of the widely applied management-buy-out privatisation schemes. Many economic sins such as corruption, under-pricing, manipulated public offers, political interferences, or favouritism were also identical. In a sense, both episodes proved that the state cannot be a neutral and innocent redistributor of big stakes of property rights. Its behaviour in such circumstances is always uncontrolled and unavoidably biased.

17 At the time, Peshev, Stainov and Moushanov were all members of parliament. Moushanov, who had been Prime Minister from 1931 to 1934, and Stainov belonged to the opposition. Peshev was a vice-president of the National Assembly from the majority but was dismissed from this position after submitting a petition on 17 March 1943 against the deportation of Jews from the kingdom, which was signed by 43 MPs. The role of Peshev is the best known outside Bulgaria. See Gabriele Nissim, *Luomo che fermò Hitler* [The Man who Stopped Hitler], Milan 1998; Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness*.

18 Minutes of the 25th National Assembly, fifth extraordinary session, 22 July 1943, 58.

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Quotation: Roumen Avramov, The Microeconomics of State Antisemitism. Expropriating the Jews under Bulgarian Rule, 1941–1944, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 3 (2016) 2, 71-82.

http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/SWL_Reader/2016-2/2016-2_SWL_Avramov/SWL-Reader_Avramov02.pdf

SWL-Reader – Reader der Simon Wiesenthal Lectures

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Paul Weindling

“That’s not fair, Daddy”

On Being a Second and Third-Generation Applicant to the Austrian General Settlement Fund¹

Abstract

Since the 1950s, the Republic of Austria insisted it had settled all the claims of its Jewish citizens regarding their properties stolen under the Nazi regime. From the late 1980s, with the help of personal recollections and case studies, it became ever clearer that this was often not the case, and that the Austrian authorities had in many instances – often deliberately – handled matters of restitution carelessly. Many losses were not addressed in Austrian restitution and compensation measures. In the course of the re-evaluation of the role of Austrian citizens in the Nazi era which took place in the 1990s, and in the wake of the Washington Agreement of 2001, a General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism was established. Its purpose was to bring about a comprehensive resolution to open questions of compensation and to acknowledge Austria’s moral responsibility for losses of assets suffered by the victims of the Nazi regime in Austria between 1938 and 1945 in the form of voluntary payments. This article describes the inconsistencies and ordeals an applicant is confronted with in the course of a justified claim for restitution, based on personal experiences, but presented in a scholarly framework.

In 2003, I filled out a succession of forms for the Austrian Allgemeiner Entschädigungsfonds für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus, the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism (GSF) with a sense of optimism. While not the first compensation scheme in post-war Austria, this scheme was to deal with large areas of injustice so far not addressed, especially for those stripped of assets as part of the intense persecution in post-*Anschluss* Vienna. How the scheme was administered provides an opportunity to reflect on present-day attitudes to the Nazi past: the GSF was intended to project an image of a nation taking responsibility for the injustices of National Socialism, not just on the national but also on the personal level; it was to acknowledge the past not in terms of generalities; it was to reach out not only to survivors but also – at this late stage, as heirs to material losses – to their children and grandchildren; thus, the GSF was to be an opportunity for a morally conscious state to offer sympathetic reconciliation. The avalanche of injustice triggered by the *Anschluss* and the Holocaust engulfed individuals in manifold ways, at different stages of their life, and in varying circumstances. The next generation has had to deal with a range of issues arising from matters left unresolved after the war. A sensitively administered scheme could identify injuries and injustice on an individual level; this was a unique opportunity to genuinely make up for some of the damage inflicted in the past.

However, there were fundamental problems of design from the outset. The GSF is a modern scheme: it sets an overall sum to be shared between applicants. For an ap-

¹ I would like to thank the anonymous referee for helping me to disentangle the Nationalfonds from the GSF, and for expert comment on other issues; and Tim Cole for helpful historical and textual clarifications. I am grateful to the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for this opportunity to historicise personal experience.

plicant to receive a massively scaled-down amount, he or she is required to sign a *Verzichtserklärung*, a waiver, giving up the totality of rights in lost assets. This model of a set amount conditional on a global waiver was first devised in a compensation scheme for thalidomide, the so-called Contergan victims in Germany in 1970. The procedure suits the transgressor in that it can point to the aggregate global sum which might seem generous, while in practice such fixed-amount schemes have the moral defect that the past loss and the numbers involved are invariably far greater than the fixed sum allows. I thought that the GSF could potentially temper this by showing historical sympathy in its administration and delivery. For without compassion and empathy, any scheme becomes a legalistic and administrative quagmire leaving the claimant in a Kafkaesque situation of irresolution due to the twists and turns of bureaucratic procedures (remember, Kafka worked in accident insurance for the Arbeiter-Unfallversicherungs-Anstalt für das Königreich Böhmen in Prag). It is made clear from the outset that the applicant has no rights: the GSF states that all payments, if the applicant even gets that far, are discretionary and are given as a gesture by the Republic of Austria rather than as any entitlement. The promise was of a light touch in terms of proof and procedure, avoiding having to have documents validated by notaries, and costs in obtaining documents.² Surely, I thought, modern Austria could be expected to refrain from letting the lawyers and bureaucrats run amok in terms of having to prove persecution, loss and injury? While the sums were to be heavily scaled down, they could still have a symbolic value, and might represent closure for victims and their descendants. Austria could take this opportunity to acknowledge that past persecution involved systematic pauperisation of its former residents as a preliminary step to either their forced departure or their total destruction. This endeavour would require a sustained effort from start to finish, and more than just an impersonal note of apology at the end. In short, I expected the administration to be fair and equitable, prioritising restorative justice over administrative expediency. In delivering a symbolic gesture (that phrase has been increasingly used by the GSF and Nationalfonds) with “gesture payments” to the applicants the Austrian state, and its institutions and agencies, now had a chance to demonstrate their recognition of past injustice in their dealings with the persons affected and their heirs. I hoped that the GSF would be claimant-oriented rather than adversarial. The scaled-down amounts would be symbolic but, if correctly and sympathetically administered, they would yield recognition, some rectification of earlier injustice, and closure. So I entered into the experience with much good will and optimism. Like K., the protagonist in *Der Prozeß*, Kafka’s novel about impenetrable bureaucracy, I entered the system with genuine optimism.

What follows is a narrative of my experience as an applicant. While these are my recollections, my experiences can be verified with documents, both in family files (which I would gladly open to scrutiny) and in the files of compensation agencies. To date, the GSF has not inquired about the experiences of the claimants: was the experience one that was positive in terms of a gesture of reconciliation? Or are there residual problems or misunderstandings that might still be resolved? Rather than actually ascertaining whether it has delivered on its aims, the GSF is in closure mode.

² <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/129563.pdf>. Agreement Between the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and AUSTRIA. Relating to the Agreement of October 24, 2000. Effected by Exchange of Notes. Dated at Vienna January 23, 2001 with Attachment, (15 October 2016) gave the undertaking of ‘relaxed standards’ of documentation and proof.

Old Forms, and the New Form

As the historian in the family, I became the custodian of documents listing war losses and assets for the most part never recovered. I heard about the Nationalfonds, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism and its payments for surviving former refugees from Paul Samet, the son of Freud's cardiologist Bernhard Samet, whom I interviewed for my historical project on refugee doctors. My mother had received a "gesture payment" of 70,000 Schillings (5,087.10 Euros) from the Nationalfonds in June 1997. The second payment required a more legalistic approach: by adding a waiver, the "gesture payment" became a conditional payment in return for giving up the right to further claims. The problem was two-fold: first, the failure to draw a clear distinction between a payment as a truly magnanimous gesture and a payment conditional upon renouncing rights, and second, the dismal efforts at contacting potential claimants (at least in the UK, which took in almost 31,000 Austrian refugees, many of whom remained).

The Nationalfonds did not manage to send the form for the second personal payment to my mother, Erica Gut(t)man(n) (originally Erika Maria; the family name was spelt in every variant on official records). Erica was born in Vienna in 1921. She was fortunate in being able to leave Vienna on a *Kindertransport* to London, travelling from 10 to 12 January 1939 with a small suitcase and ten shillings (sterling), but without the files of documents that Austrian compensation authorities would require later in her life.³ My mother had lived at the same London address since my birth in 1953. There must have been some aged former refugees who had retired, as my mother had from the surgery address where my father had established his practice in 1941, and which my parents then ran for over fifty years, or who had moved to care homes. So I called one afternoon at the office of the Nationalfonds in Vienna to inquire about my mother not receiving the forms. A visit from someone from abroad with limited time in Vienna on behalf of an aged and ailing victim of persecution was an irritating intrusion. I would not have needed to call on behalf of my mother had the Nationalfonds been proactive and kept in touch with its aging charges. As a result of my visit to the Nationalfonds in Vienna, my mother was duly reinstated – but the staff made it clear that, in their eyes, my aged mother was at fault. Given that my mother had retired from dentistry due to macular degeneration, the Nationalfonds could have given some thought to whether aging recipients could actually read and fill out their forms.

I obtained claims forms from the Nationalfonds on behalf of my mother, and subsequently from the GSF for my mother, father, and maternal grandfather, after my Israeli relative Benjamin Doron – whose grandparents Dr. Caecilia Lilienthal, born Rosenthal, and Dr. Josef Lilienthal perished in the *Shoah*, leaving behind considerable restitution issues concerning looted art which ran to the third generation – spoke optimistically about the GSF scheme.⁴ However, it is questionable to what extent the GSF has been a proactive organisation, keen to reach out to *all* potential claimants. The difficulty faced by the GSF has been that no systematic effort was ever made to trace all those who had escaped Nazi Austria, most of whom lost their Austrian citizenship in 1938 but which was not restored after the war. Here was an opportunity not just to document and provide compensation but for the GSF to estab-

³ Erika Gutmann appears in the IKG archival listing for the *Kindertransport* on 10-12 January 1939. My thanks to the IKG archives for this listing.

⁴ The GSF forms were dated August 2002 hml/mars.sys/se Hannah Lessing to author.

lish positive relations with an Austrian diaspora of former refugees and their families, many still with cultural links to Austria. Commendable efforts have been made in Austria with the compilation of a memorial list of all those killed in the Holocaust, but even here significant categories of those persecuted have been overlooked. For example, I am compiling a record of all the Austrian victims of coerced medical experiments – a group being compensated in Germany since 1951, compensated again under the forced labour scheme from 1998 to 2004, but this was not a victim category that Austria has ever recognised adequately, although plenty of Austrian physicians were involved in subjecting people to disabling if not deadly experiments. One lesson from any fixed-sum compensation scheme is that such a scheme is only viable if the numbers of potential claimants are reliably researched in advance. The GSF should have undertaken due diligence in terms of ascertaining all survivors and descendants to provide an evidence-base for the potential number of applicants in order to be able to deliver whatever scaled-down percentage was intended. Given that two schemes were involved, namely the personal payments conditional on waivers (delivered through the Nationalfonds but with implications for the GSF), and applications for losses of various types, the GSF additionally needed to reach out to later generations, not least for those survivors who were frail. Its failure to deliver documents to my mother indicates that its approach was too impersonal: with macular degeneration, my mother could never have read about the second payment, and how should anyone younger know about them if they were not actively involved in these historical matters? Not surprisingly, many eligible persons never knew about the scheme, and never applied. One wonders also how many fell by the wayside (as my mother nearly did) between the successive Nationalfonds personal payments.

