

**S:I.M.O.N.**



**S**HOAH:  
**I**NTERVENTION.  
**M**ETHODS.  
DOCUMENTATION.

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Katherine Lebow

# Letter from Linz

## An Archive Story<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In 2015, I discovered a previously unknown letter from Simon Wiesenthal, sent to his wife Cyla upon learning she was alive in 1945, in the Wiesenthal archive in Vienna. This essay is an 'archive story' about this serendipitous discovery and my time spent in Wiesenthal's former office in Vienna's Salztorgasse, just before it was dissolved and the collection was moved to its new home at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute. Focusing on the materiality of the archive and its traces of a 'Polish' Wiesenthal, embedded in a network of Polish Jewish survivor-documentarians, it asks which biographical narratives were made visible or invisible by the old archive. Grappling with the nostalgia many historians feel for the materiality of traditional archives, moreover, it considers how the move to digitally based research might enable some forms of serendipity yet foreclose others.

A few months ago, I discovered, quite by accident, a previously unknown letter from Simon Wiesenthal that documents a crucial moment in his private history. In August 1945, Wiesenthal learned that his wife Cyla, who had survived the war on 'Aryan' papers in Poland and Germany, was alive. They had lost touch during the final years of the war and each had every reason to believe the other was dead.<sup>2</sup> The letter expresses an almost unimaginable relief. "My dearest Cylusienka!" the letter begins, "At last, a sign of life from you [...]."<sup>3</sup>

All archival 'finds' involve an element of serendipity, but this was a genuine fluke. I do not work on Wiesenthal, and I was in the archive by accident, having been allocated a workspace there during my fellowship at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI). I happened to be idly flipping through a binder that I found on a shelf behind my desk one day, which turned out to contain miscellaneous unfiled papers. This is where I found the letter.

This essay is less the story of the letter than an 'archive story' about my accidental encounter with this place, Wiesenthal's former offices and archive on Salztorgasse 6 in Vienna's first district. Several decades ago, historians began to question how archives, with their rules and procedures, their architecture and materiality, and indeed, their own histories, shape the production of historical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, this line of inquiry flourished just as paper archives began to be supplemented and/or supplanted by digital ones. For someone like me, this conjuncture has produced a peculiar ambivalence, a kind of critical nostalgia: awareness, on the one hand, of how traditional archives can prescribe or proscribe certain historical narratives; appreci-

1 I am grateful to Malgorzata Fidelis, Irina Gigova, Emily Greble, Lisa Leff, and Andrea Orzoff for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

2 The story of their reunion is told in Tom Segev, Simon Wiesenthal. The Life and Legends, New York 2010, 72-73.

3 Simon Wiesenthal Archive (SWA), Folder SW Linz 1945-1948-1950, unnumbered; Simon Wiesenthal to Cyla Wiesenthal, 27 March 1945 [All translations from Polish are the author's].

4 See Antoinette Burton (ed.), Archive Stories. Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History, Durham 2005.



ation, on the other, for the embodied and material qualities of traditional research in paper archives. The latter encompasses the peculiar rhythms and rituals of such research (filling out call slips in duplicate and waiting impatiently for the boxes of papers to arrive); its gatekeepers and facilitators (the legendary cloakroom ladies in Moscow, the archivists everywhere both helpful and unhelpful); its sensory elements (cold/heat/hunger, the omnipresent archival ‘dust’), and so on.<sup>5</sup> A large literature, meanwhile, has sprung up considering not only the benefits, but the trade-offs of the move to digital research. Could the temporal and procedural limits of physical archives not merely restrict what we know, but also enable certain types of thinking? What kinds of serendipity might occur in traditional archives that are different from the serendipity of search engines and hypertext?<sup>6</sup>

This critical-nostalgic stance informed my behaviour in the Wiesenthal archive. Dust is intoxicating; I could not resist dipping into the papers to which I suddenly had almost unlimited access. But as an outsider to the field of Austrian history, I felt like an interloper. I saw the archive’s defining narratives – those through which an archive categorises, includes, and/or excludes – with a beady eye. I formed my own counter-narratives. These other ‘stories’ reflected my own interests and knowledge, particularly, in Polish history and the cultural traditions of autobiography and testimony. What I saw around me were the traces, not only of Simon Wiesenthal the Austrian Nazi-hunter, but of Szymon Wiesenthal the Polish Jewish Holocaust documentarian. In telling my archive story, then, I will be challenging the archive’s story, asking why Szymon Wiesenthal is absent from its tale. I will also reconsider what physical archives – especially, perhaps, those established at moments of great rupture and discontinuity – may reveal that digital ones could hide, and vice-versa.

### Prelude: Honorary Citizen of Louisville, Kentucky

Salztorgasse 6 forms part of a massive, post-war building complex on the site of the former Hotel Metropole, which also served as Gestapo headquarters after the *Anschluss* in 1938. It wraps around a city block near Schwedenplatz, a busy transportation hub in Vienna’s first district. The concrete floors, scuffed steel fixtures, and mustard-coloured tiles in the entryway exude a kind of resolute mid-century ugliness.

Upstairs, though, the office was shabby but *gemütlich*. A small plaque on the front door identified the three-room-apartment-plus-kitchen as Dokumentationszentrum des B.J.V.N., the documentation centre of the Bund Jüdischer Verfolgter des Naziregime (Association of Jewish Victims of the Nazi Regime), founded in 1961. This was the successor organisation to the Jewish Historical Documentation Centre that Wiesenthal had founded as a Displaced Person in Linz in 1947. During the last years of his life, Wiesenthal oversaw the reorganisation of the centre into the Simon Wiesenthal Archive, documenting his life and work.

It would be hard to find an archive that had more material ‘place-ness’ than this one. Some described it as having an aura left behind by the great man after Wiesenthal’s death in 2005, and the offices must have looked much the same as when he worked there. Brown and beige predominated. There were stacks of old office-supply catalogues and a large collection of magnetised paper-clip dispensers, the

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester 2001.

<sup>6</sup> For a sampling, see Toni Weller (ed.), *History in the Digital Age*, London 2013.

detritus of a bygone work culture. There was even a fax machine, which remained perpetually powered on, alert but silent.

I felt a strong sense of *déjà-vu*, remembering visits to my grandfather's New York law offices in the 1980s, and this created an association for me between Wiesenthal and my grandfather – another scrappy Jewish immigrant who “made it”. This impression was heightened by the accolades to Wiesenthal and other tokens of esteem that covered the walls, many from the United States. The randomness of their arrangement was appealing: A certificate of honorary citizenship from Louisville, Kentucky, with its lick-and-stick ‘gold’ seal, was no less prominently displayed than a beautifully hand-lettered *Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* (Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy). A bronze bust of Louis Brandeis perched casually atop a filing cabinet.

However, whereas my grandfather had a large black-and-white photograph of Masada on his wall, here there was a grainy photograph of Mauthausen in the snow and a small, sepia-toned snapshot of a barracks identified as the Displaced Persons' Information Office. Men wearing large hats and cuffed trousers, 1940s-style, strode busily in the foreground; one of them could have been Wiesenthal. My grandfather had the good fortune not to be personally in the picture, as far as the Holocaust was concerned. Instead, he collected books about it.

The archive, I learned, was a transitional formation, soon to be dissolved. The papers were to be moved to the VWI's new office a few blocks away at Rabenstein; the old furniture would be donated or thrown away: Goodbye polyester curtains – hello wifi. More than most, then, this archive was a kind of way-station between past and future. In the meantime, I enjoyed the intimacy I felt while inhabiting its rooms. I ate Vietnamese takeaway on a dish I found in the kitchen, imprinted with the logo of *Hotel Salzburger Hof* in Bad Gastein. I imagined Wiesenthal pocketing it while on holiday one summer in a small, spontaneous act of restitution. I had the illusion that I knew Wiesenthal – recognising in him something of the forces that drove my grandfather: a powerful belief in justice; a deep faith in post-war liberalism; and a persistent need for esteem and acceptance.

### A Few Phrases from Elie Wiesel

Intensifying this sense of recognition was my discovery of just how ‘Polish’ the archive was.

First, I was struck by the prevalence of Polish names on the labels of file boxes. These were not the names of people but of places – or more precisely, communities: *Biłgoraj*, *Buczacz*, *Katowice*, *Lwów*, *Połczyn Zdrój*, *Radom*, *Szydłowiec*, *Tomaszowa*, *Warsaw*, and so on. There were three boxes for *Lwów*, Wiesenthal's hometown before the Second World War, and one for *Buczacz*, his birthplace. By contrast, I was surprised to see no boxes labelled Berlin or Vienna. It seems that even after decades in Austria, Wiesenthal's focus remained on the destruction of Jewish communities in the East, especially those in his native region of Galicia.

In the same room was Wiesenthal's large collection of Polish books. This could possibly be Vienna's largest collection of Polish-language literature on the Holocaust, including many titles published in small runs by independent and dissident presses. The selection reflected more than a professional preoccupation with the Holocaust, though, but embraced titles of interest to a typical member of the Polish intelligentsia: classics of world literature in Polish translation (Sholem Aleichem and

Solzhenitsyn); the historical journal *Zeszyty Historyczne* (1960s); the Parisian émigré review *Kultura* (late 1970s to early 1980s); the opposition-linked *Karta* magazine (late 1980s to early 1990s) – a readerly chronology of key transformations in Polish intellectual life through the collapse of Communism.

One of the most curious items dated from 1938, a radio-novel by a now largely forgotten left-wing author, Helena Boguszeńska, entitled *Angelica and Life*.<sup>7</sup> Even by the standards of 1930s Polish literature, this is a truly minor title. Mysteriously, a stamp identified the book as a discard from the Chicago Public Library. Had Wiesenthal found it on a library trolley (“Free – please take”) on one of his post-war visits to the States? Had he picked it up out of idle curiosity, brought it back to Vienna in his luggage, and then forgotten about it? Or had he been moved by an impulse to rescue this discarded fragment of 1930s Poland, of his youth, a time of seething ideological debates and radical literary experiments? If so, how had he understood his relationship to that past?

On another bookshelf were thirteen blue folders labelled *Poland*. One contained papers connected to an appeal for Polish-Jewish dialogue that Wiesenthal co-authored in 1983 with his friend and colleague Michał (Michel) Borwicz. Signed by three Jewish and three non-Jewish Polish intellectuals, the letter lays claim to a venerable language and tradition of Polish-Jewish patriotism. “Forty years ago,” it begins, “two flags were hoisted side by side on the roof of a building inside the embattled Warsaw ghetto. One was white and blue, and the other was white and red.” The letter mentions its Jewish signatories’ “keen sense of fidelity to the heritage of Polish Jewry”, describing them also as “Polish patriots”.<sup>8</sup>

Other documents in the file show Wiesenthal’s irritation at Jewish figures whom he saw as undermining the project of Polish-Jewish dialogue and rapprochement in the Solidarity era. Writing to a contact in New York, he commented in heavy but expressive English: “Thousand years Jewish history in Poland cannot end in a few phrases [condemning Poles as antisemites] from Elie Wiesel or Benjamin Meed”, a U.S.-based survivor activist, “who himself was saved in a Polish home”.<sup>9</sup>

I was not surprised by Wiesenthal’s intense interest in the Holocaust in Poland, his enduring ties to Polish culture, or his avowed sense of Polish identity. But the evidence surrounding me did make me wonder about how little of this was reflected in Wiesenthal’s public profile. In Tom Segev’s biography of Wiesenthal, for example, he writes that Wiesenthal’s “broad humanity was anchored in the story of his life. He always lived within more than one sphere of identity”. Wiesenthal’s self-proclaimed “keen sense of fidelity to the heritage of Polish Jewry” seems an apt illustration of this observation, and yet, when Segev lists Wiesenthal’s overlapping identities and affiliations, he never mentions Poland. Segev notes only that Wiesenthal identified as a

7 The introduction describes it as “a new experiment in the field of spoken literature, the first psychological novel written especially for radio”. Emilia Grocholska, *Przedmowa*, in: Helena Boguszeńska (ed.), *Anielcia i życie. Powieść radiowa [Angelica and Life. A Radio Novel]*, Warsaw 1938, i.

8 SWA, Polen (Główna komisja) – Polen (Moskau Konf.) (3) (Manifest zur Aussöhnung von Polen u. Juden). The appeal appeared in Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, and English in media outlets in Israel, the United States, and Poland. The signatories were Michel [Michał] Borwicz, Józef Lichten, Jan Karski, Jerzy Lerski, Jan Nowak, and Wiesenthal. On Borwicz, more later. Lichten was a representative of American Jewish organisations in Rome. Karski had served during the war as a courier and liaison with Jewish organisations in London, and had been one of the first to bring news of the Holocaust to the West. Lerski had also served as a courier, and before the war had spoken out against antisemitism as a leader of the Stronnictwo Demokratyczne [Democratic Party] in Lwów. Both had been honoured with the title of *Righteous among Nations* by Yad Vashem. Nowak (-Jeżorański), also a courier, had been among the first to report on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to the West.

9 SWA, Polen (Główna komisja) – Polen (Moskau Konf.) (3) (Manifest zur Aussöhnung von Polen u. Juden), Simon Wiesenthal to Jacob Katzman, 9 August 1983. Meed was a survivor activist in the United States.

Jew, but also with Austro-Hungarian tradition (“and chose to live in Austria, which he saw as his cultural and political homeland”), while maintaining close connections with Israel and the United States.<sup>10</sup>

In other sources, too, Wiesenthal is rarely – in fact, almost never – described as a Polish Jew, although he grew up in the Polish Second Republic; was a Polish citizen; went to school, married, and established a profession in Poland; and spoke Polish (along with Yiddish and German) his whole life.<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia, like many sources, identifies Wiesenthal as an “Austrian Nazi hunter and writer” and a “Jewish Austrian Holocaust survivor” and locates his birthplace, Buczacz, in the former Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy at the time of his birth in 1908 and in today’s Ukraine. This is perfectly accurate, but it misses the point that Wiesenthal lived only nine of his first thirty-six years in the Monarchy (and never lived in Ukraine). Wikipedia mentions that Buczacz “changed hands several times” at the end of the First World War and that Wiesenthal attended a *Gymnasium* where “classes were taught in Polish”, but the article’s first mention of Poland per se comes in passing with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.<sup>12</sup>

The story is similar with the former Wiesenthal archive’s website. The words “Poland” or “Polish” make their first appearance some twenty years into Wiesenthal’s biography, and then only in reference to the “Polish quota restrictions pertaining to Jews” that blocked Wiesenthal’s entry to university in Lwów.<sup>13</sup> Far from acknowledging Wiesenthal’s linguistic, educational, cultural, or emotional ties to Poland, the website mentions Poland only in the context of an antisemitism that itself sought to deny them.

The consistency with which such sources overlook the ‘Polish’ Wiesenthal is a loud silence. Wiesenthal was a citizen of the Polish Second Republic for most of his childhood and young adulthood. He was in his late thirties when he arrived in Austria in the last months of the war, on a death march to Mauthausen. During his first years in Austria, his German was still prone to grammar and spelling mistakes; the notes he jotted down for himself, he wrote in Polish.<sup>14</sup> Albert Einstein was never just an “American physicist”.<sup>15</sup> But Wiesenthal’s strictly ‘Austrian’ biography reflects a set of mental maps that cannot be found in any atlas. Drawing on a post-imperial and post-Holocaust imaginary, it insists, as one biographer puts it, that “the Jews of Buczacz had little affinity with Poland”, and that, while Wiesenthal may have felt at home in Poland, this was – in Segev’s words – “an illusion, and he should have known it”.<sup>16</sup>

10 Tom Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal. The life and Legends*, London 2010, 8.

11 An interesting exception is Witold Stankowski, *Szymon Wiesenthal. Biografia* [Simon Wiesenthal. A Biography], Warsaw 2009. Stankowski’s biography (available only in Polish) is the only one, as far as I know, that researchers Wiesenthal’s school days, for instance, drawing on Polish sources that others have neglected.

12 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon\\_Wiesenthal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Wiesenthal) (9 July 2016).

13 [http://www.simon-wiesenthal-archiv.at/01\\_wiesenthal/01\\_biographie/e01\\_childhoodnyouth.html](http://www.simon-wiesenthal-archiv.at/01_wiesenthal/01_biographie/e01_childhoodnyouth.html) (22 January, 2016).

14 Segev comments on Wiesenthal’s imperfect German, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 73; for an example of Wiesenthal’s notes-to-self in Polish from 1947, see *Yad Vashem – M.9 – Jewish Historical Documentation Centre, Linz* (Simon Wiesenthal Collection, hereafter *Yad Vashem, Wiesenthal Collection*), 799.

15 Wikipedia identifies Albert Einstein as a “German-born” physicist who later assumed American citizenship and lists each country he lived in, as well as his successive changes in citizenship, with dates. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_Einstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein) (9 July 2016).

16 Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 40. Segev expresses puzzlement that the Zionist Wiesenthal never seems to have considered *aliyah* (emigration to Palestine) before the Second World War. However, this probably tells us more about a certain kind of Israeli Zionism (in which being ‘at home’ in the diaspora is a contradiction in terms) than about its manifold variants in interwar Poland.

## I Really Don't Feel Like a Stranger in This Archive

In 1928, Salo Baron, the great Polish-Jewish-American historian, famously criticised what he called the “lachrymose” view of medieval and early-modern Jewish history, in which pre-emancipation Jewish experience in Europe was a litany of oppression and suffering. Baron called for a more nuanced, historicised, and in a sense normalised view of the Jewish past – insisting, moreover, that the prevailing view of modernity as an era of enlightenment and progress required re-evaluation. In particular, Baron took aim at the widespread assumption that the ‘emancipation’ of the Jews by centralising and/or absolutist European regimes of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was an unalloyed good for the Jews.<sup>17</sup>

After the Holocaust, Baron’s reservations about modernity seemed to have been tragically vindicated. And yet the dichotomy Baron identified between the lachrymose and essentially optimistic view of Jewish history did not fade. Instead, it was re-oriented from time to space. Reinforced by the Cold War division of Europe, Eastern Europe became the rhetorical repository of a lachrymose past, the landscape of eternal Jewish suffering. For many in the West, it became impossible to imagine that Eastern European Jews, before or after the Holocaust, could have experienced something like ‘normality,’ a life in which they felt a part of their larger societies, went about their own business, and, while experiencing antisemitism, were not defined by it. Like Jews in the West. Establishing the contours of this ‘normality’ has been the thrust of much recent historiography on Jewish life in interwar Poland.<sup>18</sup>

Wiesenthal was typical in many ways of young, *Gymnasium*-educated Polish Jews of his generation. Like him, they tended to use Polish and Yiddish interchangeably; their friends tended to be Jewish, although increasingly, not exclusively so; with their non-Jewish classmates, moreover, they shared a marked enthusiasm for Polish literature and culture and often a strong civic patriotism – even if attracted to one of the various forms of Jewish nationalism, as well. Galician Jews like Wiesenthal (those living in the former lands of the Austrian partition) were particularly known for their high levels of acculturation to the Polish language and commitment to a certain vision of Polish-Jewish symbiosis.<sup>19</sup> This vision was championed by, among others, the Lwów-based, Polish-language Zionist newspaper *Chwila*, which Wiesenthal would almost certainly have read, and with some of whose writers he associated.<sup>20</sup> *Chwila* aligned itself with broader liberal currents in Poland, advocating a ‘Polishness’ that was inclusive, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious.<sup>21</sup> A similar view animated the scholarship of the Galician Jewish school of historiography, including Wiesenthal’s *landslayt* (countryman) from Buczac, Emanuel Ringelblum, who stressed Jews’ longstanding contributions to Polish cultural and economic life (an idea echoed, perhaps, in Wiesenthal’s reference to a “thousand years Jewish history in Poland”).<sup>22</sup>

17 Salo Baron, Ghetto and Emancipation. Shall We Revise the Traditional View?, in: *Menorah Journal* XIV (1928) 6, 515-526.

18 See works by, inter alia, Natalia Aleksiu, Kamil Kijek, Anna Landau-Czajka, Sean Martin, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Antony Polonsky.

19 This cultural formation is beautifully described in the historian Shimon Redlich’s memoir-cum-oral history of growing up in a town not far from Buczac, *Together and Apart in Brzezany. Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919–1945*, Bloomington 2002; also see Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918–1939*, London 2004.

20 See below.

21 Uniwersytet zbirów [University of Thugs], Cracow 1946, 2014, 185-187.

22 Natalia Aleksiu, From Galicia to Warsaw. Interwar Historians of Polish Jewry, in: *Warsaw. The Jewish Metropolis: Essays in Honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, Leiden 2015, 370-389.



Wiesenthal's biographers generally overlook these complexities of interwar Polish-Jewish identity politics. Even Segev, who acknowledges that Wiesenthal had some kind of attachment to his native land (Galicia), does not consider the possibility that Wiesenthal's cosmopolitanism reflected his formative experiences as a progressive, acculturated Jew in interwar Poland, not just distant memories of the defunct Dual Monarchy. Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive: the former monarchy offered many Galician Jews a template of citizenship and belonging that informed their attitudes toward the Second Republic, and it was during the Habsburg period that many Jews in Galicia first came to identify with Polish nationalism.

One might be justified in asking why, in that case, Wiesenthal spoke so much about his roots in the Monarchy, and so little about Poland. For example, at the opening of the Rachel Whitehead Holocaust memorial in 2000, calling himself as "an old Austrian by birth", he reminded the audience that he had attended two years of primary school in Vienna (his family was among the many thousands of Galician civilians who fled the Eastern front during the First World War) and that his father had fallen as a soldier of the Habsburg army. "I myself settled in Austria fifty-two years ago", he continued, "after the Nazis had abducted me as far as Mauthausen, where I was liberated at the eleventh hour." Summing up his relationship to Austria after more than half a century, he said: "I really don't feel like a stranger in this country."<sup>23</sup>

The explanation, however, is not that obscure: Wiesenthal had as much to gain in claiming to be an Austrian native as to lose in being identified as a Polish Jew. Austrian antisemites used long-standing negative stereotypes of Polish Jews to support their attacks on Wiesenthal, for example, by using the pseudo-spelling "Szymon Wizenthal"; even in polite society, "Polish" had always been a euphemism in Austria for the wrong sort of Jew.<sup>24</sup> Antisemitism aside, to claim a moral voice in Austrian affairs, Wiesenthal could not appear to be a carpet-bagger, and establishing an unsailable Austrian genealogy was a strategic move. To say this is not to minimize Wiesenthal's undeniably genuine attachment to Austria or his identification with his family's Habsburg heritage. But even a statement like the one above – "I really don't feel like a stranger in this country" – seems flecked with irony, an irony through which Wiesenthal invites us to unpack the complex layers of his history.

Irony was sorely lacking, unfortunately, in a recent exhibition at the Vienna Jewish Museum where this quote was prominently displayed. "Wiesenthal in Wien/Wiesenthal in Vienna" (2015/2016), stressing Wiesenthal's "deep Austrian patriotism", rehearsed all the lachrymose clichés we have seen so far about Wiesenthal's life in Poland. The catalogue tells us, for instance, that after the First World War, the refugee Wiesenthals were "unable to stay in Vienna" and thus "returned to their village" which "now belonged to Poland":

"Most of the houses had been destroyed, many families had been torn to pieces, and there was a feeling of animosity towards minorities in the young nation state. There were severe restrictions on the admission of Jews to universities, and Simon Wiesenthal had to move to Prague to study architecture, as he could not find a university in Poland to accept him. It is circum-

23 Gabriele Kohlbaumer-Fritz, "I really don't feel like a stranger in this country": Simon Wiesenthal – An Austrian Patriot, in: Wiesenthal in Wien/Wiesenthal in Vienna, Vienna 2016, 37.

24 Gerd Honsik is one antisemitic writer who favoured this spelling; see Günther Terportitz, Wizenthal, Krejsky und die Schächtung des Abendlandes. Ein Kaleidoskop 'rechter' Medien, in: Heinz P. Wassermann (ed.), Antisemitismus in Österreich nach 1945. Ergebnisse, Positionen und Perspektiven der Forschung, Innsbruck 2002, 138 and 129-150; Michaela Raggam-Blesch, personal communication, 25 January 2016.

stances like this that no doubt ensured that Galician Jews retained their faith in German culture.”<sup>25</sup>

Note the implied unwillingness to leave Vienna; the description of Buczacz – a provincial town with factories, a Jewish hospital, political parties, and other hallmarks of modernity – as a “village”, the better to contrast with metropolitan Vienna; the whiff of a suggestion that Poland’s new “ownership” of Buczacz was less than legitimate; the generalised image of suffering and hardship, although the Wiesenthal family was quite comfortable once Simon’s mother remarried; and the truly odd speculation that Polish antisemitism in the 1930s must have strengthened Galician Jews’ “faith in German culture” – a faith evidently unaffected by, say, German or Austrian antisemitism.

The effect can be seen as inversion. Poland, for Wiesenthal, is not the home that is violently destroyed in the Holocaust, but an exile. His involuntary deportation to Austria on a death march, meanwhile, becomes a kind of messianic return to the land of his forefathers.

The exhibition may reveal why some narratives of Wiesenthal’s life require that Poland be mentioned, if at all, only in the same breath as antisemitism. Poland serves as a crude foil for imperfect Austria: the worse Poland looks, the more rational and intentional Wiesenthal’s decision (and that of his fellow refugees and survivors) to remain in Hitler’s homeland.<sup>26</sup> But this narrative has significance for non-Austrian Jews, too. The more we deny that Wiesenthal and his fellow Jews were ‘at home’ in Poland, the more we can persuade ourselves – all of us – that we are ‘at home’ elsewhere.

There is one other explanation for the repression of the ‘Polish’ Wiesenthal, but it is more ambiguous. While we can speculate about Wiesenthal’s appeal as a hero-figure in the post-war period (for example, that he filled the need for a ‘muscular’ survivor – he was, after all, a ‘Nazi hunter’), I suspect that the unresolved contradictions of his biography played a role, too. It is true that Wiesenthal’s ‘old Austrian’ *curriculum vitae* supported a narrative of unbroken Jewish continuity and belonging in the West. On the other hand, Wiesenthal projected – in his person, accent, and bearing – a very different kind of Jewishness from someone like Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky. If Kreisky was the archetype of the assimilated, Viennese, ‘non-Jewish Jew’ (to use Isaiah Berlin’s formulation), Wiesenthal, thanks to his Eastern European roots, exuded the earthy *yidishkayt* and authenticity of a ‘Jewish Jew’. In the persona projected onto the post-war stage, Wiesenthal’s ‘Polishness’ simply melted into his Jewishness (after all, did not *all* survivors have funny accents?). Familiar but other; assertive but liberal; Zionist but *kaisertreu* – the ambiguities made Wiesenthal the perfect figurehead for Jews uneasily seeking their place in a post-Holocaust world.

### Letters to Linz

Before I return to Wiesenthal’s letter to Cyla, I should provide some context. As mentioned earlier, Wiesenthal co-authored the appeal for Polish-Jewish reconciliation with Michał Borwicz, an old friend and fellow prisoner in the Janowska concentration camp in Lwów. Borwicz was a writer, literary critic, and sociologist. Before emigrating to France in the late 1940s, he served as chair of the Kraków branch of the

<sup>25</sup> Kohlbauer-Fritz, “I really don’t feel like a stranger”, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Wiesenthal was still exploring possibilities for emigration in 1953, for instance, to Uruguay. See SWA, Korresp. Varia 1946–1955, Congreso Judío Mundial, Sección Uruguay, to Simon Wiesenthal, 7 April 1953.

Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna (Central Jewish Historical Commission – CŻKH), a body established by Polish Jews to document the Holocaust. It was the CŻKH that had published Borwicz's memoir about Janowska, *University of Thugs*<sup>27</sup>, and a compilation of testimonial extracts he had co-edited in 1945, *Documents of Atrocity and Martyrdom*. Besides copies of these, Wiesenthal's collection contained a half dozen other CŻKH publications, including local studies, document collections, and the 1945 methodological brochure, *Instructions for Collecting Historical Materials from the Period of German Occupation*, outlining best practices for gathering survivor testimonies.<sup>28</sup>

By coincidence, I had been trying to track down some of these publications for months in my own research. Produced using poor materials at war's end and thus physically fragile, and more likely to have been bought by refugees than research libraries, these titles were quite rare. How uncanny to find a motherlode of them here, silently awaiting me on the shelves – slightly the worse for wear after all those decades, but abundantly present, often in multiple copies. These must have been ordered by or sent in batches to Wiesenthal's documentation centre in Linz in 1945, 1946, and 1947.

Those multiples, in fact, seemed significant: they suggested something other than private consumption. Wiesenthal is often treated as a maverick, a lone wolf with a single-minded determination to bring perpetrators to justice. But the CŻKH publications in his collection highlight his embeddedness in a network of like-minded survivors all urgently preoccupied with documenting the Holocaust. Documentarian-activists like Wiesenthal organised themselves into a plethora of historical commissions in Poland, in DP camps, and elsewhere; as the historian Laura Jockusch notes, they were overwhelmingly of Polish Jewish origin.<sup>29</sup>

Wiesenthal's documentation centre was working both in parallel and in tandem with other bodies in this network. Indeed, it was not even the only one in Linz: a founding member of the CŻKH, Melech Bakalczuk, had established a historical commission there in 1946.<sup>30</sup> As the Linz committee's papers in the Yad Vashem archive show, the centre's work in these years mainly involved gathering survivor testimonies against captured Nazi suspects. To do this, Wiesenthal had to be well-networked among other DPs, reaching out to them in Yiddish or Polish and taking testimonies in both languages. German and English came into use primarily in representations to the authorities.<sup>31</sup> Wiesenthal, it seems, corresponded with former CŻKH chair Philip Friedman and the CŻKH's successor organisation, the Jewish Historical Institute, to request documentation on specific Nazi suspects, as well as with civil authorities in Poland.<sup>32</sup> In short, the work of the Linz committee was car-

27 Michał Borwicz, *Uniwersytet zbirów* [University of Thugs], Cracow 1946.

28 Michał Borwicz/Nella Rost/Józef Wulf (ed.), *Dokumenty zbrodni i męczeństwa* [Documents of Crime and Martyrdom], Cracow 1945; Betti Ajzensztajn/Majer Balbaryski/Natan Blumental/Szymon Datner/Artur Eisenbach/Józef Kermisz (ed.), *Instrukcje dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej. Seria II. Prace metodologiczne. Zeszyt 1* [Instructions for Collecting Historical Materials from the Period of German Occupation. Series II. Methodological Works. Notebook 1], Łódź 1945.

29 Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, New York 2012, 8.

30 Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 70. The statute of the Jüdische Historische Dokumentation that Wiesenthal founded in 1947 spoke of collecting documents on Jewish persecution during the Nazi period, forging links with Jewish scholars in other countries, and publishing a scholarly periodical. Founding statute, reproduced in Stankowski, Szymon Wiesenthal, 73.

31 Yad Vashem, Wiesenthal Collection, *passim*.

32 Especially interesting is Wiesenthal's correspondence with the Polish Ministry of Justice and a list, evidently prepared for use by Polish prosecutors, of "criminals who in the war years 1939–1945 acted to the detriment of Polish citizens and the Polish state". Yad Vashem, Wiesenthal Collection, File Number 812. See also File Numbers 802.2, 75, 106, 109, 111.



ried out overwhelmingly in a Polish Jewish idiom and depended on connections within the Polish Jewish survivor community, as well as with non-Jewish Poles. Wiesenthal's early postwar activities make little sense removed from this Polish context.<sup>33</sup>

It was with curiosity about these survivor networks that I opened a three-ring binder I noticed on a shelf behind my desk. It was turquoise-green and labelled *SW Büro Linz 1945–1948–1950*. It turned out to contain a heterogeneous collection of documents: mostly correspondence, largely to Wiesenthal, in German, Yiddish, Polish, English, and French. Within the binder, the papers were organised alphabetically by sender, except for those whose authors the archivists had been unable to identify; these had been placed in a section at the front. (A caveat: I do not read Yiddish, so the comments that follow exclude discussion of the Yiddish-language correspondence.)

The letters were cacophonous: official, informal, personal; Jewish, non-Jewish; praising, criticising, complaining, imploring. The letters that Wiesenthal received from non-Jewish strangers, often responses to Wiesenthal's pieces in the Upper Austrian press, were striking; their authors ranged from anti-fascists who keenly felt the lack of accountability for former Nazis in their communities<sup>34</sup> to those taking issue with Wiesenthal's defence of DPs.<sup>35</sup> These writers seemed to feel a tremendous need to unburden themselves, apparently seeing in Wiesenthal the closest available interlocutor. By contrast, most of the letters Wiesenthal received from Jewish strangers, directed to him in his position as an employee of the US occupation, were terse. "Please take an interest in my brother-in-law [the DP] Mr. Azriel Kaplan [...] We will be grateful to you if it is in your power to help him in any way"; "I am sending hearty thanks for your intervention in the matter of Schumacher since the above-named was released from prison on Saturday [...]" and so on.<sup>36</sup>

33 As I have argued elsewhere, Polish Jews shared with non-Poles a particular interest in testimony as documentation, a tradition reaching back to the interwar period. Katherine Lebow, 'The Conscience of the Skin. Interwar Polish Autobiography and Social Rights', in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3 (2012) 3, 311–312.

34 "Out of every five people I meet", wrote a man from Altmünster, "four are former Nazis – 'new Austrians', I call them. The rest are like you and me. Farmers, petty tradespeople, etc., who [...] exhaled when the chains of slavery dropped from us on 6 May. We did not shout for revenge, we killed no one – but we believed in justice. [...] We are deeply shaken and disappointed." The author, who had been accused of "servility" for efforts to help some Jews recover their property, praised Wiesenthal for his courage and invited him to visit him as a "Gesinnungsgenosse" (like-minded person). Another man, a clerk and former political prisoner living in a barracks since his return from a Nazi prison, complained about the former Party member who had seized his home during the war and continued to live there and claim ownership. "The Nazis sit disguised and undisguised at their posts", he wrote. "They sit all this time in their luxury homes and are untouchable many times over (and the Nazi women are the worst!). [...] Is there a place or organisation", he asked, "that sets as its goal bringing this situation to an end and helping those who are the victims of Nazis? Thank you once again for your [article] and best greetings." SWA, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered; Alois P. to Simon Wiesenthal, 21 January 1946; Rudolf P. to Simon Wiesenthal, 21 January 1946.

35 This includes a letter from a "German from the Bohemian Forest", a Socialist who had first been persecuted by the Nazis, then ethnically cleansed from post-war Czechoslovakia. Taking issue with one of Wiesenthal's articles on the situation of DPs in Linz (against whom local authorities had been notably hostile), the writer explains his position as "a thoroughly international Socialist" and "a logically thinking person": in short, he feels that only "German-speaking people from the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy" should be allowed to remain in Austria, bemoaning the fact that "everywhere one goes [...], one hears and sees [...], only true foreigners and Jews". Although it was wrong that "during the war, the peoples of the occupied countries suffered hunger for the German people", the author writes, it was equally wrong that today "the German and Austrian people suffers hunger for the other peoples". SWA, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered; Joh. B. to Simon Wiesenthal, 28 November 1946.

36 SWA, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered; B. & Z. Rosenstein to Simon Wiesenthal, 9 August 1947; Schumacher to Simon Wiesenthal, 1 November 1948.

Quite different again is the correspondence from old friends and acquaintances – letters in which survivors sought news of common acquaintances or family members, recalled pre-war memories, and discussed present and future plans: what now, where next? Apart from those in Yiddish that I was unable to read, the letters in this category were in Polish.

Their provenance was not always obvious, as in a letter from Tadek: no surname, no date, no address, written in purple pencil on four pages. “Dear Mr. Engineer!” Tadek wrote from Palestine, apologising for his inability to secure for Wiesenthal (an avid philatelist) the postage stamps he had requested. He touched on themes of common concern for many survivors: legal entanglements (he had just seen a lawyer in Tel Aviv about a deposition); health (he hoped Wiesenthal’s eye problems had improved); emigration (“I’m coming to the opinion that one can be a better Jew and Zionist *not* in Israel. The entire country lives off alms. So, better to give charity than to take it”).