It certainly felt odd as a historian being drawn into these proceedings, albeit at first only to intercede on behalf of an aged parent. The number of aging former Austrians is dwindling, but no-one thought of asking about my mother's well-being during the whole process (in fact her health was rapidly deteriorating). Nor was there any encouragement to provide names of other eligible persons: the "snowball" method of contact was not employed. Thus, the opportunity of cultivating links to an extended network of survivors composing a wider Austrian diaspora was one that the GSF should have taken with proactive commitment. Given the subsequent global dispersal of the forced migrants, notification to all those eligible for compensation was clearly going to require a major effort. The GSF perhaps received more applications than expected, but far fewer than should have been received following a sincere effort to embrace all entitled survivors and their descendants. This shows that the initial estimates and calculations were flawed – a serious fault that affected the proportional scaling-down of the overall sum allocated.

In the end, my mother was to be awarded two personal payments due to her and a final payment due to the GSF's procedural delay because of its obdurate position on US class actions: She signed the form for the second personal payment amidst much distress shortly before she died on 7 November 2002 (her doctor providing the all-important "certificate of life" while my mother was close to death). Otherwise, she received nothing from Austria, apart from finally becoming an Austrian citizen in 1975 (although born in Vienna she did not hold Austrian citizenship until then). The personal payments to my mother demonstrated poor communications with elderly survivors. The compensation was not a gesture given freely, but came at a cost. The second payment was conditional on a waiver that was stretched to multiple ransacked households and persecuted persons. A situation arose that multiple households – namely my father's and that of my mother's parents – were deemed somehow

‘inherited’ by my mother, even though my father’s was entirely disconnected from her’s at the time. Here, the GSF secured a bargain: two (one covering maternal grandparents and my mother, and the other my father) for the price of one.

Filling out Forms

When it came to compensation for the loss of property, the banal situation arose that I – as a post-war baby – assumed the task of filling out forms for my mother, for my father (who was born in Czernowitz in 1906, and was a resident of Vienna from 1914 until his flight in mid-October 1938), and for my maternal grandfather (who was born in 1888, and was a resident of Vienna since 1919). I did so in 2003, 65 years after the *Anschluss*. Many, – and possibly most, survivors, did not receive compensation – or even a simple apology – in their lifetimes. The terror and violence of events like the November Pogrom or a night-time visit by the SA were not compensated: my maternal grandfather promptly left Vienna after the November Pogrom for Berlin, where he experienced the antisemitism on the streets as far less vicious than in Vienna. The GSF procedures focussed on ‘aryanised’, meaning stolen, possessions. Nor was there recognition of the fact that whatever restitution had been achieved in the past was usually due to successful representation by an Austrian lawyer, not least of all because the claimants were expatriates, and the local lawyers could opportunistically charge immense fees.⁵

Opa, actually Itic/Isidor and from 1940 the more Germanic Sidor Gutman (various spellings!), had used a front a company called Teutonia in order to sell his assets, giving him the means to survive, helped also by a Romanian passport with forged stamps and Berliners willing to provide shelter. After 1945, he managed to secure only a partial restitution for what he had owned in Austria or what was thereafter located in a divided Berlin. He had survived imprisonment at the Alexanderplatz police precinct and then by the Gestapo in Moabit from 11 August until mid-October 1942 – he gave his winter-coat to a cell mate (Ernst Shampanier, later Ernest Mitchell), which helped him survive the freezing cattle truck to Riga to where the Jews in the cell were deported.⁶

My father’s papers include receipts for all sorts of costs involved in forced migration such as import of dental equipment, and for post-war restitution involving a high lawyer’s fee in Austria. None were allowable when I inquired with the GSF for restitution. So if the GSF was not compensating murder and trauma, it was also not compensating the costs of forced migration, nor the flaws in post-1945 restitution. My parents remained ever grateful to the UK guarantors for their life-saving generosity, in my mother’s case the philanthropic Margaret Hill and A.V. Hill (a Nobel laureate and co-founder of the Academic Assistance Council for persecuted academics), and in my father’s case to Marjorie Raphael, from a family of well-connected Anglo-Jewish philanthropists.⁷

5 The correspondence between Emmerich Weindling and John Blair (also known as Hans Blau) on property restitution and the high lawyer’s costs is in my possession. I deposited the bulk of the Blair/Blau papers with the Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW).

6 Landesarchiv Berlin, Reg. Nr. 5778, Isidor Gutmann prison file. His passport in part with forged visas, as well as the passport on which my mother travelled from Vienna is among my family papers. Ernest Mitchell, personal communication to author.

7 Paul Weindling, *From Refugee Assistance to Freedom of Learning. The Strategic Vision of A.V. Hill*, in: Shula Marks/Paul Weindling/Laura Wintour (ed.), *In Defence of Learning. The Plight, Persecution, and Placement of Academic Refugees, 1933–1980s*, Oxford 2011, 59–76.

Persecution causes stress, and damages overall health – I have found that so many of the refugees' lives were cut short by heart attacks when they were just in their forties, fifties, and early sixties. The payments allowed by the GSF for severe invalidity came too late for my mother; a psycho-geriatrician raised the issue of how her experiences of persecution could be contributing to her deteriorating mental state, and she died physically and psychologically severely incapacitated. It was in the few months after her death that I had to prepare the GSF application, filling out property details in multiple – I think six – copies. The GSF focussed not so much on the costs of persecution but to a large extent on property expropriation – this could be seen as an effort to put a nation's property registers in order against future claims, and the alchemy of scaling down meant this has been at a bargain price.

My mother had a poor track record of obtaining any kind of restorative justice from post-war Austria, where she returned frequently: she tried unsuccessfully to pursue claims for her interrupted education and consequent access to a pension with the Hilfsfonds for politically persecuted expatriates in 1966.⁸ She re-applied for a pension in 1987 (one can understand how, aged 66, it would have been pleasant to retire rather than to have to go on working as she did until 1998), but again her application to the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt, the Austrian Pension Fund to pay in for the missing years on a concessionary basis was rejected. The Pensionsversicherungsanstalt maintained that she had left school voluntarily (of course – Jewish children all left school 'voluntarily' after March 1938) and that she should then have paid social security contributions – despite the *Anschluss* and a failed attempt to leave Vienna that ended in a traumatic period in the summer of 1938 in a vermin-infested prison on the Romanian border.⁹ The verdict of the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt did not take into account the fact that my mother, on arriving in the UK, determinedly completed her schooling in an unfamiliar language and, despite war and childbirth, completed her university degree thereafter. The authorities argued that, because she had left school 'voluntarily' and because she should have paid social security after the *Anschluss*, she owed money to the Austrian authorities, not the other way around, and that she was at fault for not having emigrated with full documentation on the schools which kicked her out, even though the *Kindertransport* strictly limited the size of luggage. My mother was in fact expelled for being Jewish from two schools, first the Mittelschule Wien 19 in the Gymnasiumstrasse and then her loathed convent Notre Dame de Sion in the Burggasse, where the other girls complained about having to sit near a Jew. She came to the UK with the intention of completing her education and studying – which she did at University College London, qualifying as a dental surgeon. But no, the pensions authorities and, on appeal, a judicial tribunal both steadfastly insisted that she had left school voluntarily.

The issue of pension rights is unjust on a general level, because Austrian pension funds benefitted massively from the contributions of Austria's murdered Jews. The 64,000 Austrians who were murdered in the Holocaust¹⁰ represented an enormous saving for Austrian post-war social security systems as many of the insured persons had paid their contributions but never lived to draw their pensions. Similarly, there was a considerable saving on medical costs for the elderly and Jewish patients mur-

8 Erica Weindling papers (with author): Fonds zur Hilfeleistung an politisch Verfolgte, die ihren Wohnsitz und ständigen Aufenthalt im Ausland haben, Antrag No. S 30.138/3, Entscheidung 8. November 1967, and associated correspondence regarding the rejection of the claim for interrupted education.

9 Pensionsversicherungsanstalt, Zeichen Va I/Ri/Fu VSNR: 3468 29 07 21. Begünstigung gemäss §500 ff ASVG.

10 The number is compiled by the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW), the Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance in association with Yad Vashem.

dered in the Nazi ‘euthanasia’ programme. The Pensionsversicherungsanstalt complained that my mother did not pay her social security contributions – of course she should have, while having to avoid *Reibparteien* (when Jews in Vienna were forced to scrub the streets while being taunted and abused by their neighbours after the *Anschluss*– after asking my mother on her arrival about conditions in Vienna, her guarantor the Nobel laureate A.V. Hill reflected that the persecution was really far worse than he had thought) or previously held in prison on her earlier failed attempt to leave.¹¹ She nevertheless went regularly to pay local taxes on behalf of her father, thereby putting herself in some danger. The question arises whether the sum allocated to the GSF by the Austrian government amounted to less than the savings that the Holocaust represented in terms of unpaid pensions and unpaid benefits to the murdered. The only claim permitted by the GSF was for private insurance policies.

The GSF received 20,702 applications by the time the scheme closed on 28 May 2003, each application submitted on average on behalf of three persons (often murdered parents or grandparents) – making the original claim I prepared for my mother, father, and grandfather typical, although an aunt who committed suicide after the war was later added. Overall, claims for losses for 52,236 victims were submitted, and for each person there were multiple losses.¹² However, this represents only about a quarter of the approximately 200,000 persecuted Austrian Jews or people persecuted under the Nuremberg Laws as Jews, let alone the other politically and racially persecuted persons. Two matters arise. First, and most importantly, the overall sum of 24 million dollars funding the GSF received is woefully inadequate. The negotiators on the part of the USA should never have agreed to such an inadequately funded scheme, exacerbated by Austria’s conditional insistence on the cessation of US class actions – resulting in the GSF holding up of payments to aging claimants due to “the absence of legal closure” with class actions running in the USA.¹³ The US negotiator Stuart Eizenstat admitted that the GSF scheme was rushed, ill-conceived, and chronically under-financed.¹⁴ The GSF dealt with claims for (in its estimation) 1.4 billion Dollars, so that the scaling-down represents a bargain in terms of legitimating criminally obtained assets: as an asset-laundering exercise, the GSF represents an excellent deal for Austria. So excellent, in fact, that the GSF’s efforts to correct glitches that arose in the course of its operations should have been met by a less aggressively legalistic response.

Second, it should have been relatively straightforward to deliver on 20,702 claims. My own research on the victims of Nazi medical experiments – carried out on a shoestring with a postdoc and two PhD students – has reconstructed, in considerable detail, the life histories of some 28,000 victims of Nazi-coerced research. The GSF had far greater resources and privileged access to records. Its administrative resources mean that it could have helpfully worked with applicants, rather than taking an adversarial position on applications.

The GSF has never attempted to assess what its delivery was like for its individual claimants – by contrast to the German Foundation Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft/Remembrance, Responsibility and Future, which bravely commissioned a

11 Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Weindling, Erica (Oral history) (sound) Made by: Wood, Conrad (recorder) 1996-04-14, 16619.

12 <https://entschaedigungsfonds.org/statistics.html> (4 June 2016).

13 GSF to the author, 15 October 2004. Michael Newman, The General Settlement Fund. Waiting for an End to Litigation, in: AJR [Association of Jewish Refugees] Journal (June 2005).

14 Stuart E. Eizenstat, Imperfect Justice. Looted Assets, Slave Labor, and the Unfinished Business of World War II, New York 2003, 302-305.

team of independent historians to assess its delivery on a major scheme to compensate forced labour and “other personal injuries”.¹⁵ Although they differ in what was being compensated, both the GSF and the German foundation delivered compensation against waivers to aged claimants. The Trustees of the Nationalfonds lack a historian. Even the Advisory Commission includes no historian with relevant expertise. International historical expertise on the complex of issues – important in securing impartiality – is wholly lacking. That lawyers predominate is indicative of the priorities set.

The oral historian Nicole Immler, who formerly worked for the GSF, has assessed some experiences of GSF claimants. She suggests a “familial trope” with children and grandchildren having exaggerated expectations of loss.¹⁶ This does not convey my family’s situation: despite my mother irresponsibly emigrating without documents on her lack of schooling, my grandfather certainly clung onto his poorly-forged identity papers and various other documents, illegally in Berlin with a more oppositional population until the war’s end, which in his view was safer than Vienna with its enthusiastic Nazis. After the war, he drew up a list of assets which he felt should be restituted in Austria.¹⁷ Regarding the GSF, the expectations of my family were therefore realistic: here was a chance to recognise itemised losses, and receive some nominal acknowledgement. I naively expected that the amount awarded after scaling down would actually be paid out, and that the GSF would prioritise delivery on its awards rather than be legalistically obstructive. Where I agree with Immler is the sheer difficulty of extracting from the GSF information that they clearly hold or readily had access to as a basis for their decisions. What has also been dispiriting is the condescending and indeed wearied view displayed towards applicants. The legalistically hamstrung GSF has not been prepared to stand up against post-war judicial decisions regarding property restitution and other lost claims, and has instead effectively legitimated wartime and immediate post-war losses by accepting their legitimacy. I wonder how thorough the scrutiny of foreign representatives was. The UK-based Chairman Sir Franklin Berman has acknowledged the structural injustice of the whole operation.¹⁸ With the head of the whole operation taking such a pessimistic view of the overall situation, the performance of the GSF in dealing with individual claimants was going to require dedication to deliver the best possible outcomes. Immler describes a situation of frustration shared by interviewees. An agency designed to secure reconciliation appears to have systematically aggravated a significant proportion of the group for whom it was intended to achieve a comprehensive resolution for losses under National Socialism. Here is an agency falling far short

15 Constantin Goschler (ed.), *Die Entschädigung von NS-Zwangsarbeit am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2012, 4 volumes. I assessed the “other personal injuries” component in Paul Weindling, *Sonstige Personenschäden. Die Entschädigungspraxis der Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”*, in: Goschler (ed.), *Entschädigung*, Volume 2, 197-225.

16 Nicole Immler, *Individual Desire or Social Duty? The Role of Testimony in a Restitution Procedure. An Inquiry into Social Practice*, in: Nanci Adler/Selma Leydesdorff (ed.), *Tapestry of Memory. Evidence and Testimony in Life Story Narratives*, New Brunswick 2013, 219-236; Nicole Immler, “The history, the papers, let me see it!”. *Compensation Processes. The Second Generation between Archive Truth and Family Speculations*, in: Marie Louise Seeberg/Irene Levin/Claudia Lenz (ed.), *Holocaust as Active Memory. The Past in the Present*, Aldershot 2013, 113-137; Nicole Immler, *Compensation Practices and the Dynamics of Memory. A Trans-Generational Approach*, in: Anja Mihr (ed.), *Transitional Justice. Between Criminal Justice, Atonement and Democracy (=SIM Special, 37)*, Utrecht 2012, 154-183.

17 Isidor Gutmann papers (with author). These cover his post-war claims and his war-time identity papers with forged visas etc.

18 For example in <http://www.timesofisrael.com/austria-can-prepare-to-close-its-fund-for-victims-of-the-nazis/> (22 October 2016).

of its statutory aims of “comprehensive resolution” as a “moral responsibility”.¹⁹ Had the GSF been administered in a less adversarial legalistic manner, and had it been able to facilitate in its ethos, the sense of renewed injustice arising from the structural deficiencies could have been avoided.

I had to somehow translate the experiences of my family into the categories of the GSF’s forms. The forms are written in a strange language that is certainly not English but a legalistic mishmash of English with Latin expressions such as “in rem”, with English words placed in a Germanic sentence structure. The GSF’s system was never intelligibly explained: guidance on claimable items was lacking (this would have saved both myself and the GSF much time, albeit raising the question why an agency designed to comprehensively compensate losses became fixated on a fixed menu), and its communications had a legalistic, obfuscating tone. How does one decide between a “claims-based” and an “equity-based process”? A single, clearly explained system, without these two banal categories, promptly delivered, would have been far better. Nor were “heirs” provided with adequate guidance, as the forms were designed the victim of persecution. Consequently, I misunderstood the system in submitting one claim (six copies with six sets of documents per claim) for each family member who suffered loss and persecution (those being my mother, father, and paternal grandfather) and on the forms providing details of heirs, rather than submitting forms for each heir. This requirement for multiple forms from heirs for each person suffering loss was never clearly explained. That would have meant my filling out not eighteen forms – each with supporting documents, but a set for at least each of my two brothers, making fifty-four forms with documents. There needed to be clear guidelines for heirs, as opposed to direct victims. There certainly should have been better guidance for what one might have claimed in terms of income, residence, and confiscated investments. Austrian embassies should have operated a properly advertised claims advice surgery, and guidance notes would certainly have helped. Finally, there was a complete absence of being able to claim for non-material items such as professional memberships (in my father’s case the Wiener Ärztekammer, the Viennese Medical Association, who informed him that his membership lapsed due to non-payment of subscriptions during the war) and loss of Austrian nationality, matters on which my father set greater store than anything material.

Meeting the Deadline

The forms were challenging in terms of the documentation required. I was working on the forms at the time of my mother’s death and its administrative aftermath, so that I came close to the deadline for submission is understandable. In order to document the confiscation of my father’s assets, I wrote to the Magistratsabteilung 61, the Municipal Office for Citizenship and Matters of Marital Status, which had dealt with the restitution of citizenship to my father on 30 October 1975, giving the precise reference to my father’s file.²⁰ The demeaning conduct of officials on this occasion (particularly in their comments on my mother’s professional qualifications from University College London) had distressed my father.²¹ I was surprised to be contacted by the Austrian Embassy on 23 December 2002 (reference SB: VA Grog-

¹⁹ <https://entschaedigungsfonds.org/home.html> (23 October 2016).

²⁰ Letter of 16 October 2002 to Magistratsabteilung 61, citing reference number MA 61/IV-W37/74. The letter stated the purpose of the preparation of a compensation application for the GSF.

²¹ My father died shortly afterwards on 12 November 1975 from a heart attack on the nearby Rooseveltplatz.

ger, in the name of the Consul General Stefan Bagura). The Embassy requested payment for release of a document from the Magistratsabteilung. This document described the Nazi ransacking of my father's apartment, and the theft of his mother's jewellery, of a gold watch, and of his car. I pointed out to the Embassy that the document was for a compensation claim to the GSF, but the Embassy insisted that I pay the fee for the document, clearly levied by the Magistratsabteilung (although the purpose was clear to them, too). It was not a matter that the Embassy wished to rectify. The irony was that the document outlined extensive looting of possessions. So much for the public assurance that Austrian offices were not to charge for providing documents for claims made to the GSF.²² Once again, one detects a discord between the generous-sounding public pronouncements of the Austrian state and the mean handling of individual cases.

Next came the filling out of forms. This was complicated – I worked from listings compiled by my grandfather of assets still to be restituted, and tried to find confirming documentation. Even though I am a historian with archival experience, finding documents was complicated. Of course there were property declarations, and I consulted a valuation register from the time.²³ If an academic found it hard, how could aged survivors or younger heirs abroad be expected to manage?

Then there had to be multiple copies. So, in filling out forms for my mother, father, and grandfather, this amounted to quite a job. I had to fill out responses to the same questions time and again, and for each form a set of photocopies of documents like the Nazi property declarations or inheritance had to be attached. The forms required personal details covering three generations (rather like the Nuremberg Laws): but the form did not allow for spouses dying (as did my maternal grandfather's first wife, from tuberculosis) or marriages breaking down (as did my father's with his first wife), explaining why it seemed so odd for my mother's personal payment to have covered losses from a household that had nothing to do with her. I scrupulously followed the legally established line of inheritance through the generations, as established by court rulings on my maternal grandfather's will (one of the documents submitted).

Why did the GSF want so many handwritten copies? Maybe having to fill out the same information multiple times was a special penalty for claiming. Did the Austrians not have photocopiers or scanners? Had internet and computers not reached Austria? To whom would these multiple copies go? Had I filled out forms for each claimant there would have been – given that I have two brothers – three times as many forms in the required multiples: so not the 18 forms submitted, but 54 application forms, each requiring a new set of documents. There simply was insufficient guidance. The culture of making applicants do supplementary work has deeply disturbing resonances if one thinks back to the procedures of the "Vienna model" at the time of persecution.

The result of this form-filling marathon was that I only finished the forms and attaching the documents on 27 May 2003, with one day to spare. Nevertheless, I could – and did – send the package to the GSF under their stated address at the Austrian Parliament. I placed my confidence (and a hefty amount in payment) in "Royal Mail Guaranteed Next Day Delivery". So off the package went, and I was still hopeful as to the outcome.

²² The document can now be viewed under: [https://gedenkbuch.univie.ac.at/index.php?eID=tx_cms_showpic&file=uploads%2Ftx_uniwiengedenkbuch%2F40727_Weindling_Emerich_Staatsbuergerschaftsantrag.jpg&md5=bc2fed475b283c4d347e5093defe79a89f52d05b¶meters\[0\]=Y_TowOnt9](https://gedenkbuch.univie.ac.at/index.php?eID=tx_cms_showpic&file=uploads%2Ftx_uniwiengedenkbuch%2F40727_Weindling_Emerich_Staatsbuergerschaftsantrag.jpg&md5=bc2fed475b283c4d347e5093defe79a89f52d05b¶meters[0]=Y_TowOnt9) (20 October 2016).