In a postscript, however, I did find something like what I was looking for. Tadek wrote that he had been working on a manuscript about the Holocaust in Austria for the past three years, based on many thousands of documents which, he suggested, could even serve as the basis of “legal action against the Austrian government”. He felt that the Jewish community in Vienna should publish the book, as it would garner great interest among Jewish émigrés abroad (and thus, presumably, raise funds for the community and the book’s author). He proposed to Wiesenthal to bring the manuscript up to date by adding events of the last few years. “Mr. Engineer, think about this and give me your considered opinion”, he concluded. “Be healthy and *au revoir*, Tadek”.<sup>37</sup>

Only after several readings and triangulating again with Laura Jockusch’s book did it occur to me that Tadek must be Towia Frydman, known as Tadek Jasiński during the war. Frydman had set up a documentation centre in Vienna and worked closely with Wiesenthal while the latter was in Linz, emigrating to Israel in 1952. Frydman and his colleagues’ research was not published in Vienna, Jockusch reports, although an abridged version ultimately appeared in Israel. Nor do standard historiographies register their pioneering research: the *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, for instance, reports only that “research about Austria and the Holocaust dates back to the 1960s and 1970s.”<sup>38</sup>

I was slow, again, to connect the dots in a letter Wiesenthal received from Montevideo in 1953. This letter appeared in another folder with somewhat later correspondence. On the letterhead of the *Congreso Judío Mundial, Sección Uruguay*, it had been filed under C (presumably for *Congreso*), and for some reason I cannot now remember, I formed the idea that it had been written by a rabbi. The letter responds to Wiesenthal’s evident query about emigration to Uruguay, proffering useful practical information (“if you cannot get an immigrant visa, you can take a tourist one, because there’s no practical difference between them”), but also reflects upon advantages and disadvantages of life in Uruguay. These included, on the one hand, an “almost unlimited” freedom; peacefulness and the absence of overt antisemitism; a good climate and beautiful seaside; abundant housing; and free education. Moreover, although Uruguay was a small country with a poor economy, “everyone has enough for a decent life”.

37 SWA, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered; Tadek to Simon Wiesenthal, undated.

38 Jockusch, *Collect and Record!*, 155–156; Albert Lichtblau, *The Holocaust in Austria*, in: *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199840731/obo-9780199840731-0080.xml> (4 September 2016).

The letter concludes on a personal note, however, which should have alerted me to a connection between the author and Wiesenthal: “Of course Jews are reviled here [oczywiście, że Żydzi są tu paskudni] and cannot count on anyone”, the writer avers. “But that is the case everywhere, and I know from experience that we both [meaning the author and Wiesenthal] have overcome [the difficulties of] emigration only by our own hard work.” The author then adds: “We are much happier here than in Sweden.”<sup>39</sup> On a repeat reading, I scrutinised the signature and wondered how I could have been so stupid: the words clearly spelled “Nella Rost”, Borwicz’s colleague on the Kraków historical commission before her emigration to Sweden (where she had also established a Holocaust documentation centre) and then Uruguay. Rost had edited the CŻKH’s publication of Rudolf Reder’s testimony on Bełżec in 1946, which Wiesenthal had in his collection.<sup>40</sup> She herself was not a rabbi – but she was a very prominent rabbi’s daughter.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps Borwicz had put them in touch; whether or not she and Wiesenthal had met, her letter managed to be both formal and intimate, evoking a shared fate and common understanding.

One more letter in the folder bore witness, I felt, not only to Wiesenthal’s links to the work of other Polish survivor-documentarians, but to the echoing resonance of pre-war literary and intellectual life in these efforts. Written earlier (1947) than the above letter, and by someone closer to Wiesenthal, it was, of all the letters in the file, the most heart-breaking.

Szymon Spund was a poet and writer living in Lwów before the war and associated with the above-mentioned journal *Chwila*. From references in the letter, it seems likely that he and Wiesenthal also worked together on the satirical journal *Omnibus*, in which Wiesenthal had published some cartoons in the 1930s.<sup>42</sup>

Spund survived the war in the Soviet Union and was living in Łódź – Lwów having been annexed to the Soviet Union – at the time of writing. Among common acquaintances he named in the letter was *Chwila*’s editor Henryk Hescheles, who had not survived the war, and the latter’s daughter, Janina. Reading this, I sat up. As I knew from my research, the pre-teen Janina Hescheles had been discovered as a literary talent by Borwicz while both were in Janowska; she was one of those who would recite her poetry in secret gatherings of inmates.<sup>43</sup> After Borwicz was rescued from Janowska by the Polish-Jewish underground, he arranged to have Hescheles smuggled out of the camp. Placed in a safe house on the ‘Aryan’ side, she had been given paper and pen, and asked (commanded?) by her rescuers to write. The result was *Through the Eyes of a Twelve-Year-Old Girl*, a memoir of the Lwów ghetto and Janowska, published by the CŻKH in 1946.<sup>44</sup>

I quote the letter below, nearly in full.

“BELOVED MR ENGINEER!” the letter begins, in an almost comical yoking together of warmth and formality:

39 SWA, Korresp. Varia 1946–1955, N. Rost to Simon Wiesenthal, 7 April 1953.

40 Rudolf Reder, Bełżec, Cracow 1946.

41 Rost held degrees in law and literature and was an expert on French letters. Rost’s father, Ozjasz Thon, had been a towering figure, one of founders of Zionism in Poland and for many years a representative to the Polish Sejm. Noe Grüss/Diana Grünbaum, Rok pracy Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej [Work of the Central Jewish Historical Commission], Łódź 1946, 56; Thon, Ozjasz, in: The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/thon\\_ozjasz](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/thon_ozjasz) (5 September 2016).

42 For an example, see [http://www.simon-wiesenthal-archiv.at/01\\_wiesenthal/01\\_biographie/img/e03studien-zeit02.html](http://www.simon-wiesenthal-archiv.at/01_wiesenthal/01_biographie/img/e03studien-zeit02.html) (6 September 2016).

43 Michał Borwicz, Literatura w obozie [Literature in the Camp], Cracow 1946, 48–9.

44 Oczyma dwunastoletniej dziewczyny [Through the Eyes of a Twelve-Year-Old Girl], Cracow 1946.

“How happy I am that you live, and not only for myself... [ellipses in original] Often, very often in the Far North, outside the Polar Circle, I thought about you and remembered those moments when together, as a twosome in my private office, we planned a tour with slides about the arch-Satan who roundly destroyed our life! I lost everything and everyone, and above all my only daughter: STEFANIA EWELINA being her two names. Today my golden little blonde would be about fifteen years old! Perhaps you will come across a trace of her somewhere?! Perhaps??? Not long ago I found the only one of my formerly six brothers, the youngest, who has already been to me on a visit. He was injured twice outside Gdańsk. He has Polish and Soviet medals.

What is new with you? How did you come upon my address? Perhaps through the Lwów bookseller P. Rubin? After my return from the Soviet Union I reactivated *Opinia* and edited it for eleven months, and when I convinced myself that ‘Ichud’ also has in its bosom some thoroughly rotten scoundrels,<sup>45</sup> I resigned from permanent work there and write freelance for *Nowe Słowo*, where lately I published [...] a lengthy discussion of your interesting brochure. I am struck by its precise documentation [*ściska źródłowość*] and your exuberant German! I foresee great hope for you in the field of documentary literature!”

Spund then wrote that he was leaving in August for Paris – “and from there, onwards [...]” He continued:

“How is your health? What kind of work do you do? How did you save yourself? Where did you stay? Do you have family, or perhaps at least fragments? What are your plans? Do you still have your caricaturist’s powers of observation? Our poor Bickels fell to a martyr’s death! So too our dear and unforgettable Henryk Hescheles, who was my companion in misfortune! I correspond with his daughter. She published a harrowing book! Brilliant fourteen-year-old girl! Please be so kind as to search for my child with the ‘Red Cross’ etc. etc. Maybe she is alive somewhere and longing for me??? Maybe?! [...] Awaiting impatiently your news and wishing much happiness [here the typewritten words give way to handwriting], I warmly press your right hand.”

In a scribbled note at the very bottom of the page, Spund added a request for Wiesenthal to seek news of his siblings Maks, Leon, Zygmunt, Isydor, and Annalisa. Finally, as if unwilling to sign off, he penned another note: “Please greet all the people there.”<sup>46</sup>

Spund’s breakneck exuberance in the face of loss and the list of siblings Maks, Leon, Zygmunt, Isydor and Annalisa, not to mention STEFANIA EWELINA, would already have been tragic enough. But the connection between Wiesenthal and Janina Hescheles through Spund gave me a shock. Briefly, two mental spaces collided: my research-reality, and reality plain and simple – the reality of Wiesenthal’s office, the faux-wood veneer desk, the green binder. Wiesenthal’s ‘aura’ seemed to have a clarifying effect, so that Spund and Hescheles and all the others seemed as immanent in that space as Wiesenthal himself.

45 *Opinia* was the organ of the all-Zionist political party Ichud, or Zjednoczenie Syjonistów Demokratów ‘Ichud’ w Polsce (Union of Democratic Zionists in Poland). Founded in 1945, it was forced to disband in 1949, after the Communist take-over of Poland, <http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Ichud> (15 July 2016).

46 SWA, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered; Szymon Spund to Simon Wiesenthal, 21 July 1947.



Moja najdroższa Cylusienko! 27.8.45.  
 Wreszcie jakiś znak życia od Ciebie.  
 Dr. Weissberg najlepiej przypieścił mi  
 zebrać ci do Linza do mnie.  
 Słuchaj, ja nie mogę przyjechać  
 on ci wytłumaczy. Właściwie o tym  
 że ty też podziwiasz na mnie tu  
 że nie mogę już dłużej czekać. Tępo  
 przyszedł. Albo nie możesz przy-  
 jechać? Czemuś nie? z Felksem  
 ja widziałem możesz co możesz  
 by ci oświecić, ostatnio przesłucha  
 przesłuchał na drugi raz. Czekam więc  
 zawsze moja kochana  
 Twój Szymon  
 My address  
 Landstrasse 60 c/o Sturm

Photo: Archiv Simon Wiesenthal, Folder SW Linz 1945–1948–1950, unnumbered.

In the same binder was the letter to Cyla, dated 27 August 1945. Once again, it took several readings to decipher properly. It was penned in a looping, urgent scribble, and began with a diminutive – “My dearest Cylusienka”:

“At last a sign of life from you. Dr. Weissberg, my best friend, will bring you to me in Linz. He will explain why I cannot come myself. The news that you are living affected me so much that I cannot wait for your arrival. Leave everything, then, [and] come as soon as possible with Felek. I did everything that I could to find you, [but] lately I started to lose hope completely. I am waiting [illegible], my dear.

Your Szymon

My address  
Landstrasse 60 c/o Sturm”

## Conclusion: The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around

In trying to understand why this letter remained hidden for so many decades, I have come to think of Wiesenthal's Polishness as hiding in the light. In his lifetime, it was embodied – in accent, in gesture – in his person; it was an aspect of his survivorhood, his 'authenticity'. But when he died, there was no institutional knowledge of Polish language, or the cultural context of Polish Jewry, to survive him in the archive.

What besides this letter was lost as a result? I have tried to suggest that we can better understand Wiesenthal's transformation from survivor to 'Nazi-hunter' if we see it not merely as the outgrowth of one man's passion for justice, but of ideas and practices widespread among Polish Jewish survivors after the war. Hearing the voices of Wiesenthal's friends and associates from this time, moreover, keeps great-man exaggerations in check, and it humanises Wiesenthal by revealing the ties of memory and culture that bound him to a particular community. That Nella Rost's and Tadek Frydman's voices had been anonymised seems almost worse than that the letter to Cyla had been lost. Biography is most valuable when it intimates the myriad of other lives and stories that surround it, as early Holocaust documentarians well knew.

Since I began this essay, the Wiesenthal archive has been boxed up and moved out of the Salztorgasse. Its contents (minus fax machine and paper clips) have moved to the VWI's new headquarters at the Rabensteig. There are no plans I know of to digitise its holdings, so the paper archive will continue to exist, albeit in altered form. Resituated in a vibrant scholarly institute, it will undergo reclassification according to a new set of narratives, reflecting the current state of international Holocaust research. Someone else would eventually have come across the letter in this new context, if I had not.

One could argue that this outcome would be even more likely if the archive were to be digitised, as the papers would then be available to scholars with an even wider array of languages and local knowledge. Some commentators have noted how full-text-searchability can liberate sources from the narrative (and national) frameworks imposed by archival cataloguing, making them visible in new ways. The 'Polish' Wiesenthal could thus come into clearer focus. Yet it is also obvious that some kinds of sources are more text-searchable than others, and that handwritten letters, scrawled to loved ones in moments of extreme emotion, are generally not among these.<sup>47</sup> It is also clear that the archival "side-glancing," "peripheral vision," "serious play of browsing," or just "screwing around"<sup>48</sup> reflected in this essay could have occurred only in a physical archive. As Lara Putnam points out, the "friction" of traditional archival research produces invaluable contextual knowledge. Among other things, it forces us to confront not just what we think is important, but what others have thought important, and to consider the relevance of the seemingly irrelevant.<sup>49</sup>

47 Lara Putnam, *The Transnational and the Text-Searchable. Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast*, in: *The American Historical Review* (2016), 385 and 390-391. I am indebted to Lisa Leff for directing me to this article.

48 The first two phrases are Putnam's. The latter two are from a source she cites: Stephen Ramsay, *The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books*, in: Keven Kee (ed.), *Pastplay. Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, Ann Arbor, MI 2014, 111-120. Putnam, *The Transnational and the Text-Searchable*, 39.

49 *Ibid.*, 393.

I am lucky that I got to see Wiesenthal's yellowing Polish books crammed onto the shelves; to finger *Angelica and Life*; to eat off the stolen plate. And yet in the end, I would be hesitant about proposals – which there were – to preserve the Salztorgasse apartment in amber. There is much to be said for dissolving that place, putting distance between the act of research, on the one hand, and Wiesenthal's office and all that it represents, on the other: the tragedy of the DPs; postwar Austria's torturous reckoning with the past; Wiesenthal's own ego. Let the old man rest in peace.

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Quotation: Kate Lebow, Letter from Linz. An Archive Story,  
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 4 (2017) 1, 4-20.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1\\_Articles\\_Lebow/Articles\\_Lebow01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1_Articles_Lebow/Articles_Lebow01.pdf)

Article

Copy Editor: Tim Corbett



Rory Yeomans

# In Search of Myself

Autobiography, Imposture, and Survival in Wartime Croatia

## Abstract

This article looks at the production of autobiography and imposture as survival techniques during the Second World War in Croatia. Focusing on the petitions of Jewish and Serb citizens wrote to the Jewish Section of the Ustaša Police Directorate and the State Directorate for Reconstruction the article considers the various ways in which Serb and Jewish letter writers who had been placed outside the law in wartime Croatia by the Ustaša regime used a variety of discourse and linguistic markers as well as the generation of idealised biographies in which they identified themselves as Croats in an attempt to escape deportation, ghettoization or stigmatisation and to write themselves into state ideology by asserting their difference from other members of their persecuted community. The article also explores the various ways in which victims who had survived by making compromises with the Ustaša regime sought to rewrite their biographies in the post-war period to identify themselves with the new socialist orthodoxies in the face of the threat of nation-wide campaigns of unmasking and ideological purification. Using Christa Wolf's novel *The Quest for Christa T.* as a frame, it asks how much the historian can ever really know about the biographies of individuals, especially those who have felt the need to reconstruct their lives after traumatic events. At the same time it argues that in addition to the important insight these kinds of microanalysis can provide on everyday life and survival in wartime Europe during the Holocaust, they also bring ambiguity to seemingly distinct historiographical categories such as resistance and collaboration and force us, the readers, to confront our own subjectivity through reading their autobiographical petitions.

“Successful revolutions tear off masks: that is, they invalidate the conventions of self-presentation and social interaction that obtained in pre-revolutionary societies [...] In such upheavals, people have to reinvent themselves, to create or find within themselves personae that fit the new post-revolutionary society.” So wrote Sheila Fitzpatrick in *Tear off the Masks!* her history of imposture and identity in Soviet Russia. Paradoxically, she argued, while revolutionary militants “tend to become obsessed with authenticity and transparency”, hunting for “careerists” and “accommodators” in order to unmask them, they also demand that ordinary citizens invent new identities in order to demonstrate their loyalty to the revolutionary new society and its values.<sup>1</sup> To the extent that all history is in some senses biography and all biography identity, periods of revolution and violent upheaval have often resulted in the writing (and rewriting) of autobiographical texts by ordinary citizens, in particular by those who fear they might be the victims of the terror accompanying the revolution and so seek ways to negotiate it. The study of diaries written by everyday people is now an established part of the historiography of the Stalinist Great Terror of the 1930s in the Soviet Union; petitions written to the state by Soviet citizens during the

<sup>1</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*, New Jersey 2005, 3.

same period have also been integrated into recent histories of the Great Terror and the social history of life in the Soviet Union. While a diary is a more obviously autobiographical form of writing, one in which the author can explore their inner-most thoughts and subjectivity, the increasing importance social historians of Stalinist Russia have placed on petitions underlines the extent to which petitions to Stalin, senior officials, or middle-ranking Soviet bureaucrats from collective farm workers, factory foremen, lonely soldiers, or anxious students were also a highly subjective autobiographical genre of writing, expressing a desire on the part of the writer to identify themselves with Soviet values whether as a means of escaping the terror or as an expression of a sincere desire to integrate fully into the new society.<sup>2</sup> These autobiographical strategies of survival, belonging and in many cases, reinvention, were likewise evident during the Holocaust as Jews, Roma, and other victims of persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe sought various means to 'write' identities for themselves in the context of a new society from which they were being systematically excluded. While in the past two decades the diaries and, less frequently, letters and petitions of adult and adolescent Jewish victims in Hitler's European empire have increasingly become a meaningful subject for study by Holocaust historians, almost none of these cases studies have addressed the fate of Jews and other persecuted groups in the Nazi satellite states of what was until April 1941 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This is especially true of the Ustaša-led Independent State of Croatia where the Holocaust, in parallel to the genocide of Serbs and Roma, was carried out with a ferocity and single-mindedness almost unparalleled in any other part of occupied Europe.<sup>3</sup>

In a desperate situation, a part of the Serb and Jewish communities engaged actively in the writing of often profoundly autobiographical petitions to state ministries, police and security directorates, senior Ustaša officials, and the supreme leader Pavelić himself in an attempt to negotiate their positions in a state which openly sought their destruction. Deeply confessional in tone and content, this subset of correspondents facing deportation, ghettoisation and ultimately death, employed the state's totalising discourse to express a sense of belonging to the Croatian national community then under construction. Often bitterly rejecting the Jewish or Serb identity which they had been ascribed, like Soviet subjective diaries, their petitions and letters were full of emotion and intimate details, self-reflexive, endeavouring to show that the writers had transformed themselves into members of the new society. As in Christa Wolf's 1968 novel *The Quest for Christa T.*, in which the narrator attempted to reconstruct the life of her enigmatic friend, these letter-writers had two lives: the one before April 1941 and the one afterward. Engaged in projects of rein-

2 See for example Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Suplicants and Citizens. Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, in: *Slavic Review* 55 (1996) 1, 80-104; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind. Writing a Diary under Stalin*, Cambridge MA 2006; Veronique Garros/Natalia Korovskaya/Thomas Luhman, *Intimacy and Terror. Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*, New York 1997; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley 1995; Orlando Figes, *Schick einen Gruss, zuweilen durch die Steine. Eine Geschichte von Liebe und Überleben in Zeiten des Terrors*, translated by Bernd Rullkötter, Berlin 2012; Igal Halfin, *Terror in my Soul. Communist Autobiographies on Trial*, Cambridge MA 2003.