²³ J. Wolfgang Salzberg, Häuser-Kataster der Bundeshauptstadt Wien, Wien 1927–1930, various volumes.

I received no confirmation of receipt. “Papier ist geduldig” – “paper is patient” – was a phrase that mother would say to describe the Austrian bureaucracy. So, after several weeks and no acknowledgement, and since I was in Vienna anyway, I made an appointment at the GSF office. “Did you receive the forms?”, I asked. “Yes, we did”, said the polite young official, eager to be positive. I then asked how things stood. “Unfortunately, your claim is not valid”, he sheepishly admitted. Yes, the bulky package with all the forms was posted in time and yes, it reached the GSF, but it arrived two days too late. For the GSF, the date of arrival mattered, not the date of postage.

The official advised me to write a letter of appeal. I duly did so. Had I not called in person, it would have taken far longer to have established that the claim was deemed invalid. Fortunately, I could still track the document online (something that one can only do within a limited time-frame). I was able to establish that the package arrived at Schwechat Airport at 15:41 on 28 May (so it could have been delivered on time) but that the “guaranteed next day” package posted on 27 May then took two more days to make the journey from Schwechat to the Parliament, finally arriving on 30 May. How many other packages with GSF claims forms were similarly delayed?

I wrote a letter of appeal for reinstatement of the application. The GSF Director, Frau Magister Hannah Lessing, responded on 3 November 2003 to confirm that the application was received: but she ruled that my family’s application remained invalid. Frau Magister Lessing indicated that I was at fault as I could have delivered the applications to the London Embassy. Well, had the GSF contacted UK applicants to offer this arrangement, I would have. I had paid the London Embassy a fee for a document to be included in the application, so they too might have added me to a contact list to inform me of this option, but neither the Embassy nor the GSF ever followed up to inform me that I could deliver the forms there. The GSF was consistently poor in acknowledging correspondence and disseminating information about procedures that, if not followed, meant that an applicant was disqualified.

After sending documentation to prove again that the package was posted on time, a further year passed with no reply. In March 2004, I contacted the Board of Deputies of British Jews and then, on their advice, the Central Office for Holocaust Claims at the Association of Jewish Refugees in London to take up the matter of the “invalid” claim, and to press for its reinstatement.²⁴ The GSF reported that 241 forms arrived after the specified date, although it is not clear how many claims were posted on time but were delayed by the Austrian postal services or customs, and whether the figure includes applications eventually reinstated.²⁵ Judging by the sustained effort which I had to make to secure reinstatement of my family’s claims, I expect that hardly any were reinstated. However, this is where transparency – never a strength of the GSF – ended.

After nearly three years, on the recommendation of the UK Chair of the GSF, my family’s claim was finally reinstated as an “exceptional case” on 15 October 2004.²⁶ Clearly, one had to be tenacious to get anywhere.

In the meantime the GSF chose not to process all claims while class actions were in progress in the USA for property and labour claims. The GSF began a succession of missives to all applicants. First, the GSF blamed US class actions for delaying compensation claims processing; then that there were more applicants than expected (had the GSF and its progenitors exercised due diligence, these would have been ex-

²⁴ Michael Newman to the author, 17 March 2004.

²⁵ https://nationalfonds.org/files/content/documents/nf/10_nf_info_en.pdf, 113, (20 October 2016).

²⁶ Hannah Lessing to the author, 15 October 2004.

pected). The inconvenience of this would mean extra work and more delays, the implication being that claimants should show understanding for all the work they are causing for the hard-pressed GSF. Here, another Austrian phrase came to mind: “Seine Sorgen möcht’ ich haben” – I wish I had his worries.

Processing

The fixed-sum basis meant that the greater the number of applications, the greater the scaling-back of amounts. The GSF did not seek to use interest on its allocated funds for the benefit of claimants – as did the similarly over-stretched German Foundation Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft in 2004. Did the GSF ever seek additional funds for what was an evident shortfall revealed by the avalanche of claims concerning the under-estimated extent of ‘Aryanisation’ and other losses?

In the intervening period, I unexpectedly found a Vienna property declaration made by my aunt, Lydia Wittner:²⁷ she had fled Austria in 1939 and survived the Jassy pogrom of 29 June 1941. She committed suicide in Bogota after the war. At least there might be symbolic recognition for her: pleasingly, this additional document was accepted, and importantly contained a valuation of 18,000 Marks in July 1938 for a café which was part of the Hotel National in the Taborstraße: I naively thought that this valuation strengthened the claim for my grandfather’s loss of the associated hotel.

In January 2006, the GSF declared that the US class actions had ceased, and that the GSF would therefore process claims. However, I then again heard nothing. I visited the GSF to ask how matters were going. I asked about the form that I submitted on behalf of my mother. “No, we cannot tell you anything about that because of data protection.” “Why not?” I asked. “Because the form was issued to your brother”, replied the official. Why the forms for my mother were issued to my younger brother, and forms for my father and grandfather were issued to me, was an arbitrary piece of bureaucracy – what the GSF guidance should have stated clearly was that every family member needed to submit forms. “But I am my mother’s son”, I objected. “That makes no difference”, said the official, “we must observe data protection.” “But I compiled the claim and the forms are in my handwriting – multiple times”, I said. On looking at a photocopy I made before the initial mailing, my younger brother and I both signed all forms. The GSF appears arbitrarily to have ascribed forms to one or another family member – so acting divisively.²⁸ The official was unmoved – data protection was sacrosanct: it meant that a son could not ask about the claim that he had submitted on behalf of his deceased mother! The staff appeared jaded and weary – obviously they had heard claimants’ concerns about this or that banal procedure before, and probably also the astonishment that although a son or daughter had filled out a form for his/her deceased mother but was not deemed to be the official claimant. Really speaking, a claimant was an inconvenience, and certainly this one was under the misapprehension that signing all forms and sending them in might mean that he was a fit person to communicate with. I finally got the message: a visit by a claimant was unwelcome, having the effect “die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen”: to drag the matter out, as was infamously proposed as state policy regarding restitution

²⁷ Vermögensverzeichnis Nr 32590.

²⁸ I had informed the Nationalfonds that my younger brother lived at the same address as my ailing mother. The forms submitted to the GSF as heirs were jointly signed.

by a senior government minister in 1948.²⁹ However, resolution of the claims – or indeed understanding why they could not be sustained – could have been facilitated by a matter-of-fact discussion. The GSF's communications and procedures remained for the most part sporadic and often unintelligible.

Then there followed a few more years' silence. Finally, in February 2009 a decision was made on the claims – which was then sent to me, further underlining the nonsense of the data protection issue.

In my father's case, the claim for lost household property was rejected. The GSF stated that my mother had received a second personal payment from the Nationalfonds, thereby losing the right to any further claim on behalf of my father. As my mother was heir to my father (who had never received any such compensation), this invalidated any claim for the losses of my father from his household.

What puzzled me was that my mother was not married to my father until 1946: in March 1938, at age sixteen, she had lived with her parents, and had her own experience of Nazis ransacking their household. So here the GSF secured a bargain in that the advance payment cancelled a claim for a household visited separately by the SA, or some other marauding Nazi group, that my mother had nothing to do with. Clearly, marriage meant not the sharing of wealth but the sharing of loss. Upon leaving Austria, Sigmund Freud signed a declaration that he would highly recommend the Gestapo, and I would similarly commend the GSF for its astuteness in rolling together multiple claims, and saving the Austrian Republic further effort in the scaling-down procedures. It meant that I had wasted time and money (well, only the 8.50 Pounds levied by the London Embassy) in documenting an obviously extensive loss.

The claim for the loss of my grandfather's hotel business was rejected. The GSF stated that the Hotel National (with 220 rooms and 400 beds) at Taborstraße 18, built originally to rational design criteria for the World Exhibition in 1873, was worthless as a business in 1938; it alleged that the business had failed in 1936. In any case, the building had been restituted – but as a wreck, and the valuable hotel concession was lost. Paradoxically, the GSF recognised a value to the café – but it overlooked this loss, as my deceased aunt's property declaration specified the high amount originally paid in 1935 and again the valuation in July 1938 indicating the commercial value of the business.

Looking into the matter, I found that the *Jüdische Presse* throughout 1938 indicated that meetings and other functions were still being held at the Hotel National. So even if the business was struggling (I accept that), the hotel was still operating in some form at the time of the *Anschluß* and a small loss of rental income was recognised. The hotel became *deutsches Eigentum* (German property), subject to a forced purchase by the police, who wrecked much of the extensive building. When my grandfather attempted to have the building restituted after the war (made harder by the Soviet zonal administration also claiming the building), the *Bundespolizeidirektion* claimed 513,000 Schillings for its "care" of the building, while itself having profitably rented out the building for a period of eleven years. The *Finanzlandesdirektion* ruled in 1953 that the police acquisition – I believe it was the *Gestapo* – on 25 October 1939 was a *Rechtsgeschäft*, a legal transaction, rather than in any way coerced, and so not subject to restitution. The Kurator for the "Deutsches Reich (Polizeiverwaltung)" in 1953 defended its right to the hotel. Only on 28 July 1956 did the *Rückstellungskommission* finally rule against the Austrian state as successor to the Reich in

²⁹ Robert Knight, "Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen". Wortprotokolle der österreichischen Bundesregierung von 1945–52 über die Entschädigung der Juden, Frankfurt am Main 1988.

defending its possession, and restore ownership to my grandfather.³⁰ Opa wanted to restore the hotel and restaurant business, but – after his death in 1957 due to his weak heart after his perilous survival – his daughters lost a “monster court case” for the restoration of the hotel business in 1958.³¹ The GSF’s rejection of my family’s claim by ruling that the hotel was valueless legitimated a Nazi expropriation of a business that had possessed potential in post-war Austria.

Given that my family’s claims were late in being decided on, there were only a few weeks to lodge an appeal. Again, I had the temerity to challenge the GSF. The ruling of the GSF on 19 February 2009 on the initial application was that, yes, the hotel business still existed in March 1938 and, yes, Isidor Gutmann would have had a share of the income, but no compensation was payable as the value (of what was evidently a substantial asset) was “incalculable”. The GSF ignored the fact that the café business had been bought by my aunt at a considerable cost in 1935 and the valuation remained substantial in 1938, as the property declaration of my aunt showed. The decision was neither accurate, nor showed any spirit of sympathy in the reconciliation of claims at a low and symbolic amount. At this late stage – my family’s claims were clearly at the bottom of the heap, in having been reinstated at a late stage – the GSF did not want its final figures altered.