3 Among the best recent studies of Jewish diaries and private correspondence during the Holocaust are Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days. Diaries and the Holocaust*, New Haven 2006; Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven 1991; and Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages. Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, New Haven 2002. A number of diaries and notebooks written by Holocaust victims have also been published. See for example Derek Bowman, *The Diary of David Rubinowicz*, London 1980; Saul Esh (ed.), *Young Moshe's Diary. The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy in Nazi Germany*, Tel Aviv 1965; and Chava Pressburger (ed.), *The Diary of Petr Ginz, 1941-1942*, with an introduction by Jonathan Safran Foer, translated by Elena Lappin, New York 2004.

vention and personal transformation as strategies of survival and a means of claiming membership in the new society, some Serbs and Jews, however, sought to represent themselves in the present as nationally-conscious citizens, recalling how they had worked to overcome their 'shameful' national pasts and incarnate themselves as Croat subjects.<sup>4</sup> How spontaneous these sentiments were is hard to gauge though it is likely that at least some of those who wrote to the state in 1941 genuinely believed the autobiographies they were constructing. At the same time, these Serb and Jewish citizens were writing in extreme times and their letters, heartfelt and confessional as they were, must have been strongly influenced by the threat of terror which hung over them. Furthermore, it was not just the victims of Ustaša terror who were involved in rewriting their biographies or in seeking to transform themselves into conscious citizens; those who aspired to be beneficiaries of the terror were also expected to demonstrate how they had written themselves into the values of the state. One way or another, tens of thousands of ordinary people drawn from all social classes, ideological persuasions, and national groups were involved in the process of remaking themselves through petition writing. On the one hand, the petitions from victims demonstrated the totalising nature of everyday terror under the Ustaša movement: The same state agencies which sought their destruction often paradoxically became the sole intermediary through which Jews and Serbs could save themselves, fulfilling the aim of the movement's architects to construct a society in which no aspect of life would exist except through the mediation of the state. Moreover, in order to save themselves, supplicants and petition-writers were required to denounce their own communities and even their families while insisting that an exception should be made in their case, evidence that they were people who had overcome their past and 'undesired' identities. By contrast, in the post-war Socialist period, some of these same letter-writers once more felt compelled to engage in similar autobiographical practices to either explain or, more frequently, to conceal their interaction with a regime whose sympathisers the new Socialist Yugoslav authorities had vowed to 'unmask' and 'tear out at the roots' as a necessary precondition for the reconstruction of the Yugoslav homeland.<sup>5</sup>

It is true that there are empirical limitations to the reading of correspondence such as this. While thousands of Serbs, Jews and, to a lesser extent, Roma wrote petitions such as these to the state's planning and economic agencies and the organs of terror, they still represented a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Roma, and Sinti who were persecuted in the first few months of the state's existence (n=470).<sup>6</sup> The majority of victims did not, it seems, write to the authorities, far less the Poglavnik, and there were, no doubt, diverse reasons for this: Some were illiterate, others believed that any such appeal would be hopeless, while others still had fled or, in a small number of cases, had decided to actively resist. In the case of Serbs, in particular, many had also already been murdered. In this sense, it is hardly surprising that the petitions of Serbs, Jews, and Roma collected in the archival files and collec-

4 Christa Wolf, *The Quest for Christa T.*, New York 1979; Original: Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, Halle 1968.

5 See for example Nikola Rubčić, *Kaznimo zločince čovječnosti i narodne budućnosti* [We are punishing the criminals for humanity and the national future], in: *Vjesnik* [News] 5, 29 May 1945 33, 1.

6 Roma were also subject to the same pattern of economic destruction, social segregation, and terror as the Serbs and Jews, but even among affluent educated Roma and Sinti it seems there was less petition-writing. A recent comprehensive discussion of the persecution of the Roma under the Ustaša regime, their deportation, and the confiscation of their property can be found in Bibijana Papo/Danijel Vojak/Alen Tahiri, *Stradanje Roma u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj 1941–1945* [The suffering of the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945], Zagreb 2015.

tions of the Independent State of Croatia overwhelmingly expressed a desire to be accepted as members of the Croatian national community since petitions to the authorities was one of the few ways they could try to write themselves back into a society they had been written out of. While these Serb and Jewish petition-writers might tell an important story about their respective communities' fate under the Ustaša regime, they are still, statistically speaking, not the dominant story.<sup>7</sup>

Why, then, write about a cohort which almost certainly did not represent the majority sentiment in their communities even in the state's formative period? There are a number of reasons why this subset of the Jewish and Serb correspondents to the state matters to an understanding of the Holocaust in Croatia. First, a case study of the subjectivity of victims in wartime Croatia adds an important dimension to our understanding of how ordinary people in Europe experienced terror in real time during the Holocaust and Nazi occupation. Given that most previous discussions of the terror of the Ustaša regime have pushed the victims and the diverse ways in which they attempted to negotiate persecution to the margins, relying, if at all, on the testimony of those who were bystanders to the programme of terror, perpetrated it, or who miraculously survived it, studying the petitions of the victims tells us something about the day-to-day reality of terror, unfiltered by unreliable memory, ideological narratives, or retrospective reimagining. Simultaneously, the subjectivity of persecuted Jews and Serbs in occupied Croatia challenges conventional thinking about the nature of identity – or at least perceptions of identity – in the South-Eastern Europe of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Third, the fact that some of the petition writers survived the Holocaust enables us to better appreciate how, after the liberation, they reconciled their roles in that terror and recast their biographies once again to write themselves into the new Socialist state. Whether the writers of the petitions consciously saw themselves as creating new identities is less clear: For many, it seems, letter-writing provided a means not so much of demonstrating their inner transformation as a chance to express the identity which they felt they had always possessed, less an attempt to become someone new than to find their authentic selves. Seen from this perspective, and given how little other information there is about the victims, debates about the sincerity of the sentiments in their letters become less central; it is through their writing ultimately that we know them. As Hannah Arendt observed:

“The sources talk and what they reveal is the self-understanding as well as the self-interpretation of people who act and believe they know what they are doing. If we deny them this capacity and pretend that we know better and can tell them what their ‘real’ motives are or which ‘real’ trends they objectively represent – no matter what they themselves think – we have robbed them of the very faculty of speech insofar as speech makes sense.”<sup>8</sup>

7 Of these 470 petitions, around 75 per cent expressed a desire to be recognised as members of the Croatian national community, though within that basic schema, narratives, sentiments, and attitudes differed considerably.

8 Hannah Arendt, *On the Nature of Totalitarianism. An Essay in Understanding*, in: *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York 2005, 338–339.

## Real-Time Terror in Wartime Croatia

Terror was a defining characteristic of the Independent State of Croatia. This was not surprising since the new state was ruled by the Ustaša Croatian Liberation Movement, an underground separatist terrorist organisation established in the 1930s, many of whose active members had lived in exile in terror training camps in Fascist Italy and Hungary. True, another more intellectual group of young activists ran a propaganda centre in Berlin and, increasingly through the late 1930s, the Ustaša movement gained the support of radical nationalist and separatist students, intellectuals, trade unions, and cultural and social institutes as well as a growing number of workers and peasants. Nonetheless, despite becoming progressively fascistised, the movement's terroristic instincts remained an important feature of its character and view of the world and had a fundamental impact on the development of state ideology. Immediately after it came to power in April 1941 following the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, the Ustaša leadership, headed by Ante Pavelić, the Poglavnik (or Supreme Chief) of the new state, created a series of economic, social, and security ministries and agencies which aimed at removing Jewish and Serb citizens from the life of the new state. Beginning in April 1941, the Office for Economic Renewal (later the State Directorate for Economic Regeneration – DGRP) embarked on a programme to expropriate Serb and Jewish businesses which included the appointment of commissioners to Jewish and Serb factories and businesses in preparation for their nationalisation, liquidation, or sale.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Ministry for Social Co-Operatives introduced a series of legal statutes from early May 1941 enabling the mass removal of Serbs and Jews from their positions in the private sector and the 'Aryanisation' of the Croatian economy. An employment law of 23 May, for example, allowed commissioners to sack workers with one month's notice.<sup>10</sup> In the towns and cities of the new state, especially Zagreb, local Ustaša police chiefs ordered Serbs and Jews to register their property and assets with the police.<sup>11</sup> Local authorities and the police also introduced statutes evicting affluent Serbs and Jews from their apartments in the more desirable parts of town to the cramped poorer districts, imposing curfews on the hours they could shop and be on the streets and, often, the facilities they could use.<sup>12</sup>

While these laws made life extremely difficult for Jews and Serbs and represented a form of terror, simultaneous citizenship laws made it clear that Jews and Serbs had ceased to exist as citizens of the state in any meaningful way. For example, the citi-

9 See for example Zakonska odredba o imenovanju povjerenika kod privrednih poduzeća, [Legal provision on the appointment of commissioners for commercial enterprises], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 19 April 1941; Dužnosti povjerenika u židovskom i srbskim poduzećima [The duties of the commissioner in Jewish and Serbian enterprises], in: Nezavisna Hrvatska [Independent Croatia], 12 July 1941.

10 Zakonska odredba o otkazivanju i otpisivanju privatnih radnika i namještnika [Legal Statute concerning the dismissal and issuing of notice to private-sector workers and employees], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 23 May 1941.

11 Zakonska odredba o sprečavanju prikrivanja židovskog imetka [Legal statute concerning the prevention of the hiding of Jewish assets], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 5 June 1941; Naredba o dužnosti prijave Srbijanca [Order concerning the obligation of Serbs to register], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 7 June 1941; Zakonska odredba o podržavljenju imetka Židova i židovskih poduzeća [Legal statute concerning the nationalisation of Jewish assets and enterprises], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 10 October 1941.

12 See for example Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA) [Croatian State Archive], Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (NDH) [Independent State of Croatia], Zbirka štampata (ZS) [Print Collection], 104.36/104/19 and 1289/41, order from the director of the Ustaša Police in Zagreb, 8 May 1941; HDA, NDH, ZŠ, 104.36/99/115, order of the Ustaša Police office in Varaždin, 21 July 1941; Nove naredbe Židovima u Varaždinu [New orders for Jews in Varaždin], in: Novi list [New newspaper], 27 June 1941; Emily Greble, When Croatia Needed Serbs. Nationalism and Genocide in Sarajevo, 1941–1942, in: Slavic Review 68 (2008) 1, 127.

zenship law of 30 April created distinct categories of communal belonging in the Croatian state by distinguishing between a citizen and a 'state national'. A state national was defined as someone who "stands under the protection of the Independent State of Croatia", while a citizen was defined as a "state national of Aryan origin who by his actions has demonstrated that he did not work against the liberation aspirations of the Croat people and who is willing to readily and faithfully serve the Croat people and the Independent State of Croatia". Only the citizen was defined as the bearer of all political rights and this law effectively meant that Jews and Serbs (as well as other "undesired elements" such as foreign citizens, Roma, and politically "disloyal" Croats) could be stripped of their citizenship rights, deported or worse.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, a Ministry for Education law removed from the discourse of the state any recognition of a separate Serb identity, declaring that "the title 'Serbian Orthodox' is no longer in harmony with the new state order. This legal statute deems it necessary to use the title 'Greek-Eastern faith' when referring to them instead." The Ustaša movement's chief propagandist Mijo Bzik went even further. In a style guide for officials, he stressed that Serbs were henceforth to be known as 'Greek-Easterners', 'Vlachs', and "ormer Serbs". Under no circumstances, he added, should the word 'Serb' be used "when dealing with the Vlachs in Croatia".<sup>14</sup> A legal statute of 30 April 1941 related to "race membership" issued by the Ministry of the Interior ordered that Jews would be required to wear a yellow star on their chests and arms. The same order banned marriage between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>15</sup> An additional law of 4 June 1941 made it compulsory for all Jewish-owned stores to be marked with the yellow star and the word *Židov* (Jew) and for Jews to change their Croatianised names back to their original, Jewish forms.<sup>16</sup> These legal statutes negated the identity of those Jews and Serbs who saw themselves as or aspired to be part of the Croatian national community. On the one hand, they symbolised the extent to which Serbs and Jews were, to use the expression of the Ustaša party boss in Bosanska Krajina Viktor Gutić, "undesired elements" of which the state needed to be "cleansed", but also "former people" who had ceased to exist as constituent citizens and from whom Croats needed to be separated. In exceptional circumstances, they could become members of the national community, but they would need to prove that they had overcome their "undesired" and shameful origins.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to most other states in occupied Europe, the antisemitic laws contained an exceptional clause for Jews who were employed in vital state sector roles, on active military duty, or who had Aryan spouses and children baptised before 10 April 1941. Honorary Aryan membership was also extended to those deemed as having done something "meritorious for the Croatian nation, especially its liberation". To gain 'Aryan rights', Jewish citizens had to apply in writing to the newly established Jewish Office of the directorate of the Ustaša police. However, while successful petitions exempted individuals from having to wear the

13 Zakonska odredba o državljanstvu [Legal statute concerning citizenship], in: Hrvatski narod [The Croatian Nation], 1 May 1941.

14 Ministarstva odredba o nazivu "grčko-istočne vjere" [Ministerial order concerning the term "Greek-Eastern faith"], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 19 July 1941; HDA, NDH, Ministarstvo pravosuđa i bogoštovlja [Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs], 31.218/I-81-120/119/1941, Mijo Bzik, Okružnica [Circular].

15 Zakonska odredba o rasnoj pripadnosti [Legal statute concerning racial affiliation], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 30 April 1941.

16 Naredba o promjeni židovskih preimena i označavanju židova i židovskih tvrtka [Order concerning changes to Jewish names and the marking of Jews and Jewish businesses], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 4 June 1941.

17 The speech in which this phrase is used can be found in Stožernik Viktor Gutić dobio je naročite pohvale sa Najvišeg mjesta za svoj dosadašnji rad [Centre leader Viktor Gutić has received exceptional praise from the highest authorities for his recent work], in: Hrvatska krajina [Croatian Frontier], 28 May 1941.



Jewish sign, it did not mean they were exempted from the wide range of other anti-semitic legislation related to “racial membership”, as the interior ministry made clear, and a significant proportion of those who were awarded honorary Aryan status, save for those who were related to senior officials in the regime, later perished in Jasenovac or one of the other numerous concentration camps in the state.<sup>18</sup>

In May of that year, the Ustaša leadership began to make plans for the mass deportation of hundreds of thousands of the state’s Serbs to Serbia. Ostensibly, this was part of an agreement with the Nazi occupation authorities in which Croatia would accept a comparable number of ‘disloyal’ Slovenians the Reich wanted to expel from Slovenia.<sup>19</sup> However, the number of Serbs the regime wanted to deport quickly grew in excess of the numbers agreed with the German authorities as the state saw an opportunity to significantly reduce the size of the Serb population, especially its educated layer. In late June, a resettlement agency, the State Directorate for Regeneration (DRP), was established in Zagreb to oversee the deportation process.<sup>20</sup> The DERP set up local branches throughout the state and established resettlement camps to accommodate Serb deportees, administered by a DERP militia. Conditions in these camps were terrible, characterised by poor hygiene, insufficient food, inadequate shelter, and brutality on the part of the guards; death rates were high. For their part, the German authorities in Serbia made frequent complaints that the Serb refugees arriving from these camps were often half starving and naked and frequently showing signs of abuse. As early as 6 July, the German military authorities in Serbia were demanding a halt to the mass deportations, barely a week after the programme had begun to be systematically implemented.<sup>21</sup> While Serbs who were being deported were in theory allowed to take a limited amount of goods with them (including valuables and money) in a bag weighing two kilogrammes at most, in practice many deportees arrived in Serbia without even this small amount of personal effects. Some Serbs – although it is not clear how many – likely hearing rumours about conditions in these camps wrote letters to the DERP asking for permission to stay in Croatia. In their letters, they invariably employed the state’s discourse, asserting a specifically Croatian sense of belonging. In fact, they often explicitly rejected a Serb identity, referring derisively to their ‘former’ identity. In overcoming their ‘shameful’ Serb past through acts of everyday political, consciousness, they had transformed themselves

18 Naredba o promjeni židovskih preimena i označavanju židova i židovskih tvrtka [Order about changes to Jewish surnames and the marking of Jews and Jewish businesses], In: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 4 June 1941. Paradoxically, this legislative anomaly did not mean that comparatively fewer Jews perished in the Holocaust in Croatia. In fact, in some states, which did not introduce legal exemptions from persecutions, such as Romania and Bulgaria, a far greater number of native Jews survived the Holocaust, especially in the core parts of the respective states. The classic text in the Bulgarian case is Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria’s Jews Survived the Holocaust*, London, 2001. On the Holocaust in Romania see e.g. Simon Geissbühler, *Blutiger Juli. Rumäniens Vernichtungskrieg und der vergessene Massenmord an den Juden 1941*, Paderborn 2013; see also Evan J. Hollander, *The Final Solution in Bulgaria and Romania: A Comparative Perspective*, in: *East European Politics and Societies* 22 (2008) 2, 203–226.

19 The classic works on the deportation process are Andrija-Ljubomir Lisac, *Deportacije Srba iz Hrvatske 1941* [The Deportations of Serbs from Croatia in 1941], in: *Historijski zbornik* 9 (1956) 4, 125–145; and Slobodan N. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije* [Refugees and settlers on the territory of occupied Yugoslavia], Belgrade 1981. More recent studies include Alexander Korb, *Im Schatten des Weltkriegs. Massengewalt der Ustaša gegen Serben, Juden und Roma 1941–1945*, Hamburg 2013, 123–205; and Filip Škiljan, *Organizirana prisilna iseljavanja Srba iz Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* [The organised forced emigration of Serbs from the Independent State of Croatia], Zagreb 2015.

20 Zakonska odredba o osnutku Državnoga ravnateljstva za ponovu [Legal statute concerning the establishment of the State Directorate for Regeneration], in: *Narodne novine* [National Gazette], 24 June 1941.