The GSF also dismissed the claim for my grandfather’s properties Birkenhof and Hubertushof at Bad Gleichenberg in Styria. These appear in Gestapo records as Jewish assets to be seized in 1939.³² My grandfather’s list of lost assets referred to a forced sale on unfair terms in December 1940. The GSF argued that the wartime ‘sale’ of the Bad Gleichenberg properties was legitimate. In 1952, Opa lost a court case for the return of these properties, but some illegality in the 1940 ‘sale’ was recognised in that he received an additional monetary amount, albeit far less than he had claimed. The GSF was effectively not compensating for lost assets but legitimating their expropriation. The GSF stated that it could not fix a value to know whether the few thousand additional Schillings received were a just amount. However, the valuation data does exist: it was not that the GSF could not value the lost asset, but it decided to endorse the expropriation. My letter of appeal of 7 April 2009 suggested splitting the difference between what my grandfather had claimed (80,000 Schillings) and the 25,000 Schillings received in 1952, but the GSF rejected the claim – administratively the easiest solution.

Another claim, for a villa at Hasenauerstraße 24 and 26 where my grandparents had lived, was rejected. When I asked for a sheet from the land registry to prove that my grandfather was not the owner, the GSF sent an illegible print out. I was in fact looking to see if the apparent sale was a transfer to his company, Teutonia. So much for transparency and verification, matters which also frustrated Immler’s interviewees. The GSF expected claimants to submit proof for a claim; but when it rejected claims, it never offered legible documentation to prove the justice of its decision. Indeed, as it constantly made clear, applicants had no rights under Austrian law, and the whole procedure was discretionary. When it so chooses, the GSF cites obligations under regulative laws: so the GSF can be discretionary or declare it acts under obligation as the occasion best suits it. I wrote in the 2009 appeal document: “that the expropriations were accompanied by terror and even items of low value were precious in terms of associations with close relatives is not recognised in this procedure.” I

30 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, M Abt 119 K5 VEAV – Geschädigter und Entzieher: Isidor Gutmann Sig 215: 2. Bezirk.

31 Family papers, newspaper cutting dated 22 May 1958.

32 DÖW, 19400/170.

therefore asked for transparency in terms of providing documentation. After all, I submitted documents in good faith from the family side, and it seemed reasonable to expect that the GSF should offer the equivalent. The GSF could, however, have done far more – it could have proactively contacted potential claimants, asking them if they had any documents as well as proactively providing them with documentation. This would have transformed an adversarial approach into one which was collaborative – surely more appropriate for achieving the deeper aim of a late reconciliation, seventy years after the traumatic events at issue.

Delivering Compensation

The GSF gave the option to collect signed waivers from all family members. The principle is that the GSF pays its scaled-down amounts once a waiver is signed giving up the right to further claims. This is what Constantin Goschler, the historian of compensation, has called “the unfair transaction” underlying the model of compensation based on scaled-back amounts – albeit writing about the payments for forced labour, but the GSF had similar procedures as a waiver-collecting agency.³³ This German compensation scheme was so overwhelmed with applications, it was unable to stretch compensation to damage to health; similarly, the GSF’s scaling down of valuations of properties (often of considerable value seventy years on) because of large numbers of claimants constituted a renewed injustice.

Why was the GSF placing the burden on its claimants? I was struck by historical resonances with a tragic past which informed the issues being compensated, when burden after burden was part of the system of expropriation. The GSF now expected its claimants to copy multiple forms, to provide documents, and to obtain the waivers from other family members: all this meant making claimants do tasks that could be construed as having prejudicial implications. I reflected on the fact that if the GSF expected waivers giving one hundred per cent immunity from further claims on an asset for which it offered only a token amount or even nothing (its refusals were hurtful), then it really should have contacted the persons for whom I had supplied contact details. I would make the decision for myself, submit claims and the appeal, and resign myself to signing the waiver, but now I was expected to be complicit in collecting these fundamentally unfair waivers from other family members, saving the GSF from a task that it might well have carried out given that the forms indicated current addresses. Instead, I sent in documents from my family detailing agreements over the inheritance from my grandfather Isidor Gutmann, indicating the legal succession of inheritance, and my family’s rights to the assets. The documentation was sent prior to the specified date of 31 December 2014, and yet was steadfastly brushed aside. According to a recent additional ‘law’, the GSF claims that it is now unable to discuss individual cases – so much for accountability to individual claimants. This means that efforts to resolve non-payment cannot be questioned.

The GSF’s procedures in 2009 hindered the claiming of awarded payments, as the GSF did not adhere to its own timescales in that it adjudicated on appeals only *after* it brought down a guillotine on claiming for co-heirs. Given that, in order to secure

³³ Constantin Goschler (ed.), *Vom asymmetrischen Tauschhandel zur humanitären Geste. Die moralische Ökonomie des Auszahlungsprogramms der Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”*, in: Constantin Goschler (ed.) in cooperation with José Brunner, Philipp Ther and Krzysztof Ruchniewicz: *Die Entschädigung von NS-Zwangsarbeit am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Volume 1: *Die Stiftung. Der Abschluss der Wiedergutmachung?* Göttingen 2012, 15-46.

any pay-out, the waiver requires one to renounce “all claims against the Republic of Austria and/or against Austrian companies arising out of or in connection with the National Socialist era or World War II”,³⁴ this all-encompassing waiver, which went beyond the assets in question, would have effectively nullified the appeal. The response to my appeal concerning the award of 19 February 2009 (which, due to the complexity of the issues, was only placed on 7 April 2009, but still within the specified timeframe) came on 31 July 2009. What the GSF should have informed me and my family about clearly was that there was only a relatively short time window from the receipt of the letter of 19 February until 24 May 2009 to include my elder brother (Alan) Michael as co-heir. In fact, the GSF waited until 19 May 2009 to even acknowledge the letter of appeal. It makes no sense to sign forms and the all-important waiver concerning the payment of the final award before the appeals process was completed, and indeed before a letter of award was issued! Should not the GSF have completed its procedures before 24 May 2009 to allow submission of the relevant documents by the time of the arbitrary deadline of 24 May 2009? By waiting for the appeals procedure to be completed in July 2009, members of my family lost payments that they might otherwise have received. How could I have been arranging payments in May 2009 prior to the ending of the appeals process? There has been a total obstructiveness: the GSF obdurately refuses to consider the documents sent in regarding the legal agreement reached with my cousin regarding compensation claims payments.³⁵

What the GSF believes I should have done would be the equivalent of a person whose case is being considered by a court of appeal asking to be locked up in prison before the final verdict on their case. It makes absolutely no sense. How could I sign a waiver for specific assets and request family members sign a waiver for a scaled down payment when the amount was still under review? Little effort was made to communicate the importance of this date of 24 May 2009. Waiting for the final adjudication meant that a substantial proportion of the amounts awarded could never be claimed in my family’s case, and this remains the case. This amounts to confiscation of an award made to rectify confiscation.³⁶

The GSF’s statutes state:

“Pursuant to the General Settlement Fund Law amendment (Federal Law Gazette I 9/2013), the following provision stipulated a time limit for collecting the payments: the entitled beneficiaries will be able to claim the amounts awarded within a period of five years after the service of the decision; this period will expire however no earlier than 31 December 2017.”

But having saved the GSF paperwork by including beneficiaries on a single form and also having provided details of an internal legal agreement within my family concerning compensation, the GSF steadfastly refuses to pay the scaled-down amounts in full. Once again, I am apparently at fault for not following procedures that are arbitrary and difficult to understand, especially when the appeals process and the deadline for recognition of heirs were out of step.

Viewed more generally, the Austrian state was laundering the nation’s assets to free them from the taint of having been owned by its former Jewish citizens and residents. Much of the documentation was done by claimants. Small payments were

³⁴ https://nationalfonds.org/files/content/documents/gsf/EF-G_NON-BINDING_translation.pdf (15 October 2016).

³⁵ This legal agreement between the US and UK branches of our family signed on 20 December 2000 regulated compensation payments for our grandfather.

³⁶ The final award letter came only on 19 March 2010.

made against really valuable assets. Or, as with the Hotel National business or the properties at Bad Gleichenberg, the GSF legitimated earlier expropriations. I appreciate the symbolic recognition of my mother's interrupted education, but here intercession with the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt might have been a better outcome, as the compensation was minuscule in proportion to the earlier rejected pension claims for her interrupted education concluding with her qualification as a dental surgeon: a pension (in her case by buying lost years at a concessionary rate) would have been far more valuable in supporting her retirement with extensive costs of care.

The standard letter from the Bundeskanzleramt, the Federal Chancellery, in the name of Barbara Prammer as chair of the Trustees, the Federal Minister of Finance, and the Chancellor, was hopeful on their part– it apologised for the suffering inflicted at the time and the lateness of the settlement. Well, my maternal grandparents, my aunt who committed suicide in Bogota after the war, and my parents were all deceased. It was not that the settlement was late, but the procedures were demanding, and often fundamentally unfair. Applicants were subjected to a protracted form of bureaucratic torment for over a decade to obtain the precisely calculated but trifling (or in GSF-speak 'symbolic') allocated amount. The GSF prioritised obtaining the waivers not just for specific assets but for the totality of loss, rather than establishing any sense of restorative justice to its Austrian diaspora.

In my family's case, the GSF has retained a substantial proportion of the overall amount allocated – effectively a renewed confiscation. The GSF refers to symbolic compensation: but what my family has experienced is symbolic confiscation. Of course, there is no comparison between the terror of the Nazi era and the administrative obstructiveness of the GSF. However, the GSF has been appalling in its delivery of the allocated compensation, failing fundamentally in its very rationale. Thus we arrive in the Kafkaesque realm in which the legalistic bureaucracy creates more injury than redress.

The GSF cites time and time again the aggregate amounts which it has disbursed – but what is important is delivery in terms of assessment and actual payment to individuals, and moreover the quality of its delivery. Exactly how much of the sums that were allocated but – because of its protracted and at times obtuse procedures – ultimately remains with the GSF, and which it steadfastly refuses to pay out, is unclear. The sole group acknowledged are persons who were awarded compensation but have died with no apparent heirs.

I am too young to have experienced the mass confiscations after the *Anschluss*, so here was my family's chance to experience "symbolically" the confiscation of the minuscule amounts awarded by the Austrian state. As a historian who consults compensation forms, the experience – from filling out the form to final payment (or more often non-payment) – is especially instructive in terms of procedure. The amounts themselves are low, and oddly all sorts of items (five in my case, before the massive scaling-down) came out at an arbitrary but similar amount, and in the end the claims-based, equity based procedures and an insurance policy when added up and scaled down and divided between family members amounted to slightly less than an individual 'gesture payment' to a direct victim.

Having had Frau Magister Lessing declare that the initial application was invalid, then experiencing the extended amount of time in delaying payment, then the bringing down of a guillotine to prevent full distribution before reaching a decision on appeal, and finally the refusal to consider legal agreements within my family, makes the GSF a minefield in which each step by a claimant results in renewed loss. This is hardly the compassionate and sympathetic administration promised at the outset.

The GSF arbitrarily decided not to ‘reopen’ any file after declaring closure. ‘Re-opening’ includes not considering the legal agreement with my cousin that I submitted on 5 April 2014 concerning compensation payments in an effort to resolve an evident logjam. Instead, the GSF simply will not pay out the full amount that it has calculated is due, and not a cent to my elder brother although he has an equal entitlement to his brothers Paul and Oliver, who both received proportional amounts but not the amount they should have had the legal agreements with our cousin been respected. So the achievement of the GSF is to give the post-war generation the chance to feel what it is like to experience expropriation by the Austrian state. One wonders overall how much has been awarded but never paid to recipients.³⁷ There is a mismatch between the statutory basis of the aims of the GSF, its public statements, and actual processing at an individual level. Image and practice do not match up.

One positive is that for those survivors of Nazi persecution who survived long enough (my mother included), the Nationalfonds made ‘gesture payments’ that were indeed appreciated. The GSF interpretation of the waiver was unfair in its coverage of multiple households and, if an elderly person retired or moved, the GSF lost touch, and there is the tragic situation of claimants dying without known heirs. But let’s be positive.

The GSF prioritised its waiver-collecting function, legitimating the acceptance of expropriations between 1938 and 1945 – restitution could take as much as eleven years after the war, as in the case of Taborstraße 18. As a historian dealing with compensation, it is disappointing to see such procedures, when the effort should have been directed towards delivering what was due within the initial terms on offer. The GSF should have been transparent in its calculations and proactive in its distribution, and altogether making the process less adversarial and more collaborative. These are symbolic amounts downscaled to a trivial level. Rather than giving later generations a sense of a state and society that wishes to make symbolic reparation, the GSF has achieved the reverse in withholding trivial amounts that it allocated for those who had moral qualms in carrying out administrative work in collecting waivers. Looking more widely, the roughly 20,700 claims submitted is far too low, even if representing the losses of some 60,000 persons. Here, the GSF reached out to only a third of the victims. Of course, some may have decided that filling out multiple forms and assembling heaps of documents was more trouble than it was worth, especially regarding the morally problematic aspects. I can certainly agree!

Inter-Generational Injustice

In order to be paid the share allocated, I had to obtain the “certificate of life”³⁸ and resign myself to signing the all-important waiver. I duly prepared my papers before visiting the Oxford police station on St Aldate’s. I found police officers who are familiar with certifying aged Austrians. Looking me up and down, the police officers

³⁷ I requested this information in February 2016 from the GSF secretariat, in a letter addressed to Frau Magister Lessing. In response, I received confirmation on the unpaid proportion of my family’s claim, and that the deadline for payments to family members was past the date of the final award. Frau Mag. Lessing and Catherine Friedmann reply to the author, 8 April 2016.

³⁸ <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/embassy/london/practical-advice/consular-services/life-certificate.html> (15 October 2016). The certificate is a standard Austrian requirement for pension recipients, and has meant that Austrian embassies also have regular visits from former refugees.

shook their heads: surely I was too young for one of these Austrian payments? Nevertheless, they graciously stamped the certificate.

That was on 30 March 2010, when my elder daughter, Silvia, observed me getting together a file of documents. What was it for, she asked. I explained that we had applied for compensation for some of what the family had once owned in Austria, that the assets had been valued, and that the family would receive a scaled-back amount of between roughly ten and 17 per cent of their worth: I did not mention the rejected items and arising complexities. “But that’s not fair, Daddy”, came the quick-witted remark. What the GSF achieved was not inter-generational reconciliation, but the passing on of a sense of injustice to the next generation.

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Quotation: Paul Weindling, "That's not fair, Daddy". On Being a Second and Third-Generation Applicant to the Austrian General Settlement Fund, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 3 (2016) 2, 83-102.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_CTT_Weindling/
CTT_Weindling02.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-2/2016-2_CTT_Weindling/CTT_Weindling02.pdf)

Coming to Terms

Copy Editor: Tim Corbett

Christina Winkler

“2,000 Jews Have Registered So Far” Historiography and the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don

Rostov-on-Don is known for being the site of the largest massacre during the Holocaust in contemporary Russia and witnessed the annihilation of Soviet Russia's third-largest pre-war Jewish community within only a few days. It is considered the Russian Babi Yar by some Russian historians. Yet, outside of Russia, the city's tragic past is hardly known. In August 1942, a massacre was committed here by *Sonderkommando 10a* of *Einsatzgruppe D*. The numbers of victims of the mass atrocity diverge in the literature, in some cases considerably. A conservative estimate is that 15,000–18,000 Jewish men, women, and children were murdered within only three days on the outskirts of Rostov, near the Zmievska colony. Some scholars speak of even higher victim numbers. Nevertheless, the atrocity has not received much scholarly attention. The events in Rostov are but one example of the escalation that Hitler's *Judenpolitik* had undergone between the beginning of 'Operation Barbarossa' on 22 June 1941 and the summer of 1942. It illustrates that it is vital to bring together all existing sources, including perpetrator documents, records of post-war trials, as well as Soviet files, because a one-sided focus on perpetrator documents in previous Western studies on Rostov does not allow for a full understanding of the scale and the course of events, as this article aims to demonstrate.

Russian regional archives such as the State Archive of Rostov Oblast, the Rostov Province, and the Centre for Recent History of Rostov Oblast hold files produced by the city's Soviet Extraordinary State Commissions, including eyewitness testimonies, which cannot be found elsewhere. In 1942, this Extraordinary State Commission for Discovering and Investigating Crimes Perpetrated by the German–Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices (Extraordinary Commission, Чрезвычайная Государственная Комиссия, or ChGK) was established. Around 32,000 public representatives gathered evidence from all over the occupied parts of the Soviet Union by interviewing witnesses whose testimonies were then used for reports on the damage caused in a liberated town or region. In addition, about seven million Soviet citizens collected and prepared documents for the ChGK. The overall material consists of about 54,000 witness statements and some 250,000 interrogation protocols. About four million reports on the damage caused by the Nazis were compiled, based on these testimonies, although only 27 reports were published in English and Russian between 1943 and 1945.¹ The ChGK documents stored in the State Archive of Rostov Oblast contain essential information regarding the course of events, and they are particularly important if, as in this case, perpetrator sources are hardly in evidence. Apart from *Einsatzgruppen* Report no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* (*Reports of the Occupied Eastern Territories*), no documentary evidence of the perpetrators is extant regarding Rostov. However, all stages of this particular mass atrocity were covered in accounts which were collected by the Soviet

¹ Marina A. Sorokina, *People and Procedures. Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR*, in: *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (2005) 4, 801.

Extraordinary Commission as well as by West German authorities from civilian observers, perpetrators, and their local collaborators.

It has proven difficult to determine the number of Jewish victims of the Zmievs-kaya Balka mass atrocity. From the author's point of view, this can mainly be explained by the deviating numbers we find in the Extraordinary Commission's report and the aforementioned Report no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*. While the latter does not provide us with any victim numbers, the figures stated in the Soviet Extraordinary Commission's reports range from 10,000² to 13,000,³ 15,000-18,000,⁴ and even 27,000⁵. The first two refer explicitly to Jewish victims, whereas the last speaks of "people" or "civilians", the common Soviet paraphrase used to disguise the victims' ethnicity. A statement as to the exact scale of the crime is thus hardly possible unless the final registration lists were found. Report no.16 speaks of a *Judenrat*, which had been established on 1 August 1942, and of about 2,000 Jews who had complied with the registration order when the report was written. However, it is unclear when exactly the original report of *Sonderkommando 10a* or one of its subunits was compiled, upon which Report no.16 is based. These initial reports went through several stages and respective editing before they were sent to Berlin. Generally speaking, the

"*Sonderkommandos* and *Einsatzkommandos* reported on their extermination activities to their respective *Einsatzgruppe* headquarters which sent the information to Berlin. There the RSHA [Reichssicherheitshauptamt] compiled concise reports in the name of the Chief of Sipo [Sicherheitspolizei] and the SD."⁶

More specifically, the initial reports were edited by the *Sonderkommando* leaders who drafted more extensive reports based on the various incoming initial reports. These more substantial documents were then sent to the *Einsatzgruppen* headquarters and edited once more by the chiefs of the *Einsatzgruppen* before being sent to the RSHA. There, they were eventually used for final reports that documented the operations of all four *Einsatzgruppen*.⁷ In other words, "the reports to this point were the result of several steps in a series in which a number of people – the men carrying out the operations, their leaders, various officials in the Kommandos, and those on the staff of the *Einsatzgruppen* headquarters – all came to bear on the content of the reports".⁸

The *Einsatzgruppen* reports were marked *Geheime Reichssache* and were therefore subject to the highest security level.⁹ Report no.16 is a clipped RSHA report compiled in Berlin and dated 14 August 1942, two days after the mass killings in Rostov had ended. Two aspects seem problematic when trying to determine whether the

2 Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Rostovskoj Oblasti (GARO), fond 3613, opis'1, delo 30, 'Akt no. 1231', list 10; in the trial against collaborators of Sonderkommando 10a conducted by Es'kov, Psarev, Skripkin, Veikh et al in Krasnodar in 1963, the number of victims of the mass execution named by the court was 10,000; see M. Andriasov, 'Palachi derzhat otvet', Molot (24 October 1963).

3 GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 2, 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 4ob.

4 GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 25, 'Akt', list 14. GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, 'Akt no. 1' list 1ob., 2.

5 GARO, fond 3613, opis'1, delo 30, 'Akt no. 1231', list 10.

6 Ytzhak Arad/Shmuel Krakowski/Shmuel Spector (ed.), *The Einsatzgruppen. Reports Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews in Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union July 1941–January 1943*, New York 1989, xiii; see also Raul Hilberg, *Die Quellen des Holocaust entschlüsseln und interpretieren*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, 66.

7 Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder. A Study of the Reports of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941–1943*, London 1992, 39.

8 Ibid.

9 Hilberg, *Die Quellen des Holocaust*, 71.

document could be interpreted as a reliable source regarding the victim numbers, as has been done by Aleksandr Kruglov, Andrej Angrick, and Dieter Pohl.¹⁰ First of all, Report no. 16 indicates that the registration process had not yet been finalised when the initial report was compiled. The relevant passage in the document reads as follows: “On 1 August 1942, a Jewish *Ältestenrat* was constituted by the *Sonderkommando* which is deployed in Rostov and 2000 Jews have been registered so far. Further necessary measures have been taken.”¹¹ Bearing in mind the aforementioned compilation process, this could not have been stated on 14 August 1942. We must therefore assume that the author of the initial report that was used as the basis for Report no. 16 described activities that took place before the annihilation of Rostov’s Jewish population and that a concluding document from *Sonderkommando 10a* about its extermination activities in Rostov was either never compiled, went missing, or was destroyed. The historian Ronald Headland points out that “[t]here was a time lapse between the events and their appearance in the reports”.¹² These lapses were small in the first reports, yet “greater distances, plus the ever-increasing amount of information sent to Berlin made even greater the time lapse between the events and the final reports”. Two or more weeks could have passed between an event and its reference in a report, Headland concludes.¹³

The *Einsatzgruppen* were instructed by Reichsführer SS Reinhard Heydrich to give continuous, detailed reports about their operations. This usually included exact information on executions and the number of people killed. The reports were at first cabled to Berlin. From late summer of 1941 however, the documents were sent to the Zentrale Nachrichtenübermittlungsstelle situated at the Reichssicherheitshauptamt by courier, therefore it is possible that the documents were either lost or destroyed.¹⁴ Andrej Angrick commented that the loss of documents marked *Geheime Reichssache* is “immense”.¹⁵ Another possibility, however, is that an initial report by *Sonderkommando 10a* that included information about the mass execution was never compiled, and could consequently not form part of Report no. 16, as suggested by Gert Robel.¹⁶ In this context, Roman Headland points to the discrepancy in the representation of the four *Einsatzgruppen* in the Operational Situation reports, particularly staggering for *Einsatzgruppe D*, which received the least representation according to his findings.¹⁷ This might be explained by the fact that the “Kommandos often filed separate reports directly to the RSHA, and these reports appeared frequently on their own, independently of other reports from their *Einsatzgruppe*”.¹⁸ Unfortunate-

10 Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943*, Hamburg 2003, 561–565; Aleksandr Kruglov, *O nekotorykh spornykh momentakh Kholokosta v Rostove-na-Donu* [On some controversial aspects of the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don], *Istoriya Kholokosta na Severnom Kavkaze i sud’by evreyskoi intelligentsii v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny, Materialy 7-i Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii „Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya“*, Moscow 2013, 47; Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht. Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944*, Munich 2009, 277.