21 See for example HDA, NDH, Ponova/SO/OS, 445.1076/unnumbered, German high command to the DERP, 6 July 1941.; Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA-MA), BA-AA (Bundesarchiv-Auswärtiges Amt), RH 31/III/26, Arthur Haefner, *Polizeibericht über Ustascha*, 18 July 1941.

into Croats and demanded to be seen as part of the Croatian national community. Of course, not all Serbs who wrote to the DRP and the Ustaša police directorate wanted to stay. In an atmosphere of economic destitution, impoverishment, and increasing terror, a smaller number wrote asking permission to move to Serbia. However, volunteering to emigrate came at a heavy price. In order for the DRP to grant approval and issue a travel permit, applicants had to sign a form agreeing that they would transfer their assets and property to the state and waiving their right of return. Initially, these conditions were limited only to those who 'voluntarily' left the state, but they were subsequently extended to those Serbs being forcibly deported, too.<sup>22</sup> Many of those Serbs who asked permission to stay also sought permission to convert to Catholicism in order to transform themselves completely into Croats.

A small number of Jews, unlikely though the request was to be fulfilled, also applied for travel permits so that they could emigrate, in some cases to Serbia when they had Serb spouses, but more often to other parts of Europe where family members were living and which were unaffected by the war. Others still applied for travel permits as part of a desperate attempt to get their husbands and fiancés out of concentration camps such as Jadovno.<sup>23</sup> Far more often, though, Jews who wrote to the authorities expressed the aspiration to be full members of the Croatian national community. In practice, this meant seeking an exemption from wearing the yellow star and thereby expressing their innate Croatian identity. In their letters they often differentiated themselves sharply from the rest of the Jewish community, looking with scorn on those Jews who, they asserted, had made no effort to overcome their Jewish past and transform themselves into Croats. While the letters were very different in some respects from diary entries and private letters which Jewish individuals were writing in many other parts of occupied Europe in response to ghettoisation and persecution – they were written for an audience but for one the sender did not have a relationship with – they were often equally as self-reflexive, autobiographical, and confessional, with emotional appeals to a shared identity. In contrast to Holocaust diaries, though, which expressed diverse attitudes to the catastrophe unfolding around them, the correspondence of Serb and Jewish writers with the Jewish Office and the DRP expressed a consistent desire to belong by overcoming an accident of birth.

### 'Shameful' Jews in Search of the National Community

As well as fear caused by their overnight destitution as a result of the 'Aryanisation' of the economy, the letters of many Jewish correspondents to the Jewish Office convey a deep sense of 'shame' at having to wear the Jewish star. The Jewish star not only marked them out as separate and not belonging to the Croatian national community but were a visible daily reminder that, despite their loyalty and sense of belonging, they were perceived as enemies of the Croat people. For many assimilated Jews in Zagreb and other cities in Croatia, having to revert to their original Jewish

22 Zakonska odredba o imovine osoba koje su napustile područje Nezavisne Države Hrvatske [Legal statute concerning the property of people who have left the territory of the Independent State of Croatia], in: Narodne novine [National Gazette], 6 July 1941.

23 See for example Arhiv Udruženje Gospić Jadovno Pag [AUGJP], Fond Đuro Zatezalo [fDZ], 374, Jetty Werner to the Jewish Section, undated; AuGJP, fDZ, 375, Iluś Hahn to the Jewish Section, 25 July 1941; AuGJP, fDZ, 430, Ella Goldschmidt to the Jewish Section, 29 July 1941; AuGJP, fDZ, 414, Laura Frölich to the Jewish Section, 1 August 1941.



names was a sign, to them, of their own personal failure to properly imbue themselves with Croatian values. Surely, if they had ‘deserved’ the right to honorary ‘Aryan’ status, it would be given to them? This was particularly true of the German-speaking Ashkenazi community, some of whom had long exhibited a fiercely nationalistic Croatian outlook. In his memoirs, Imre Rochlitz, a young Jewish refugee from Austria in the period immediately before and after the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, described the incredulous reaction of many such Jews to the antisemitic laws. As he recalled, many Jews, including in his own family, were susceptible to the very same antisemitic prejudices that they eventually fell victim to, often despising the unassimilated Jews:

“A major family dispute ensued. Why should they persecute us? The various accusations of the Nazis did not seem to fit us: We were not rich, we did not exploit Gentiles, we certainly were not international conspirators, financiers, or Zionists, our culture was Germanic, we spoke *Hochdeutsch* [...] without an accent and we didn’t even have big noses. They could not possibly mean *us*; surely their hostility was directed against the Jews of other cultures and nationalities, some of whom – we secretly thought – might even deserve a small dose of discipline.”<sup>24</sup>

Among these Jews, the sense of shame at having to wear the Jewish insignia combined with trust and confidence that the authorities would reconsider their decision once they had learnt about the individual’s past service for the national community was pervasive.<sup>25</sup> In his petition to the Ustaša police, Aurel Gorjan clearly expressed these complex emotions. Gorjan, a machine engineer from Zagreb, had been one of the founding members, along with the wartime state’s leading film director Oktavijan Miletić and a teenage Krešimir Golik, of the Cinematic Section of the Fotoklub in Zagreb. In 1935, he had helped organise the first international amateur film festival in Croatia.<sup>26</sup> In his petition he pointed out that wearing the Jewish insignia would expose him to “ridicule” and make him a “laughing stock in the eyes of others” when carrying out his work. Not only was his request bluntly dismissed,<sup>27</sup> but as a subsequent letter of his to the Jewish Section made clear, he had been forced to change his name and that of his wife and son back to the original Grünwald and move to the south side of the city in Deželića ulica as the antisemitic laws stipulated.<sup>28</sup>

The sense of ‘shame’ was a recurrent feature of many of the other applications to the Jewish Section for honorary ‘Aryan’ status. Leopold Müller, a retired businessman, wrote to the police directorate in June 1941 to explain that having to wear the Jewish insignia would be an indication that he had failed in his endeavour to become a Croat, a disgrace. Married to an ‘Aryan’ Croat wife Marija and living on the affluent

24 Imre Rochlitz, *Accident of Fate. A Personal Account*, Ontario 2011, 20.

25 Bruno Carmon recalled that when a rumour began that the Ustaša police in Zagreb were conducting a sweep of Jewish youth in the city on 31 May 1941, some parents even proposed taking their sons to register with the police, so confident were they that nothing untoward would happen; see Bruno Carmon, *Zagreb, 31 svibnja, 1941* [Zagreb, 31 May 1941], in: *Novi Omanut* [New Art] (May–August 1999) 34–35, 2.

26 During the period of the Independent State of Croatia, Golik was a young war reporter for the party journal *Ustaša* and in 1943 won a literary prize for a short story about an isolated battalion of Ustaša soldiers holding off an attack by Partisans entitled *Because an Ustaša Never Surrenders Alive*. Subsequently, in socialist Yugoslavia, he became one of Yugoslavia’s most internationally successful, popular, and acclaimed film directors. When this earlier aspect of his past became known, it led to him being expelled from the Society of Film Workers and effectively being unable to work as an independent film maker for almost ten years, see Petar Krelja, Golik, *Zagreb* 1997, 31; Krešimir Golik, *Jer ustaša se živ ne predaje* [Because an Ustaša Never Surrenders Alive], in: *Ustaša* 12 (17 January 1942) 3, 4–6.

27 HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 20.252/27571, Aurel Gorjan to the Jewish Section, 31 May 1941.

28 HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 20.252/998, Aurel Grünwald to the Jewish Section, 25 June 1941.

northern side of the town on Ilica, the antisemitic laws threatened to separate them. Hence, wearing the Jewish insignia would not only damage her reputation, he explained, but “would cause me great shame in my old age”. This was not least because, as he continued,

“as a businessman in Zagreb of many years standing, I always distinguished myself as a good Croat and a supporter of the politics of Ante Starčević and the Croatian Party of Right. Among respectable citizens and businessmen, I enjoyed a good reputation and supported all philanthropic and cultural Croatian institutions and never got involved with Jewish organisations and nor did I ever attend Jewish schools, as many people can testify.”<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, in his petition to the Ustaša police, Vitomir Krauth, a 29-year-old sales assistant, explained that “it is a tragic fact of my life that my ancestors were Jews and I am one too”. He felt the need to emphasise that “in my soul, even in my early childhood, I always expressed myself and felt in every way a Croat”. In this sense, the need to wear a yellow star struck at the core of who he was or thought he was. “Although I don’t want to stress how this affects my feelings, it deeply offends me and strongly debases me that as a Jew I am counted among those who positively worked against the yearnings of the CROAT PEOPLE”, he added, hoping that “in my everyday life I can be permitted to walk about without having to wear the Jewish marking”. He recalled the various ways he had sought to overcome his Jewish ‘taint’ by becoming “extremely active in the Croatian Sokol in Virovitica from 1924 until the time when the notorious Serbian authorities disbanded it”. Afterward, he was among the first to take on the role of auditor, hiding its documentation “in the hope that there would come a time for Croats when the Croatian Sokol could again be active”. He also revealed that “in the time of the most intense persecution of the Croats in 1933, I gave asylum to my good friend and national warrior Josip Begović”.<sup>30</sup> Despite their proud assertions of a Croat identity and nostalgic memories of what it meant to be a Croat nationalist in the 1930s, neither Leopold Müller nor Vitomir Krauth were successful in gaining honorary ‘Aryan’ status and they both perished in the Holocaust, dying in 1941 in Jasenovac.<sup>31</sup>

A few petitioners were more fortunate and did receive honorary ‘Aryan’ status. One of these was Vladimir Sachs-Petrović, the veteran leader of the radical nationalist Pure Party of Rights from which many of the founding members of the Ustaša movement, including Pavelić, had come. Returning from self-imposed exile in April 1941, he experienced, he wrote, the prospect of wearing the Jewish insignia as profoundly shameful, particularly in an independent Croatia he had fought so hard to realise. In his petition of May 1941, he pointed out that “in my fifty years of work for the Croat people and especially its liberation I suffered the unceasing chains of persecution. From 1891 to 1941, I placed my life on the line over thirty times for pure *Pravaši* [radical nationalist] ideas and my wife who experienced the entire Calvary

29 HDA, NDH, MUP/ŽO, 12.252/1886, Molba Leopolda Müllera iz Zagreba, Dalmantinska 16/II, za dozvola da mogu stanovati na istočnoj strani grada Zagreba kao i za oslobodjenje nošenje židovskog znaka [Request of Leopold Müller from Zagreb, Dalmantinska 16/II, for permission to stay on the eastern side of the city of Zagreb as well as for exemption from having to wear Jewish markings], 13 June 1941.

30 HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 2.252/691, Vitomir Krauth to the Jewish Section, undated (emphasis in original). Josip Begović, a university student and member of an Ustaša cell, executed in 1934 for alleged complicity in a plot to assassinate King Aleksandar, was one of the most revered and mythologised martyrs in the movement, his death being commemorated every year on the Day of Croat Martyrs in June and the Day of the Dead in November.

31 See HDA, NRH, JT-OPA, 124.1421/6, Popis interniranih Židova u Jasenovcu III od 21 October 1941 62/5000 [Register of interned Jews in camp 3 of Jasenovac as of 21 October 1941].

with me and who was arrested on 4 April 1939 due to her 'illegal' return to the country [Yugoslavia] and who has just recovered from a serious and devastating illness has decided that she would commit suicide if she had to wear the shameful sign of international Jewry against which we have both determinedly fought."<sup>32</sup>

Petrović-Sach's petition highlights another common feature of many of the Jewish petitions: the view of the writer that they had, in some senses, separated themselves from the rest of the Jewish community. Like Imre Rochlitz and his family, they were convinced that an exception would be granted in their case because they had demonstrated that they were different from other Jews and therefore had transformed themselves into Croats. In fact, some petitioners viewed Jews with scorn, contrasting the eagerness with which they seemingly wore the insignia with their sense of humiliation. One such petitioner was Ela Sudarević, a thirty-four year old tailor's assistant from Zagreb. While she conceded the practical difficulties in having to wear a yellow star and being classified as a Jew would cause her, being publicly marked as Jewish, she stressed, would represent a sign of moral defeat for her: It would associate her with an identity she viewed with revulsion and associate her with a community whose values were alien to her. She pointed out that she had converted to the Roman Catholic faith in 1937 and, despite coming from a Jewish family, had a modest occupation like most Croats, living a hand-to-mouth existence, barely able to afford the bare necessities, and owning no property of her own. She had, she continued, married a Croat, Slavko Sudarević, in 1937 and "we were always good Croats and felt Croat". Moreover, she wrote that while "there are Jews in Zagreb who wear the designated sign with pride, considering themselves martyrs, for me, this insignia is the greatest shame because I always felt myself to be a Croat and I will always feel like this. I am a tailor's assistant, a worker, and so that I can continue to work I am pleading to be exempted from wearing the Jewish sign. Despite attempts to find work in the past half year, my husband is unemployed and if I were to be without a job and income that would mean catastrophe for us both."<sup>33</sup>

Artur Takač, meanwhile, a twenty-three year old athletics star from Varaždin and founder of the town's first ice hockey club, did not mention the Jews by name in the petition he wrote directly to the Poglavnik, but the 'Aryanised' discourse of his letter made it clear that the Jews were on his mind. He sought to differentiate himself from the Jewish community in two ways. First, he praised the wisdom of the antisemitic laws while suggesting that an exception should be made for him as one of a small number of Jews who had transcended their Jewish origins. Second, by emphasising his achievements on the sports field and the role this had played in the construction of a new steely nationalist youth, he sought to emphasise that he stood apart from the stereotype of the weak intellectual Jew, one who had, moreover, made an important contribution in the building of the youth of the future in a Croatian nation-state which would be free of Jews. He belonged, he wrote, to "those who by birth belong under the constraints of those laws, but who with their life and their work are to be separated from the majority of non-Aryans and who are unselfish and sincere Croat nationalists whose life's work is devoted to the awakening of the national consciousness as well as to the progress and prosperity of our nation". He lauded the Poglavnik for his "far-sightedness and generosity" in granting such people all the rights which belong to people of "Aryan origin". In the national organism, there were countless acts which had a great influence on the life of the nation. One of these activities, he added, was sport.

<sup>32</sup> HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 1.252/194/41, Vladimir Sachs-Petrović to the Jewish Section, 25 May 1941.

<sup>33</sup> HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 31.252, unnumbered, Ela Sudarević to the Jewish Section, 28 May 1941.

“Right from the start of our young state, it was noticeable that you understood the overwhelming importance of physical culture and you dedicated particular attention to it. Among the countless young athletes who dedicated themselves to sport, I attempted with my modest means to make a contribution to the hardening of the Croat soul and body for the most sublime struggle: the liberation of the nation.”<sup>34</sup>

### Ordinary Serbs between Terror, Stigmatisation, and ‘Croat Feelings’

Feelings of stigma and pride in the steps they had taken to overcome their ‘shameful’ origins were also important features of the petitions Serb citizens sent to the DRP, the Serb section of the Ustaša police, and even directly to the Poglavnik himself with the aim of avoiding deportation or gaining permission to convert to Catholicism. These narratives can be discerned clearly in the letter Emil Vukašinović, a shipping merchant from Zagreb, addressed to the “Poglavnik of the Croat people” on 14 July asking permission to remain in Croatia. In his letter, he provided a detailed biography, talking emotionally of his Croat identity and nostalgically of his transformation into a Croat, overcoming his Orthodox roots and “stigmatisation” as a Serb. Simultaneously, his letter articulated his conviction that the Ustaša state was one in which an honest patriotic Croat like himself could expect fair treatment. One of the most noticeable aspects of his letter, common to many of the petitions Serbs and Jews wrote to the authorities during this period, was the appropriation of the state’s language. In his case, this involved the use of the phrase ‘Greek Easterner’; in other cases Serb petitioners referred to themselves as ‘former Serbs’. He also used the Ustaša greeting “For the Homeland Prepared!” which was the mandatory state salutation in all public correspondence and communication among citizens and officials alike. However, Serbs and Jews were ostensibly banned from using it since it could only be employed by those with full citizenship. The writer’s use of it here was likely deliberate, intended not only to ensure his petition was looked on more favourably but also to suggest that he considered himself a member of the Croatian national community:

“On the basis that every Croat needs to write to the Poglavnik for permission, I am sending you my petition to ask that you protect me from being branded as a Serb even though my father was baptised in the Greek Orthodox faith. My mother is a Roman Catholic Croat, my wife is a Roman Catholic Croat, I was married in a Roman Catholic Church, and I myself have converted to Roman Catholicism. Apart from that, I have been in Zagreb for 45 years, where I always actively collaborated exclusively with Croats in Croatian societies. I fought as an Austro-Hungarian sergeant [*Zugsführer*] for four years on the Russian Front and for two years on the Italian Front and was decorated as such. In 1924, I actively collaborated in the Party of Right including in the first election when it appeared in the Croatian Block against the late [Stjepan] Radić when he entered the Belgrade government. I was vice-head of the Croatian Sokol and Holy Spirit and actively worked in it for a number of years until the sixth January regime which forced us to dissolve the Sokol. As a flag bearer and vice-prefect of the Croatian Sokol, the vice-Poglavnik Mile Budak and the Poglavnik surely

34 HDA, NDH, RUR/ŽO, 32.252/2341, Artur Takač to the Office of the Poglavnik, 28 May 1941.

have not forgotten when I, together with them, entered the first ranks of the Croatian Sokol. In my honest struggle for Croatian ideals, I never in any way insulted the honour of my Croatian feelings. I ask to be protected as a Croat from stigmatisation as a Serb because previously I was of the Greek Eastern faith. For the homeland prepared!"<sup>35</sup>

Of course, underneath the passionate declarations of a Croatian national identity, the account of their personal struggle to overcome their Serb or Jewish origins and the optimistic belief – in public at least – that they simply had to voice their sameness to the Croatian nation and their *differentness* to the communities to which Ustaša racial ideologues insisted they were members of, and that it would be obvious to the state and the Poglavnik that they belonged, lay a barely concealed dread. In the case of Jews, especially in the early months, members of the community waited for worse to come after the initial burst of antisemitic legislation. For their part, many Serbs were desperate to avoid deportation and 'resettlement camps'. There was also a corrosive sense of terror as rumours about what was happening to Serbs elsewhere in the state spread. This sense of both unrealistic optimism and profound fear is evident in the petition Milan Redić from Soljani wrote to the DRP on 6 August 1941. Although his mother and father were both 'Greek-Eastern' and he had been born into that faith too, he had applied for conversion to Catholicism and his request, he assured the agency, was already underway. "Now the resettlement of the Serbs from the Independent State of Croatia is in progress", he started hopefully, "I am asking the directorate to allow me to remain on my native soil where I was born because I have never felt like a Serb and that is why I am now converting to the Roman Catholic faith and want to be completely equal with other Croats." The local Ustaša camp leader in Soljani Ivan Graždić and the mayor of Soljani sent endorsements confirming that Redić was "always an upstanding citizen and always worked with the Croats, never expressed any kind of Serb consciousness, and was a member of Croatian societies".<sup>36</sup>

In other Serb petitions the sense of desperation was so palpable as to drown out any positive messages about a Croatian identity. These kinds of letters were frequently addressed directly to the Poglavnik in the hope of a positive response and the writer often set out his predicament in overtly emotional terms. These kinds of petitions were penned by the well-educated, humble factory workers, and ordinary peasants alike. The following letter is from Bogdan Lužnjevć, a young worker at a dried meats factory from Križevci, asking for his application to convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism to be expedited. Clearly shaken by a rumour that he and his family might soon be deported to Serbia, he was fearful that he and his family might be subject to "persecution" as Orthodox Serbs if it were not understood that his "true" identity was Croat. His long, confessional letter to the Poglavnik is far less about his struggle to overcome a past 'shameful' or unwanted identity and far more about as-

35 HDA, NDH, Ponova, SO/OS, 447.1076, unnumbered, Molba Vukašinović, Emila, otpremnika, Zagreb, Ilica 159 da se kao člana Pravaške stranke iz godine 1924 i podstarješini Hrvat Sokola Set Duh, Priznanje Hrvatsko kao grčko-istoč, koji je prešao na rimok. vjeru, 14 July 1941 (Petition from Emil Vukašinović, shipping merchant, Zagreb, Ilica 159 as a member of the Party of Right since 1924 and vice-prefect of the Croatian Sokol for the recognition of his Croatanness as a Greek-Easterner who has converted to the Roman Catholic faith). Stjepan Radić was the former leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, the largest and most popular party in Croatia in the 1920s and 1930s. When he entered into a coalition government with pro-government parties in the late 1920s, he was assailed by Croat ultranationalists for 'betraying' Croatia. He was assassinated in the Yugoslav parliament in 1928 by a Serbian nationalist deputy and thereafter King Aleksandar declared a royal dictatorship out of which the embryonic Ustaša movement emerged.

36 HDA, NDH, Ponova, OS/SO, 447.1076, unnumbered, petition from Milan Redić to the DRP, 6 August 1941.



serting the identity he believed he always possessed. Grounded in the discourse of the Ustaša movement and the new state, he portrayed the state not as a site of terror and persecution but one in which he, as much as other Croat people, had been liberated and given the freedom to find himself:

“Poglavnik! I, the undersigned, of the Orthodox faith, born in 1919 in Križevci, honourable, a trained sales assistant, appealed for conversion to the Roman Catholic faith on 12 June 1941 but until today it has still not been resolved despite the fact that Dr. Mile Budak, the minister for religion and education, said during a celebration of the Independent State of Croatia in Križevci on 6 July that those who have committed no sins can convert to the Catholic faith. Seeing as I was born in Croatia and recognise the state of Croatia as my dear homeland, I have never erred with words or deeds against the honour of the Croat people but on the contrary always collaborated in Croatian societies and was always with those who worked for the realisation of the liberation of the state of Croatia and because I am utterly poor without anything. [...] I am contacting you as the Poglavnik of our dear homeland with the warmest appeal that you will be so merciful as to approve my efforts to get permission to convert to the Catholic faith and issue an order to stop the possible persecution of me as I am a poor man of excellent moral character, because I earn my crust with great difficulty and do not want to achieve any kind of riches on the backs of others, and as I never worked against the Croat people and guarantee on my life and also, if it is needed, all the citizens of Križevci can prove my claims.<sup>37</sup>

As well as portraying himself as an honest working man of “excellent moral character” who did not exploit others, but simply earned his “crust” with “great difficulty” and is therefore an ideal new Croat worker, this 24-year-old factory worker emphasised the commitment of his family to the Croatian nationalist cause and their disdain for the Serbian Orthodox Church, not just now but in the 1930s, too. Not only he but also his brother, a builder’s assistant, were married to Croat women, he wrote, their marriages consecrated in the Catholic Church. Like him, his brother was a “resolute Croat” who “always expressed himself as a Croat” and had also applied for conversion to Catholicism. In his petition, he recalled that his family resolutely “stood on the side of the Croats” not least because “we saw that the Orthodox priests were not doing God’s teaching”. This reinforced the state discourse about the heretical and sacrilegious nature of Serbian Orthodox priests and the Church. In fact, the Serbian Orthodox Church was viewed by Ustaša ideologues as one of the main proponents of Serbian nationalist ideology and, later, when the Ustaša movement had abandoned its original programme of mass killing and forced deportation, as an obstacle to the assimilation of the Serb peasant masses. At the height of the Ustaša campaign against the church in the spring and summer of 1941, Ustaša camps and commissariats throughout the state closed Serbian Orthodox churches, monasteries, societies, and schools. Meanwhile, the DRGP and DRP confiscated, nationalised, and liquidated church property and assets and expelled hundreds of priests while Ustaša militias arrested and murdered dozens of others and destroyed or burnt down hundreds of churches. Ljužnjević asked the Poglavnik to publish a licence for conversion to the Catholic faith for him “because without a spiritual shepherd it is hard for us here because we are as though lost”. He added that “as honourable Croat workers, we should not be persecuted”. This hinted again at the threat of terror hang-

<sup>37</sup> HDA, NDH, Ponova, 445.1076/SO, unnumbered, Bogdan Ljužnjević to the Poglavnik, 5 August 1941.

ing over the family from the local Ustaša authorities and militias which at the time appeared determined on cleansing the state of Serbs entirely. In order to underline his loyalty and that of his family, he declared that – if necessary – they would be “always upstanding in defence of our dear homeland of Croatia”, sacrificing “our own lives for the freedom and independence of our Croatian homeland”. He concluded his letter emphatically, declaring that “I remain always for the homeland prepared. Long live our Poglavnik Dr. Ante Pavelić, long live the freedom of the state of Croatia, long live the Croat people. Always prepared.”<sup>38</sup>

### Reconstructed Biographies for New People

The lives and fates of the subjects explored in this article followed very different paths during the Second World War, the Holocaust, and after. For most of the Jewish subjects, there was no after. A few, however, did survive. One of these was Artur Takač, who went on to enjoy a successful career in Socialist Yugoslavia as a sports trainer and Olympic official. The account of how he managed to escape the Holocaust contained in the Biografski Leksikon (Biographical Lexicon) of Jewish personalities does not match the archival evidence. While there are obvious reasons why Takač kept his correspondence with the Poglavnik and his attempts to assert a Croat and ‘Aryan’ identity prior to his escape from the Ustaša state concealed, the political culture in post-war Socialist Yugoslavia also encouraged people from all ethnic groups to edit their autobiographies and reinvent themselves in order to integrate into the new social orthodoxies. The pressure must have been especially intense in the first formative years of the state when the campaign to unmask Fascists who were allegedly concealing themselves as Socialist citizens was at its height and party newspapers called on vigilant citizens to root out all manifestations of ideological deviationism in their factories, offices, neighbourhoods, and even homes.<sup>39</sup> Personal biographies, therefore, were not just often acts of imposture, but also a question of survival. In Takač’s case, his Socialist biography removed him completely from Croatia at the time he wrote his petition to the Poglavnik and relocated him first in a labour camp in Italy and then as an active participant in the anti-Fascist struggle. In truth, these aspects of his wartime experience only occurred later. Nevertheless, this biographical editing ultimately helped him to build a career as one of Yugoslavia’s most celebrated sports trainers, someone who played a leading role in the organisation of the triumphant 1984 Sarajevo Olympics and after whom an athletics tournament would be posthumously named. Far away from the Varaždin and Croat identity he described in his letter, he would, ironically, spend the rest of his life following liberation in Belgrade, ultimately being recognised as one of Serbia’s most illustrious and noteworthy Jews.<sup>40</sup> Yet, as the case of Krešimir Golik illustrated, the risk of exposure and denunciation lurked menacingly in the background with threat of social and ideological shaming and career ostracism should it be revealed.

Artur Takač’s life in Fascist Croatia and Socialist Yugoslavia was one example of this repressed fear, but then so were the lives of countless other Croat citizens who, in the space of twenty years, had had to acquire new personas under (variously) syn-

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Rubčić, *Kaznimo zločince čovječnosti i narodne budućnosti* [We are punishing the criminals for humanity and the national future].

<sup>40</sup> See Teodor Kovač, Artur Takač, in: Aleksandar Nećak (ed.), *Znameniti Jevreji Srbije. biografski leksikon* [Famous Serbian Jews. Biographical Lexicon], Belgrade 2011, 227-228.

thetic Yugoslav, Fascist Croatian, and Socialist regimes. Imposture was an important element of post-war life in Socialist Yugoslavia as tens of thousands of ordinary citizens sought to rewrite their personal biographies in order to reinvent themselves in line with the new socialist orthodoxies just as thousands of ordinary people had tailored their pasts to survive in the Independent State of Croatia. In fact, the same individuals were often involved in serial rewritings in their attempt to negotiate their lives in interwar Yugoslavia, under Ustaša rule, and in Socialist Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly, in all three states an important part of official discourse involved tearing off the masks to reveal the authentic person, someone who all too often, it seemed, hid character or national flaws, deviant ideological agendas, or a corrupt private life underneath. In all three societies, vigilant and honest citizens were encouraged to denounce dangerous neighbours, work colleagues, friends, and even relatives.<sup>41</sup> One of the most notorious of Socialist Yugoslavia's imposters was a con man and seeming fantasist called Leo Furetić, unmasked working in the card index section of the Yugoslav secret police in 1946. In interwar Yugoslavia, he had lived under the name Bernard Švarcenberg and had served time in prison for fraud and embezzlement, but in April 1941, finding himself in the Independent State of Croatia, this illegitimate son of Jewish single mother Cecilija Rozner had managed to get himself baptised and changed his name to the more Croat Leo Furetić, a surname, according to Yugoslav investigators, he had taken "from some goat herder called Furetić in Sesvete for whom he was an apprentice for a period". He then seamlessly joined the Ustaša movement, inventing membership in the revolutionary 1918 battalion (revered by Ustaša ideologues for mounting an insurrection against the new Yugoslav state on 5 December 1918 in Zagreb's Jelačić Square). He also successfully hid his Jewish ancestry, even if ultimately a disciplinary Ustaša court sentenced him to death for corruption and accepting bribes in return for favours. He had the last laugh, escaping from the notorious Savska Cesta in Zagreb in 1944.<sup>42</sup> In the autobiography he wrote for his Yugoslav post-war interrogators, he revealed his varied career as soldier, convicted felon, factory owner, con artist, policeman, death row prisoner and, finally, Communist spy and all-round fixer.<sup>43</sup> Con man or victim of circumstance? Fascist functionary or Socialist spy? Clandestine friend of the resistance or disreputable collaborator? Which one of these personas was the real Ivo Furetić or, indeed, Bernard Švarcenberg? Perhaps they all were, in the same way Ivo and Bernard were one and the same person. At different times, these contradictory identities ensured his economic, social, and physical survival. Whether by the time he was unmasked he actu-

41 Interwar Yugoslavia, especially during the period of King Aleksandar's Yugoslav dictatorship, developed an extensive system of surveillance, denunciation, and monitoring of public opinion. Ordinary citizens were also encouraged to demonstrate their transformed Yugoslav consciousness by denouncing anti-Yugoslav sentiment and, while some were motivated by opportunism, the desire for social advancement, social resentment, or revenge, others engaged in denunciation for idealistic reasons or to demonstrate they had become Yugoslavs. See Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Policing Yugoslavism. Surveillance, Denunciations, and Ideology during King Aleksandar's Dictatorship, 1929–1934*, in: *East European Politics and Societies* 23 (February 2009) 1, 34–62; and Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs. Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia*, Toronto 2014, 137–206.

42 The soldiers were portrayed in Ustaša iconography as the first Ustaša revolutionaries. The anniversary of their uprising was an important day in the state's calendar and an army unit was named after them. In December 1941, the bodies of the dead soldiers were buried with great solemnity at the national cemetery of Mirogoj and the surviving participants in the uprising were incorporated into an honorary battalion at the behest of the Poglavnik to honour their dead comrades. Membership of this battalion offered not just state acclaim but numerous privileges, as Furetić's career in wartime Croatia illustrates. On the state's appropriation of the 1918 uprising, see Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation. The Ustaša Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941–1945*, Pittsburgh 2013, 328–330.

43 HDA, MUP, RH, ZIG, NDH, 176.154/1549/9339/149, 2 Zapisnik o saslušanju Furetić Leo [Minutes of the hearing for Leo Furetić], 21 July 1946.



ally knew who he was is another question. By contrast to Furetić's strategies of survival, many Serb and Jewish petition writers, attempting to survive in a time of terror and revolution, aimed to assert their loyalty, publicly at least, by tearing off the masks which had kept their 'real' national affiliations concealed, now adding new ones in search of their 'authentic' self.

### In Search of the 'Authentic Self'

If, in times of revolution, ordinary people who fear becoming victims of the violence that accompanies it have, as Sheila Fitzpatrick has written, often been forced to tear off their masks – the carefully constructed image of themselves which they present to the world – and create new identities in order to negotiate the social upheaval, for many years the historiography of episodes of modern terror such as the Great Terror in Stalinist Russia and the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Europe often assumed that potential victims either withdrew, making themselves as inconspicuous as possible, or lived a double life, presenting a socially acceptable persona for the public sphere and reverting to an 'authentic self' which expressed resistance in the privacy of the home.<sup>44</sup> Increasingly, Soviet and Holocaust historiographies have challenged this view. While, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in how ordinary Jews experienced the Holocaust in South-Eastern Europe as everyday life, consideration of the individualised nature of Nazi occupation in the former Yugoslavia, despite the rich diversity of sources available to researchers and the importance of the Independent State of Croatia in the Nazi empire, is only in its formative stages. What do the petitions written to state agencies and ministries – the Ustaša police, the State Directorate for Reconstruction, and just as frequently the Poglavnik himself – by this cohort of Jewish and Serb victims tell us about the behaviour of victims of terror during the Holocaust? First, some victims of persecution did not withdraw from the state, aiming to become inconspicuous, as a means of negotiating what they had good reason to expect would be a terrible fate. Nor did they flee or join the incipient resistance struggle. Instead, they were consumed by questions of identity, involved in an (admittedly one-sided) dialogue with the state about their subjectivity. Hence, they publicly declared their difference to other members of their persecuted community as a means of emphasising their affinity with the wider collective of the Croatian nation. Second, while the sentiments expressed in the writers' petitions underline the fluidity of their identity to a contemporary reader that is clearly not how they intended their confessional letters to be interpreted by the bureaucrats who read them. Rather, by stressing their separateness from the community to which they had, they believed, been arbitrarily and unwillingly assigned, and in attributing their 'false' non-Croat identity to malign others (the Jewish community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Yugoslav state), they were tearing away their masks not to adopt a new identity but to reclaim the identity they felt they had always possessed but which could only now be unmasked for the first time.

Finally, the fact that a small number of petition writers such as Artur Takač survived the Holocaust provides us with the opportunity to compare their attempts to write themselves into the Ustaša state with their endeavours aimed at writing themselves into the new Socialist Yugoslav values. In the case of Takač, this required that

<sup>44</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, *Speaking Out. Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalin's Russia*, in: *Kritika* 1 (2000) 1, 72.

he, once again, refashion his autobiography since a Socialist consciousness was clearly incompatible with a past stated identification with Fascism, irrespective of whether it had been motivated by idealism or fear and desperation. Takač's successful integration into the new Socialist state raises questions about the sincerity of the declarations the writers expressed in their petitions. Who was the 'real' Takač, for example? The youthfully exuberant athlete who wrote to the Poglavnik in summer 1941 expressing himself as "an unselfish and sincere Croat nationalist"? Or the other one, the one who became a Socialist resistance fighter and trained generations of Yugoslav athletes before staging the triumphant 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo? Were the 'real' Vitomir Krauth, Leopold Müller, or Bogdan Ljužević the ones who wrote these letters, or were the words they wrote on the page and their 'authentic selves' disembodied and disconnected from each other? In the latter case, we surely cannot know since they either perished or disappeared without trace. For Takač, perhaps his letter to Pavelić never really was anything more than a search for salvation. Or maybe it was as genuine as his later support for the Partisan movement and the Socialist values of Yugoslavia, given that there were numerous examples of young Croat workers, intellectuals, and students who moved between Fascism and Socialism in the violent years of their internecine conflict. If so, this might in itself tell us something about the subjectivity of ordinary people not just during the Holocaust and Nazi occupation but under totalitarian revolutionary rule more generally.

Where the notorious trickster, imposter, and con man Leo Furetić is concerned, of course, it seems much clearer to us who the real person was despite his many disguises and identities. To ask, however, who the 'real' Furetić or Takač was is perhaps to pose the wrong question. As the Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood wrote: "There's never only one, of anyone."<sup>45</sup> The practice of petition-writing as autobiography in a time of terror with all its fear, desperation, and idealism provides an important insight into the way in which the Holocaust and ideological terror in occupied Europe and the post-war period – in this case the Independent State of Croatia and Socialist Yugoslavia – forced victims into tearing off one set of masks and putting on another, hopefully adopting a new identity, but ever fearful that a past 'wrong' comment, letter, or identity would unmask them as a class traitor, national enemy or economic saboteur. More than this, however, exploring subjective processes at the individual level forces the historian to see the Holocaust in fundamentally personal terms, blurring the line between collaborator and victim, challenging post-war discourses about the Holocaust and experiences of occupation as well as contemporary historiographical judgements. Perhaps the autobiographical petitions of the victims of terror in wartime Croatia are subjective in another sense too: The stories of ordinary people in extraordinary times, told in their own words and everyday narratives, are ultimately moderated by our own reactions to them. In an interview of 1982 Christa Wolf reflected that both the narrator and central character in *The Quest for Christa T.* in fact involved Wolf in a dialogue with herself. Her motive for writing the story, she confessed, was "entirely subjective". While the novel did, indeed, seek to memorialise a real-life friend who had died too young, she nevertheless "suddenly" realised as she was writing the manuscript that "it was *myself* I was confronting".<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the correspondence here not only provides a glimpse of what it must have

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, London 1988, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Christa Wolf, Interview with *Myself*, in: Alexander Stephan (ed.), *The Author's Dimension: Selected Essays*, New York, 1993, 13.

been like to experience terror in real time, but forces us to think about our own subjectivity. In the final analysis, to the extent that victims such as Vitomir Krauth and Bogdan Ljužnević were seeking, through their petitions, to be recognised as their authentic selves, they challenge us to think about who we really are through reading them.