11 *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, no. 16, BAL, R 58/698, 144 [Translation by the author].

12 Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 55.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Bert Hoppe/Hildrun Glass, *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, Volume 7, *Sowjetunion mit annektierten Gebieten I. Besetzte sowjetische Gebiete unter deutscher Militärverwaltung, Baltikum und Transnistrien*, Munich 2011, 89, 146; see also Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 40.

15 Andrej Angrick/Klaus-Michael Mallmann/Jürgen Matthäus/Martin Cüppers (ed.), *Deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in der UdSSR 1941–1945. Dokumente der Einsatzgruppen in der Sowjetunion*, Darmstadt 2013, 18.

16 Gert Robel, *Sowjetunion*, in: Wolfgang Benz, *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, Munich 1991, 499–500.

17 Headland, *Messages of Murder*, 94–95.

18 *Ibid.*

ly, so far no relevant report which refers to the mass atrocity in Rostov could be traced. Another aspect which might also be very important in terms of the informative value of Report no. 16 concerns the methods of reporting: on the *Kommando* level, *Einsatzgruppe D* produced less informative reports compared to the other *Einsatzgruppen*. Especially the information on killing activities were often imprecise regarding the dates of shootings. More importantly, in terms of the victim numbers, Roman Headland states that “relatively little can be learned about numbers for individual *Kommandos* of this *Einsatzgruppe*”.¹⁹

Secondly, the *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, which replaced the *Ereignismeldungen UdSSR* from 1 May 1942, were compiled on a weekly basis, unlike the preceding *Ereignismeldungen UdSSR* that appeared almost every day.²⁰ According to Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, the *Meldungen* were more general and hardly offered details about the annihilation of Jews.²¹ Wilhelm adds that reports from the *Einsatzgruppen* would not reach the Zentrale Nachrichtenübermittlungsstelle on a daily basis, as with the military intelligence corps, but within days. Furthermore, the radio stations that finally cabled the reports to Berlin had often first left them unhandled for a very long time.²² The difficult task for the editors of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt then was to put the incoming reports into chronological order, occasionally failing to do so. Given the fact that Report no. 16 from 14 August 1942 informs about the 2,000 Jews that had been registered “so far” – meaning when the original report was compiled in the first days of August – Headland’s suggestion is probably correct that there was some time-lag between the two documents. It is likely that Report no. 16 would have mentioned a mass execution of this scale, had it already taken place.

In summary, we can assume that Report no. 16 is not relevant when trying to determine the number of victims of the mass executions in Rostov on 11 and 12 August 1942. Even if the number is mentioned in the war crimes indictment against Kurt Trimborn et al and the testimony of a former member of *Sonderkommando 10a* draws this connection, we cannot assume that because 2,000 Jews had been registered, this was also the number of people who were executed.²³ We therefore need to depend on the Soviet documents when trying to determine the scale of the crime. Here, however, we are confronted with yet another problem: Due to the Soviet policy of concealing the victims’ ethnicity, the Extraordinary Commissions’ relevant reports often do not indicate whether the victims were Jewish. Some examples nevertheless confirm Karel Berkhoff’s and Kiril Feferman’s findings on occasional deviations of the ban on addressing the Jewishness of victims in reports by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission as well as Soviet media responses to the Holocaust. Feferman mentions several examples of the commission investigators even being asked to confirm that the Nazis’ victims were Jews and not representatives of other nations, as in a Smolensk investigation. More frequently, questions about the de-

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Arad/Krakowski/Spector, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, xv.

²¹ Helmut Krausnick/Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938–1942*, Stuttgart 1981, 336.

²² Ibid.

²³ USHMM, 14.101 M, B 162/1.263, 27, Indictment against H. Görz, F. Severin and K. Trimborn. In his testimony from 20 March 1967, Werner Spiegelberg mentions having been informed about Ereignismeldung no. 16 from 14 August 1942, according to which about 2,000 Jews had been executed in Rostov; see USHMM, 14.101 M, B 162/1.230, 3843; see also Werner Spiegelberg’s earlier testimony from 4 November 1964, USHMM, 14.101 M, B 162/1.224, 2300.

struction of the Jewish population were posed.²⁴ When trying to determine the number of victims we can therefore only refer to documents which clearly indicate that the civilians were indeed Jews. In the case of Rostov, two documents illustrate this quite well: An undated report entitled *Record. Atrocities of the German Fascist Cannibals in the City of Rostov-on-Don* contains information on the collection, deportation, and finally annihilation of 15,000–18,000 “peaceful citizens” of Rostov. The document lists the names of some of the persons who were among the victims:

“According to incomplete specifications, the German tormentors shot and poisoned 15,000–18,000 people. Among those who were shot are the department head of the Soviet hospital no. 2, lecturer KIRSHMAN, internist INGAL, jurist LUTSKII, deputy director of the Voroshilov factory BUNKOV and his wife, lecturer NOVIKOV, his seventy-year-old mother, his wife, and his eight-year-old son, medical doctor SHERSHEVSKAYA, nurse SIMONOVICH, wood turner PAVLOVSKAYA, and others.”²⁵

In the other document, entitled *Record No. 1*, which was produced only three days after the city’s liberation and is identical to the first regarding contents, we find the same list of names, augmented by the victims’ age and full name, but in this case the preceding passage reads as follows: “According to preliminary specifications, the number of Jews who were shot, poisoned, tortured to death, and annihilated in Rostov-on-Don between 23 July 1942 and 13 February 1943 adds up to 15,000–18,000 people.”²⁶ Throughout this file, we find the word ‘Jew’, whereas the first lacks any such information.

In conclusion, it is hardly possible to verify the exact number of Jews who lost their lives in the mass atrocity committed in the Zmievka ravine by members of *Sonderkommando 10a*. What we can conclude, however, based on inspections of the crime scene, the estimates of the number of Jewish inhabitants including refugee, in Rostov in July of 1942, and the eyewitness testimonies that served as the basis for ChGK reports, is that at least 15,000–18,000 Jews were murdered. Bearing in mind that their non-Jewish spouses were killed together with them, of the 27,000 overall victims calculated by the ChGK the majority were victims of the Holocaust. All in all, the author therefore agrees with Luck’s conclusion regarding the mass atrocity in Rostov: “If, in short, eyewitnesses report a vast killing of Jews at Rostov or anywhere else in occupied Russia, then there is no objective reason for assuming that it did not occur.”²⁷

24 Karel C. Berkhoff, Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population. The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941–45, in: *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10 (2009) 1, 61-105; Kiril Feferman, Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR. Documenting the Holocaust, in: *Journal of Genocide Research* 5 (2003), 4, 591.

25 GARO, fond 3613, opis’ 1, delo 25, list 14.

26 GARO, fond 3613, opis’ 1, delo 30, list 10b., 2.

27 David Luck, Use and Abuse of Holocaust Documents. Reitlinger and „How many?“, in: *Jewish Social Studies*, 41, (1979), 2, 105-106.

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Quotation: Christina Winkler, "2000 Jews Have Registered So Far". *Historiography and the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don*, in: *S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation* 3 (2016) 2, 103-108.

http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Essays/2016-2/2016-2_ESS_Winkler/ESS_Winkler02.pdf

Essay

Copy Editor: Tim Corbett

Am 10. Mai 1933 wurden in Berlin und anderen deutschen Städten hunderttausende Bücher ins Feuer geworfen. Es waren Werke von Autorinnen und Autoren, die aus politischen Gründen beziehungsweise da sie Jüdinnen und Juden waren, verfemt, verfolgt und ins Exil getrieben wurden.

Achtzig Jahre danach wird an zwei in unmittelbarer Nähe gelegenen, historisch konträren Orten an dieses schändliche Ereignis erinnert.

Am Denkmal Karl Luegers im Zentrum Wiens zeigt eine Intervention Dokumente zu den Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland und den österreichischen Reaktionen. Zwei öffentliche Vorträge kommentieren und vertiefen das Thema.

Nur fünfzig Meter entfernt, erinnert das heutige »KIP - Kunst im Prückel« im Souterrain des bekannten »Café Prückel« an einen wichtigen Ort des Exils. In den noch weitgehend original erhaltenen Räumen befand sich in den 1930er-Jahren das von Stella Kadmon gegründete Kabarett »Der liebe Augustin«. Es bot Emigrantinnen und Emigranten aus NS-Deutschland Zuflucht und behauptete sich auch in der Zeit des Austrofaschismus als Ort der Satire und des subtilen Widerstands: *In Wien - beim charmannten »Lieben Augustin«, wer denkt denn da noch an Berlin?* schrieb ein Besucher in das Gästebuch.

Wenig bekannte Materialien im Foyer, ein Vortrag und eine Lesung legen für einen Abend Erinnerungsspuren durch die historischen Räume.

Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland
Zum 80. Jahrestag
10. Mai 2013

wienbibliothek
im zethaus

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT
FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)

Wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen ...

Where they have burned books, they
will end in burning human beings ...

Heinrich Heine

Wenn Ihr glaubt, dass Ihr Gedanken umbringen könnt, habt Ihr nichts aus der Weltgeschichte gelernt. Genau das haben Tyrannen des Öfteren versucht, und die Ideen sind in all ihrer Allmacht entstanden, und sie haben sie der Zerstörung preisgegeben. Meine Bücher könnt Ihr verbrennen und die der besten Köpfe Europas, jedoch ist das darin enthaltene Gedankengut durch Millionen von Kanälen durchgesickert und es wird fortfahren weitere Köpfe zu beleben. Ich habe die Urheberrechte auf alle meine Bücher auf alle Zeiten den deutschen Soldaten übertragen, die im Krieg geblendet wurden, mit keinem anderen Gedanken als der Liebe und des Mitgefühls für das deutsche Volk. Ich bin eingedenk der bedrückenden Komplikationen, die euch zu dieser Intoleranz gebracht haben. Um so mehr bedaure ich die Ungerechtigkeit und Unklugheit, ungeborene Generationen mit dem Stigma eurer Taten zu belasten. Glaubst nicht, eure barbarischen Handlungen an den Juden seien hier unbekannt. ”

Offener Brief von Helen Keller an die Deutsche Studentenschaft,
abgedruckt in der *New York Times*, 10. Mai 1933, 10.