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[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1\\_Articles\\_Yeomans/Articles\\_Yeomans01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1_Articles_Yeomans/Articles_Yeomans01.pdf)

Article

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Ferenc Erős

# From War Neurosis to Holocaust Trauma

## An Intellectual and Cultural History

### Abstract

This paper outlines a historical and critical survey of the contribution of psychoanalysis and other 'psycho-sciences' to our contemporary understanding of Holocaust trauma. It argues that the theme of mass traumatisation effects originates in the use of psychiatric knowledge and procedures during the First World War. As part of the war machine, psychiatry had special functions in the mobilisation of the masses as well as in the treatment and rehabilitation of those soldiers who suffered from 'shell shock' and later developed 'traumatic neurosis' or 'war neurosis'. The main task of psychiatrists at that time was to cure these soldiers as quickly and effectively as possible – in order to send them back to the same dangerous circumstances, which had caused their symptoms in the first place. In treating war neurotics, brutal punitive methods such as painful electric shocks were frequently used. Based on archival sources, and on the correspondence between Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi, the application of these methods is illustrated here through the example of a Hungarian military doctor, Viktor Gonda. The majority of army doctors regarded war neurosis as a character deficiency, a sign of a 'feminine' character. It was thought that this kind of 'male hysteria' could also affect 'healthy' soldiers, destroying their will, determination, patriotism, and heroism. By contrast, the psychoanalytic conception of war neurosis developed by Sándor Ferenczi in Hungary and by Karl Abraham and Ernst Simmel in Germany was intended to be a humanising alternative to the dominant, mainly 'punishing' and torturous procedures applied by mainstream military psychiatry. Psychoanalysts emphasised the importance of understanding the patient's symptoms, assuming that their explanation originated in the patient's life history and unconscious motives rather than exclusively in external, physical causes. The psychoanalytic approach to war neurosis anticipated later debates on the nature of individual and collective psychological traumata. This paper surveys the impact of the First World War on the development of the theory and technique of psychoanalysis, including the concepts of Freud, Ferenczi, Melanie Klein, Abram Kardiner, and others. After the Second World War, psychoanalysis was preoccupied with the exploration of the 'Nazi mind', the specific psychological and characterological traits of war criminals, their supporters, and their collaborators. This paper argues that the existence of a Holocaust trauma as a separate group of symptoms was for a long time not really acknowledged. The focus only shifted from perpetrators to victims in the 1970s, due to the introduction of the diagnostic category of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) into the vocabulary of psychoanalysis. This paper, however, argues that the concept of PTSD preserved, in some ways, the dominant discourse of First World War psychiatry, continuing, in a subtler way, to stigmatise or blame the victims.

## The Ice Age of Catastrophes

For the last fifteen years, I have been working on the origin and history of psychoanalysis in Central Europe. Among other things, I edited the Hungarian translation of the six grand volumes of the correspondence between Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi, the founder of the Hungarian psychoanalytic movement in 1913. This correspondence, which contains more than 1,200 letters, is an excellent source base not only for studying the history of psychoanalysis, but of the intellectual and cultural history of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy as well.<sup>1</sup>

The letters exchanged between 1914 and 1919 – in the period of the First World War and the subsequent revolutions – deserve special attention. These may be read as a kind of joint war diary, a collection of personal thoughts, confessions, and reflections, from which we can follow, almost day by day, how Freud and Ferenczi experienced and lived through the war and the revolutions, how they reacted not only to everyday problems, but also to grand historical events and traumas such as the disappearance of their previous realm of experience and the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, to which they had been so strongly attached politically and also emotionally, though not without serious doubts and ambivalences. As Freud wrote in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*:

“We live in the hopes that the pages of an impartial history will prove that the nation, in whose language we write and for whose victory our dear ones are fighting, has been precisely the one which has least transgressed the laws of civilization, But at such a time who dares to set himself up as judge in his own case?”<sup>2</sup>

We can also follow from these letters how the themes of the traumatic mental and psychological impact of the war and the problem of war neurosis emerged and developed in their ideas and activities.

The first part of this article focusses on the psychoanalytic approach, especially Ferenczi's, to war neurosis, as opposed to other, mainstream psychiatric approaches. In the second part, I will briefly describe how the problem of war neurosis and the problem of war and revolutions as a whole continued in psychoanalysis after the war. In the third part, I will comment on the question of how Holocaust trauma is related to war neurosis.

On 21 August 1914, a few weeks after the outbreak of the war, Ferenczi wrote to Freud:

“The events have had a paralyzing effect on any kind of mental activity on my part. I have felt like a foreigner with respect to the war enthusiasm – anachronistic, to my way of thinking. It seems I have had the wrong idea about the real cultural state of our society, otherwise the mental and emotional emptiness that has become manifest in me since the outbreak of the war would be inexplicable.”<sup>3</sup>

His “mental and emotional emptiness” was soon replaced by new obligations. In October 1914, Ferenczi was ordered to ‘volunteer’ as an ordinary physician attached

1 Ernst Falzeder/Eva Brabant (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*, Volume 1, 1908–1914; Volume 2, 1914–1919; Volume 3, 1920–1933, Cambridge, MA 1993–2002. The Hungarian edition was published by Ferenc Erős/Anna Kovács (ed.), *Sigmund Freud – Ferenczi Sándor, Levelezés [Correspondence]*, Budapest 1999–2005.

2 Sigmund Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, in: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Standard Edition (S.E.), Volume XIV, London 1957, 274–300, here 279.

3 *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*, Volume 2, 1914–1919, 11.



to a Hussar regiment, stationed at that time in Pápa, a small garrison town in western Hungary. As we can see from the correspondence, he was from the very first days of his military service was meditating on the psychological roots and effects of the war. As he wrote in an essay published in 1915 under the title *The Ice Age of Catastrophes*:

“The worst and most upsetting events could appear as unbridled experiences of experimental psychology, a kind of ‘Naturexperiment’ that the scientist cannot realise in his study, but at most, within the laboratory of his mind. War is one of those laboratory experiments taken to a cosmic level. In peacetime, only through the complex examination of dreams, of neurotic symptoms, of artistic creations, of diverse religions can one demonstrate [...] that the human psyche presents multiple layers, the culture is but a prettily decorated shop-window whilst at the back of the store, the more primitive merchandise is piled up. War had brutally wrested of this mask and has shown us man in his deepest, truest nature at the heart of man, the child, the savage, the primitive.”<sup>4</sup>

During his deployment at the still relatively quiet garrison, where he was once visited by Freud himself, he submitted a proposal to his superiors, suggesting the establishment of a specialised institution for the ‘brain-crippled’ soldiers. Although this plan was not realised in its original form, an impressive network of provisional military hospitals and medical stations were set up quite rapidly in diverse regions of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>5</sup> Special psychiatric and neurological departments were established within the walls of several such centres, one of the largest in the Monarchy being the Mária Valéria barrack hospital in Budapest. In early 1916, Ferenczi was transferred from the provincial garrison to the neurology ward of this institution. He was one of many thousands of medical doctors who served in the war at various posts, either directly on the battlefields, or in provisional medical stations, in military hospitals, and in other health institutions. War medicine was not only an instrument for alleviating the pain and suffering of the patient, it moreover became one of the most important weapons, a bio-political weapon, “machine guns behind the front”.<sup>6</sup>

The First World War was one of the first wars in human history that was fought with advanced industrial and military technology. The war afflicted millions of people not only physically but mentally as well – among the citizens (soldiers and civilians, prisoners of war, men and women, children and adults) of all participating nations. Medicine, with its already fairly specialised branches, including neurology and psychiatry, was an integral part of the war technology, and made extraordinarily rapid progress during the war, from diagnostic as well as therapeutic, theoretical as well as technical aspects.<sup>7</sup> The foundations for the present historical and cultural approach to the issue of war psychiatry were chiefly laid by the scholarship of Michel Foucault, partly through his works on the history of mental illness, and partly by showing how the development of human sciences was connected to the birth of the modern tools, practices, and sites (hospitals, asylums, armies, prisons, detention

4 Sándor Ferenczi, *The Ice Age of Catastrophes*, in: Julia Borossa (ed.), Sándor Ferenczi. *Selected Writings*, London 1999, 125.

5 A Hadtörténelmi Levéltár katonaelegetszegugyi iratainak repertoriuma 1740–1980 [Repertory of the Military-medical Documents of the Military History Archive]. Hadtörténelmi Levéltár [Military History Archive], Budapest, 2003, <http://mot.tudomanytortenet.hu/pdf/Hadtortenelmi.pdf> (28 January 2017).

6 Peter Riedesser/Axel Verderber, “Maschinengewehre hinter der Front”. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Militärpsychologie, Frankfurt am Main, 1989.

7 See e.g. Heinz Schott/Rainer Tölle, *Geschichte der Psychiatrie. Krankheitslehren, Irrwege, Behandlungsformen*, Munich, 2005.

centres etc.) of discipline, punishment, and violence.<sup>8</sup> The Foucauldian notion of *gouvernementalité* proved to be essential, since it referred to those organised practices (mentalities, rationalities, techniques) with the help of which hegemony over subjectivity or the “governance of the soul” was implemented.<sup>9</sup>

The main task of psycho-sciences, at that time mostly subsumed under medicine, was to deal with and to govern the human subject, enabling the utmost exploitation of human resources necessary for the war effort, the mobilisation of the masses, the enforcement of discipline and obedience, the weeding out of those deemed unfit, of weaklings and other ‘unhealthy’ and disturbing elements, and on the other hand the cure and potential rehabilitation of those individuals who had already suffered serious psychological injuries related to any kind of violent events. The main obligation of psycho-doctors in the armies was to cure shell-shocked or war-neurotic soldiers as quickly and effectively as possible – in order to make them fit again to be sent back to the scene of their original trauma, to the trenches and battlefields.

Over the last years, the psychiatric and neurological practices, and the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and discourses applied to war-afflicted mental states during the First World War have become a special research area. While traditionally this area belonged to medical history, to the history of psychiatry and related disciplines, it nowadays seems to be an exciting novel topic for historical research. For social historians, the practices and discourses of military psychiatry on body and soul illuminate the everyday life and human history of the war, society’s relation to physical and psychological suffering, as well as the structure and functioning of military health organisations, their inner power relationships, and the conflict between obedience to orders and the doctor’s Hippocratic Oath.<sup>10</sup> The topics related to war neuroses have attracted the attention of gender researchers, too, since the diagnosis and evaluation of war-related psychological symptoms have raised the issue of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’, illuminating the genesis of modern discourses on masculinity.<sup>11</sup>

## Shell Shock and War Neurosis

Shell shock was the most common psychological consequence of the war for the combatting soldiers – a condition that was first described in the medical journal *The Lancet* in 1915 by Charles Myers, a British military doctor, based on his first-hand experience of the battles at the river Somme in France.<sup>12</sup> The most salient symptoms of shell shock were described as tremors of the feet, quivering, gait disorders, loss of vision, hearing and speech, sudden violent outbursts, amnesia, and anaesthesia. Shell shock was one of the most widespread battlefield injuries during the First World War: It seemed unlike any of the other wounds contracted in the war, an in-

8 See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London 1965; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, London 1977.

9 See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France*, London, 2008. See also Nikolas Rose’s seminal work on the social history of modern psychology: *Governing the Soul. The Shaping of the Private Self*, London 1989.

10 See Susanne Michl, *Ethical Conflicts in Wartime Medicine*, in: *War and Trauma. Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914–2014*, Ghent 2014, 105–114.

11 See for example Jessica Meyer, *Men of War. Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, London 2009.

12 Charles Myers, *Contribution to the Study of Shell Shock*, in: *The Lancet*, Volume 185, Issue 4772, 13 February 1915, 316–330; see also Tracey Loughran, *Shell Shock, Trauma, and the First World War. The Making of a Diagnosis and Its Histories*, in: *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 67 (2012) 1, 94–119, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhmas/jrq052> (28 January 2017).

jury without any overt bodily signs, a mass outbreak of mental disorder. As historian George L. Mosse emphasised:

“For the cultural historian, shell-shock provides an excellent example of the fusion of medical diagnosis and social prejudice [...] Shell-shock, in reality, was not as vague a disease as it seemed at the time; rather, as we look upon the phenomenon from a historical perspective, it was an injury, which, while raising disturbing medical questions, was easily co-opted by traditional cultural prejudice which, so it was thought, could provide it with a readily understood context.”<sup>13</sup>

The military doctors of the Austro-Hungarian and German armies observed similar symptoms among fighting soldiers, as had the British doctor Charles Myers. The German neurologist Alois Alzheimer observed, also in 1915, a “shock experience”, and the victims of this experience were in the beginning called *Kriegszitterer* (war quiverers).<sup>14</sup> However, Austro-Hungarian and German doctors preferred to call this syndrome a ‘traumatic neurosis’, ‘war neurosis’, or ‘war hysteria’.

It was in the Mária Valéria barrack hospital where Ferenczi was able to garner his first direct impressions of shell shock and of other brutal effects of war. As he wrote in a 1916 article on preliminary remarks on certain types of war neuroses:<sup>15</sup> “I have been in charge of the section for nervous diseases in this hospital for only two months, and have had about two hundred cases [of war neurosis] under my observation.” Simultaneously, in a letter to Freud, he reported about one single interesting case:

“I analysed [...] a sufferer from war trauma for an hour. Unfortunately, it turned out that the year before the shock of the war he had lost a father, two brothers (through the war), and a wife through unfaithfulness. When such a man then has to lie for twenty-four hours underneath a corpse, it is difficult to say how much of his neurosis is due to war trauma. (He trembles and speaks in a mumble.)”<sup>16</sup>

In *Two Types of War Neurosis*, Ferenczi outlined his first psychoanalytic conception of traumatic neuroses – based upon Freud’s concept of hysteria which differed from the standard psychiatric position on at least one essential point: it was “genuine illness, not simulation”. According to Ferenczi, the patients’ symptoms (as already described by several military doctors such as Myers, Alzheimer, and others) were all caused by “psychological trauma” and not by some central organic, possibly microscopic lesions of the nervous system, as was widely believed by several contemporary neurologists. Observing patients suffering from astasia (inability to stand), and abasia (inability to walk), Ferenczi thought that these patients

“had repressed into their unconscious the affective reaction to certain psychic traumata, for the most part experiences that were adapted to diminish their self-confidence, repressed in the unconscious from where they continued to influence their activities, and any threat of repetition of the pathogenic experience led to a development of anxiety. The patient then learns to

13 George L. Mosse, *Shell-Shock as a Social Disease*, *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000) 1, 101-108, here 101. On the cultural and political history of shell shock and its impact on British society and cultural memory, see Jay Winter, *Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000) 1, 7-11; Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle. Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Manchester 2009; and Peter Leese, *Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldier in the First World War*, London 2002.

14 Alois Alzheimer, *Der Krieg und die Nerven*, Breslau 1915.

15 The article was published in English in 1916 under the title *Two Types of War Neurosis*, reprinted in: Julia Borossa (ed.), *Sándor Ferenczi*, 129-144.

16 *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*, Volume 2, 1914–1919, 107-108.

escape anxiety states by avoiding any activity that would in any way lead to the repetition of the pathogenic situation (hysterical anxiety).<sup>17</sup>

A co-ordination disturbance such as a tremor “becomes a defense formation that will protect the patient from re-experiencing the alarm”.<sup>18</sup> In other cases, such as hyperesthesia (hypersensitivity of all the senses), “the psyche does not wait for an external stimulus in order to react to it exaggeratedly, but creates for itself the image at which it can then become alarmed. The unpleasant symptom too, therefore, is in the service of the effort of self-healing” – “Traumatophilia.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Ferenczi, his own psychoanalytically oriented attempts to treat shell-shocked patients proved Freud’s original hypothesis about the predominantly sexual etiology of hysteria, inasmuch as many patients behaved as though they had been victimised by sexual assaults in their childhood. The result of psychological shocks – argued Ferenczi – may be a neurotic regression, that is “a return to a stage of development long outgrown both onto- and phylogenetically.”<sup>20</sup> At the end of the article he referred to the results “achieved by many neurologists from treating war neuroses by painful electric stimuli”, which may be due “to the fact these painful sensations satisfy the patient’s latent traumatophilia.”<sup>21</sup>

### Traumatic Neuroses in Peace and War: An On-Going Debate

Ferenczi’s concept of hysteria and his remark on “painful electric stimuli” applied as a cure lead us to the core of the debates concerning the nature of war neurosis going on among military psycho-experts (psychiatrists and neurologists) at that time in Austria-Hungary, in Germany, and in other countries. In that period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there existed two distinct schools, which differed essentially in their assumptions about traumatic neuroses. The first school attributed an organic background (subtle molecular changes, lesions, or degenerative processes of the central nervous system) to this sort of neuroses. In other words, these patients were sick in the full sense of the word, meaning that they needed proper medical treatment, hospitalisation or, in incurable cases, longer absence or release from military service. The second school, which became ever more dominant in Austria-Hungary and Germany, stigmatised patients suffering from traumatic neuroses as hysterics in the common, pre-Freudian sense of the word, meaning that they were feminine, morally retarded people, malingerers, and deserters, who whether deliberately or unconsciously used their pretended symptoms to escape from front service, to avoid the military, and to receive various compensations, benefits, and life-long pensions.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ferenczi, Two Types of War Neurosis, 137-138.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>22</sup> See Esther Fischer-Homberger, *Die traumatische Neurose. Vom somatischen zum sozialen Leiden*, Bern 1974; Hans-Georg Hofer, “Nervöse Zitterer”. *Psychiatrie und Krieg*, in: Helmut Konrad (ed.), *Krieg, Medizin und Politik. Der erste Weltkrieg und die österreichische Moderne*, Vienna 2000, 15-134; Hans-Georg Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg. Modernitätskritik und Krisenbewältigung in der österreichischen Psychiatrie*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 2004; Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men. War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930*, Ithaca/London 2003; Mark S. Micale/Paul Lerner (ed.), *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, Cambridge, MA 2002; Doris Kaufman, *Science as Cultural Practice*, In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (1999) 3, 125-144.