Am 10. Mai 1933 brannten in Berlin und in anderen deutschen Städten die Scheiterhaufen. An diesem Tag und in den folgenden Wochen wurden hunderttausende Bücher ins Feuer geworfen. Es waren die Werke von Autorinnen und Autoren, die aus politischen Gründen oder weil sie Juden waren, verfeimt, verfolgt und ins Exil getrieben wurden.

Achtzig Jahre danach wurde in Wien an zwei in unmittelbarer Nähe gelegenen, historisch konträren Orten an dieses schändliche Ereignis erinnert. Am Denkmal Karl Luegers im Zentrum Wiens zeigte eine Intervention Dokumente zu den Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland und den damaligen österreichischen Reaktionen. Österreich, seit März 1933 diktatorisch regiert und staatlicherseits den Emigrantinnen und Emigranten aus Deutschland gegenüber wenig freundlich gesinnt, wurde für fünf Jahre zu einem wichtigen Exilland. Private Initiativen und künstlerisch-intellektuelle Netzwerke, vor allem im Bereich Theater und Film, sicherten den Vertriebenen ein prekäres Überleben.

Quer über den Sockel des Denkmals wurde ein Transparent mit Bildern ([Link](#)) der damaligen Ereignisse, Dokumenten der Protestaktionen, Texten der verfeimten Literaten gelegt.





Zwei öffentliche Vorträge am Platz über die Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland und über den Exilort Wien 1933–1938 kommentierten und vertieften das Thema. Nur fünfzig Meter entfernt, erinnert das heutige *KiP – Kunst im Prückel* im Souterrain des bekannten *Café Prückel* aber auch an einen wichtigen Ort des Exils. In den noch weitgehend original erhaltenen Räumen befand sich in den 1930er-Jahren das von Stella Kadmon gegründete Kabarett *Der liebe Augustin*.

Es bot Emigrantinnen und Emigranten aus NS-Deutschland Zuflucht und behauptete sich auch in der Zeit des Austrofaschismus als Ort der Satire und des subtilen Widerstands: *In Wien – beim charmanten Lieben Augustin, wer denkt denn da noch an Berlin?* schrieb damals ein Besucher in das Gästebuch.

Wenig bekannte Materialien im Foyer zum Kabarett, ein Vortrag zur Geschichte des Kellerlokals und eine Lesung im Rahmen der Intervention legten für einen Abend Erinnerungsspuren durch die historischen Räume. ([Link](#))

In der folgenden Nacht blieb das Denkmal Karl Luegers im Dunkeln: Auf Initiative des VWI wurde die Festbeleuchtung des Monuments des antisemitischen Bürgermeisters der Stadt nicht eingeschaltet.

History has taught you nothing if you think you can kill ideas.
 Tyrants have tried to do that often before, and the ideas have risen up
 in their might and destroyed them.
 You can burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe,
 but the ideas in them have seeped through a
 million channels and will continue to quicken other minds.
 I gave all the royalties of my books for all time to the German soldiers blinded
 in the World War with no thought in my heart but love and compassion for the German people.
 I acknowledge the grievous complications that have led to your intolerance;
 all the more do I deplore the injustice and unwisdom of passing on
 to unborn generations the stigma of your deeds.
 Do not imagine that your barbarities to the Jews are unknown here.

Open letter from Helen Keller to German students, *New York Times*, 10 May 1933, 10.

On 10 May 1933, the bonfires burned in Berlin and in other German cities. On this day and in the following weeks, hundreds of thousands of books were thrown to the flames. They were the works of authors who were outlawed, persecuted, and driven into exile, either for political reasons or because they were Jews.

Bücher auf dem
Scheiterhaufen

Öffentliche Vereinsversammlung des sozialdemokratischen Wahlvereines Meidling

**Gegen die Kulturschande der
 Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland**

Montag, 19. Juni 1933, 1/2 8 Uhr abends, im Meidlinger Arbeiterheim
 Wien XII, Eichenstraße 50

Redner: **Dr. Karl Ziak**

Vorlesung aus verbotenen Büchern, verbotene Musik
 und verbotene Schallplatten.

Freitag, den 23. Juni, 1/2 8 Uhr abends, im Meidlinger Arbeiterheim
 Wien XII, Eichenstraße 50

Öffentliche Vereinsversammlung zum Gedenken

Galileo Galilei's

300 Jahre seit der von finsternen Mächten erprobten Widerrufung:
 „Und sie bewegt sich doch!“

Redner: **Dr. Edgar Ziesel**

Sozialdemokratischer Wahlverein Meidling.

Eighty years later, two events commemorated this shameful incident at two historically contrary sites located in close proximity to one another in the city of Vienna. At the memorial to Karl Lueger in the centre of Vienna, an intervention displayed documents pertaining to the book burnings in Germany and the reactions in Austria at the time. Austria, although it had been ruled dictatorially since March 1933 and was on the part of the state not well-disposed towards emigrants from Germany, nevertheless became an important exile country for the next five years. The exiles were able to make a precarious living through private initiatives or cultural and intellectual networks, especially in the realms of theatre and film.

A banner (Link) was spread across the plinth of the memorial displaying pictures of the incidents, documents of protest campaigns, and texts of the outlawed literati.



The topic was discussed and augmented by two public lectures which were held on the square, regarding the book burnings in Germany and Vienna as a place of exile from 1933 to 1938.



Only fifty metres away, *KiP – Kunst im Prückel* (Art in the Prückel), today located in the basement of the well-known *Café Prückel*, also commemorates an important site of exile. In these rooms, which are still largely preserved in their original form, the cabaret *Der liebe Augustin* (Beloved Augustin), founded by Stella Kadmon, took place in the 1930s.

It offered emigrants from Nazi Germany a place of refuge while also asserting itself as a site of satire and of subtle resistance during the period of Austrofascism. As a visitor wrote at the time in the guestbook: *In Vienna, at the charming Beloved Augustin, who still thinks of Berlin?*

Little-known materials pertaining to the cabaret were laid in the foyer, a lecture was held on the history of the basement venue, and a reading in the context of the intervention, all of which spread traces of memory through these historical rooms for one evening.

The following night, the memorial to Karl Lueger was left in the dark: An initiative of the VWI led to the illuminations of the monument to this antisemitic mayor of the city not being switched on.



EVENT

Der bayrische Schriftsteller und Satiriker Oskar Maria Graf veröffentlichte in der Arbeiter-Zeitung den auch international Aufsehen erregenden Protest Verbrennt mich!. Darin rief er die NS-Machthaber dazu auf, auch seine Bücher zu verbrennen. In ihrer scharfen Replik auf die Ereignisse in Berlin zitierte die Arbeiter-Zeitung auch jene Feuersprüche, die während der Bücherverbrennungen deklamiert wurden. Sie richteten sich u.a. gegen Erich Kästner, Heinrich Mann, Erich Maria Remarque und Sigmund Freud.

The Bavarian writer Oskar Maria Graf published his protest entitled Burn me! in the Arbeiter-Zeitung. This statement, which received even international attention, called upon the NS potentates to burn his books as well. In its fierce response to the events taking place in Berlin, the Arbeiter-Zeitung also quoted the fire slogans that were recited at the book burnings. These were directed against Erich Kästner, Heinrich Mann, Erich Maria Remarque and Sigmund Freud amongst others.

Die liberale Presse in Österreich, wie die Neue Freie Presse blieb in ihrer Kritik an den Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland offenbar aufgrund von wirtschaftlichen Interessen sehr zurückhaltend.

The Austrian liberal publications such as the Neue Freie Presse remained very reticent in their criticism of the book burnings in Germany – apparently for reasons of economic interest.



EVENT

Seite 4 Wien, Dienstag 11. März 1933 Die Reichspost, die wichtigste Organ der seit März 1933 in Österreich diktatorisch regierenden Christlichsozialen Partei erklärte sich mit den Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland weitgehend einverstanden. Nach dem Bürgerkrieg im Februar 1934 wurden auch in Österreich Arbeiterbüchereien gesäubert und 'schwarze Listen' angefertigt. The Reichspost, the most important publication of the Austrian dictatorial ruling party as of March 1933, the Christian Social Party, declared its general approval of the book burnings in Germany. After the civil war in February 1934, Austrian workers' libraries were also cleansed and 'black lists' were compiled.

EVENT

Wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen...

Programm

Lueger-Denkmal, 1010 Wien, Dr. Karl-Lueger-Platz

KiP – Kunst im Prückel, 1010 Wien, Biberstraße 2

10. Mai 2013

Lueger-Denkmal

18.30 Alfred Pfoser (Wienbibliothek) über die Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland und die Folgen in Österreich

19.00 Hilde Haider-Pregler (Universität Wien) über den Exilort Wien 1933–1938

KiP – Kunst im Prückel

20.00 Birgit Peter (Universität Wien) über den historischen Ort: die Kleinkunsthöhle *Der liebe Augustin*

20.30 Franz Schuh über Kultur und Brutalität mit Lesung aus zeitgenössischen Texten



Idee & Konzept: Béla Rásky/Werner Michael Schwarz

Gestaltung: Alexander Kubik

Programme

Lueger Memorial, 1010 Vienna, Dr. Karl-Lueger-Platz

KiP – Kunst im Prückel, 1010 Vienna, Biberstraße 2

10 May 2013

Lueger Memorial

18:30 Alfred Pfoser (Wienbibliothek) on the book burnings in Germany and the consequences in Austria

19:00 Hilde Haider-Pregler (University of Vienna) on Vienna as a place of exile in 1933–1938

KiP – Art in the Prückel

20:00 Birgit Peter (University of Vienna) on the historical site of the cabaret theatre *Der liebe Augustin*

20:30 Franz Schuh on culture and brutality with readings from contemporary texts

Idea & Conception: Béla Rásky/Werner Michael Schwarz

Design: Alexander Kubik

Besprechung der Veranstaltung im FALTER: https://www.falter.at/archiv/FALTER_201305151612320031/80-jahre-nachdem-die-bucher-brannten-stand-karl-lueger-im-dunkeln

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auch Menschen ..., in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation.
3 (2016) 2,109-119.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2016-2/2016-2_EVE_Rasky-Schwarz02/
Einladung_10Mai.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2016-2/2016-2_EVE_Rasky-Schwarz02/Einladung_10Mai.pdf)

Event

Deutsches Lektorat: Jana Starek
Übersetzung: Tim Corbett