The debate between the two schools originated in the nineteenth-century psychiatric conceptions of female and male hysteria. While it was widely supposed that hysteria among women was part of their biological constitution (inborn physiological fragility or weakness), male hysteria was seen by many doctors as ‘the illness of the will’, a lack of discipline, inability to cope with stress, and a lack of physical and psychological strength. Male hysteria was often associated with neurasthenia, a term originally introduced by an American doctor, George Bernard Beard. The roots of the problem of traumatic neuroses go back to the second half of the nineteenth century, in relation to the development of modern technologies of railway transport, industry, and war, and the growing number of accidents stemming from new technological devices. The diagnostic category of ‘railway spine’, designating psychological trauma conditions after serious railway accidents, was introduced in 1867 by the British physician John Eric Erichsen. While the victims of accidents, injuries, and other traumatic events as consequences of modern technology were mostly men (industrial workers, miners, soldiers and so forth), the victims of the more ‘traditional’ traumata, such as sexual abuse, were mostly women and small children. According to the dominant conception, women and children reacted to traumatic events with hysteria, while adult men could become neurasthenic in extremely stressful conditions. While neurasthenia was seen as a genuine illness which could afflict all men, hysteria was something of an morally inferior and shameful condition which was characteristic of women, with ‘infantile’, ‘feminine’ types of men, like most Jewish men, belonging to some ‘inferior race’. As we know for example from Sander Gilman’s research, modern racism is largely founded on this sort of “medical characterology”.<sup>23</sup>

The acknowledgment of traumatic illness as illness was, therefore, not only a theoretical and diagnostic question, it also had far-reaching political and economic implications. In the United Kingdom, insurance companies partly acknowledged traumatic neurosis as an illness entitled to compensation. In Bismarck’s Germany, the Reichsversicherungsamt (Imperial Insurance Office) recognised the existence of traumatic neurosis and “thereby included post-accident nervous symptoms within the beneficence of the workers’ compensation legislation”.<sup>24</sup> The main figure of German neurology at that time was Hermann Oppenheim (1858–1919), like Sigmund Freud a disciple of the great French neurologist and ‘inventor of hysteria’ Jen-Martin Charcot. He was one of the main supporters of the compensation legislation, while most German neurologists and psychiatrists opposed it, claiming that the welfare laws resulted in an epidemic of ‘pension neurotics’, people who only pretended to be ill in the hope of welfare benefits. Oppenheim’s opponents introduced the term *Begehrensneurose* (coveting neurosis), indicating the source of neurosis in a longing for benefits.

This debate continued during the First World War. Oppenheim and his followers continued to believe in the organic etiology of traumatic neurosis, meaning that detonation shocks and other violent events could cause molecular damage or lesions to the central nervous system that could in turn lead to “neurasthenia” or “degeneration”.<sup>25</sup> However, a growing number of army neurologists and psychiatrists started to radically challenge Oppenheim’s views. The great clash between the psycho-doctors took place in September 1916 in Munich, at the conference of the

23 Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud. Medicine and Identity at the Fin de siècle*, Baltimore 1993.

24 See Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men*.

25 See also the work of the Viennese neurologist Otto Marburg, *Nervenkrankheiten. Die Neurologie im Kriege*, Munich 1915.

German Psychiatric Society on war neurosis, involving the leading experts from Germany and the Dual Monarchy. The overwhelming majority supported the views of Robert Gaupp, Max Nonne, Karl Bonhoeffer and other leading neurologists/psychiatrists, who favoured a so-called “psychological explanation”, meaning that most of the war neurotics were in fact war hysterics (*Kriegshysteriker*), not physically ill, and that they should be treated as such.

Even if the symptoms were similar, there was a huge difference between the British and the Central European concept of war-related psychological disturbances. The British conception of shell shock emphasised the consequences of a dramatic event, such as the explosion of a grenade, which could affect anyone, and did not necessarily attribute it to hereditary causes or character deficiencies. In Germany and in the Dual Monarchy, by contrast, ‘war hysterics’ were more likely to be stigmatised with malingering, feminine, and infantile features, moral inferiority, cowardice, and a lack of will and patriotism. It was supposed and feared that this kind of ‘male hysteria’ could also infect ‘healthy’ soldiers, destroying their will, determination, patriotism, and heroism. Therefore, hysterics should either be healed with the harshest methods, or the incurable degenerates, schizophrenics, and mentally retarded persons should be isolated from the rest of their comrades. Some psychiatrists, such as the above-mentioned professor Alzheimer, even used the strange diagnostic term ‘psychopathia gallica’ for designating the alleged ‘femininity’ of the French national character. Thus, psychiatry and psychopathology became part of the war propaganda machine on all sides, stigmatising inner and outer enemies with pathological and/or diabolic character traits (femininity, aggression, and so on).<sup>26</sup> Later, at the end of the war, Emil Kraepelin, a leading German psychiatrist announced that the defeat of Germany was caused by psychopathic revolutionaries, predominantly Jews, who spread mass hysteria among the population.<sup>27</sup> As we know from the historiography, the campaign against war neurotics continued afterward with other means, for example by contesting or limiting their claims for proper compensation and pension.<sup>28</sup>

The Munich conference reinforced the role of army psychiatrists and neurologists as state functionaries. Erwin Stransky from the Viennese Psychiatric Association pointed out that “whatever therapeutic measures might seem appropriate in a particular situation, in this serious time the cardinal point of view ought not to be determined by the well-being of the individual case, but by the welfare of our so close allied armies”. The German Psychiatric Association declared officially that its members would “never forget that we physicians have now to put all our work in the service of one mission: to serve our army and our fatherland”.<sup>29</sup>

26 It should be noted that the treatment of war neurotics was, in general, much harsher in Germany and the Dual Monarchy than in the United Kingdom. This, of course, did not mean that harsh or even torturous methods would have been completely lacking from the arsenal of British military doctors. However, British soldiers might have had a better chance of avoiding punishing or even torturing treatments of the military doctors; see e.g. Peter Leese, *Traumatic Neurosis*.

27 See Riedesser/Verderber, “Maschinengewehre hinter der Front”.

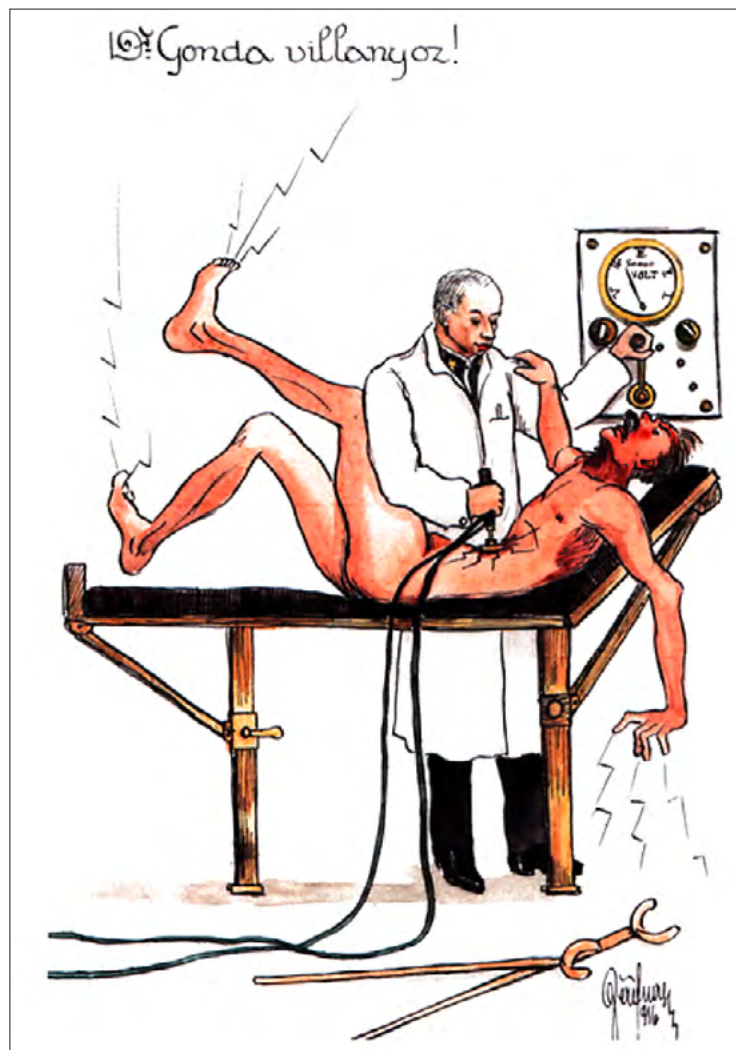
28 On the social-political questions regarding war victims in its aftermath, see Kent, *Aftershocks*. Politics and Trauma in Britain 1918–1931; Verena Pawlowsky, *Wunden des Staates. Kriegsopfer und Sozialstaat in Österreich 1914–1938*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2015.

29 See José Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*, Oxford 1995; José Brunner, *Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and Politics during the First World War*, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 27 (1991) 4, 352–365.



### 'Surprise Cure' and Shock Therapy

After the Munich congress, most military neurologists and psychiatrists in Germany and Austria-Hungary had come to agree that the most efficient method of curing and 'normalising' war neurotics – either for those who were really 'ill' or for those who were just 'malingerers' – was electrotherapy combined sometimes with other harsh methods, such as cures with alternating hot and cold water, isolation in a dark room, forceful exercises, and so forth. Electrotherapy was also called *Kaufmann's Method* after the German army doctor Fritz Kaufmann, who was the first to apply this procedure systematically.<sup>30</sup> He called his treatment *Surprise Cure*, assuming that the great and sudden pain caused by the shock would make the patient 'forget' his symptoms forever. Some neurologists supposed that the symptoms disappeared exclusively because of the direct physical effect of the electric shock. Others believed that the doctor's personality, the suggestive power of therapy, or the combination of physical and psychological consequences caused most symptoms to disappear – at least at first sight – after a few electrotherapy sessions.



A caricature of Dr. Gonda's method

30 On the history of electrotherapy, see Michael Hubenstorf, Vom Krebsgang des Fortschritts, in: Lichtjahre. 100 Jahre Strom in Österreich, Vienna 1987, 149-171; Markus Hedrich, Medizinische Gewalt, Bielefeld 2014; see also Max Kahane, Grundzüge der Elektrodiagnostik und Elektrotherapie, Berlin/Vienna 1922.

Returning to Ferenczi's own experiences, in May 1917 he was ordered to continue his service in a reserve hospital in Újpest, a suburb of Budapest, in a modern and well-equipped neurology section opened in 1916. In this hospital, electrotherapy was also systematically applied. One of Ferenczi's colleagues here was a young physician named Dr. Viktor Gonda, who was already known as an expert of and a passionate believer in shock therapy.<sup>31</sup> Ferenczi characterised him as such in a letter to Freud:

"[Dr. Gonda] is spreading himself around more and more here, is having column-length articles written about his miracle cures (in daily newspapers), and all the naive folk, from archduke to university professors on down, are coming to our hospital to observe the miracle together."<sup>32</sup>

In an earlier article, Gonda had already described the details of his method, which meant administering painful electric shocks with growing intensity of faradic current on the patient's limbs.<sup>33</sup> The administration of the shock was complemented by verbal suggestion. This procedure was repeated eight to ten times, and finally the patient was forced to stand up, move, walk, and run.

Dr. Gonda was also a passionate photographer and filmmaker. He took a great number of photographs portraying his patients at different stages of their treatment, and he also made a moving picture to illustrate the process of the cure. These images portray treatment as a theatrical performance reminiscent of Charcot's *Theatre de l'hystérie*.<sup>34</sup>



Scenes from the film on the electric treatment of war neurotics made by Dr. Viktor Gonda in 1916.

31 Dr. Gonda graduated from the medical faculty of Budapest University in 1911. In 1916, he joined the Magyar Királyi Rokkant Kórház, the Hospital of the Hungarian Royal Disability Department in Rózsahegy (today Ružomberok, Slovakia) as a neurologist. From there he was transferred to Újpest in 1917. After the war, he emigrated to the United States where he later became a professor of neurology in Chicago. His work largely contributed to the spread of electroconvulsive therapies in the USA; see László Kiss, Rózsahegyől Chicagóig. Gonda Viktor (1889–1959), egy méltatlanul elfelejtett magyar orvos [From Rózsahegy to Chicago. Gonda Viktor (1889–1959), An Undeservedly Forgotten Hungarian Doctor], in: Orvosi Hetilap [Weekly for Medical Doctors] 146 (2005) 18, 853–855.

32 The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi, Volume 2, 1914–1919, 243.

33 Viktor Gonda, Rasche Heilung der Symptome der im Kriege entstandenen "traumatischen Neurose" (Vorläufige Mitteilung), in: Wiener klinische Wochenschrift XXIX (1916) 30, 960–961.

34 For the photos and films, I am grateful to Dr. William Gonda, Viktor's grandson. Some of the photos can be found in the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv (ÖStA/KA), KM 1916, Präs. 15–15, 155.

## Psychoanalysis Enters the Scene

In 1917, one year before the end of the war, war neurosis became an increasingly serious problem for the Austro-Hungarian military authorities. On 2 October 1917, the Austrian Prime Minister Count Czernin claimed during a speech in Budapest that the war must be continued and the final victory must be attained “with cold blood and calm nerves”.<sup>35</sup> In October 1917, the Austro-Hungarian High Military Command convened a conference in Baden in order to discuss the most important and immediate actions to be taken in order to prevent the occurrence of massive war neuroses. The military doctors who attended the conference, among them Dr. Gonda, presented with pride their enormous successes in electrotherapy. However, the propaganda of success could not bring improvements to the masses of people who suffered shocks on the battlefield, or became traumatised in many other ways during the war. Military medicine was ever less capable of coping with the problem of traumatic neuroses on a massive societal scale. Protests against the terrible human and material conditions and against the often barbaric, inhuman treatments ruling at the neurological and psychiatric wards of the military hospitals became ever more intense. Among the war neurotics, whose numbers in Vienna alone had increased according to some estimates to as many as 180,000 by 1918, revolutionary agitation fell upon fertile ground.<sup>36</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War – already in the shadow of imminent defeat – planned new strategies in order to cope with this increasingly threatening problem. For a moment, psychoanalysis seemed a promising alternative to alleviate the situation, replacing, at least partly, the much criticised and mostly ineffective electrotherapies. In fact, the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War issued an order in October 1918, a few days before the end of war, for the “[f]urther construction of nerve stations and treatment of war neurotics”. The order ruled, among other things, that “cases that already manifested resistance against the doctors’ intentions on several nerve stations should be handed over to nerve stations where cures should be attempted with psychoanalytic methods.”<sup>37</sup>

The more favourable attitude of military health authorities toward psychoanalysis was largely due to Ferenczi’s ceaseless efforts to popularise his ideas. He was able to arrange an invitation of the delegates of the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of War to the Fifth International Congress of Psychoanalysis – “this very important scientific meeting” then under preparation – the main themes of which would be “war neuro-

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*, 358.

<sup>36</sup> See Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg*; Riedesser/Verderber, “Maschinengewehre hinter der Front”. It should be noted that the problem of war-neurosis came to the forefront again by 1920 in Austria. Julius Wagner-Jauregg, the famous neurology professor from Vienna who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1927, was accused by one of his war-neurotic ex-patients (Lieutenant W. Kauder) claiming that the treatment of patients under his direction was brutish. The professor regarded these patients simply as hypochondriacs or deserters. A board of enquiry was set up and Freud was called as an expert witness. He declared his reservations concerning the methods used by Wagner-Jauregg. However, at the same time he commended Wagner-Jauregg’s professional and human qualities; see Kurt R. Eissler, *Freud und Wagner-Jauregg vor der Kommission zur Erhebung militärischer Pflichtverletzungen*, Vienna 1979.

<sup>37</sup> ÖStA/KA, Code No. KA 18. 14. A. 43-51. The document was first published by Ferenc Erős/Patrizia Giampieri Spanghero, *The Beginnings of the Reception of Psychoanalysis in Hungary 1900–1920*, *Sigmund Freud House Bulletin* 11 (1987) 2, 13-28.

ses and psychoses, topics so important for military medicine”.<sup>38</sup> The Fifth International Congress of Psychoanalysis took place in Budapest in September 1918, under the participation of a few higher ministerial dignitaries from Vienna, Budapest, and Berlin. The keynote speech was held – in Freud’s presence – by Ferenczi, under the title *Psychoanalysis of War Neurosis*, which was in fact a more elaborate version of his earlier paper, cited above, on certain types of war neuroses.<sup>39</sup> In the speech, he pointed out: “The mass experiment of the war caused many kinds of grave neuroses, among them such conditions that were caused certainly not by mechanical effects. Thus, neurologists are due to acknowledge that something was missing from their calculations, namely, the psyche.” He added that it was only the terrible experiences of the war that had forced neurologists to appreciate the significance of psychoanalysis.<sup>40</sup>

From a historical perspective, medical treatment of soldiers suffering from shell shock or war neurosis was one of the most exciting and at the same time darkest chapters in the history of modern warfare and psychiatry, a genuine *Naturexperiment*, as Ferenczi called it. The psychoanalytic conception of war neurosis played only a marginal role in the history of psycho-sciences during the First World War. Nevertheless, by suggesting a more humane alternative to the dominant, often barbaric procedures, it became a paradigmatic frame for further discussions on the nature and consequences of psychological traumas. Psychoanalysts emphasised the importance of listening to the patients’ narratives, exploring their previous life history, understanding the meanings of their symptoms, and interpreting their unconscious motives, rather than focussing exclusively on external, hypothetically physical causes, or simply declaring them ‘malingerers’. On the other hand, most psychoanalysts were obedient soldiers, being loyal to Freud and to the Kaiser at the same time, and, as all other military doctors, stood in the service of an oppressive power. In *The Last Days of Mankind*, Karl Kraus portrayed the military doctor as a diabolic figure who becomes “less fit for service the more people he declares fit to fight, so securing a greater chance of survival for himself. [...] they secure the survival of the wounded – to be sent back to the front, where they won’t survive”.<sup>41</sup> Psychoanalysts could have been, of course, less diabolic, but they could not escape from the inherent hypocrisy of their position: “Healing of the soul while serving the war.” Or as Karl Kraus remarked with murderous irony: “Psychoanalysis is that mental illness for which it regards itself as therapy.”<sup>42</sup>

38 During the final period of the war, a few German psychoanalysts such as Karl Abraham and Ernst Simmel also played an important role in legitimising psychoanalysis, and in convincing the Prussian military health authorities about its beneficial effects. Simmel, as the head physician of the neurology department of the military hospital in Posen (Poznań), combined psychoanalysis with hypnosis during the treatment of war neurosis, publishing a book about his work that raised widespread interest: Ernst Simmel, *Kriegsneurosen und “psychisches Trauma”. Ihre gegenseitigen Beziehungen, dargestellt aufgrund psychoanalytischer, hypnotischer Studien*, Munich/Leipzig 1918.

39 Karl Abraham and Ernst Simmel, both representing the Berlin Psychoanalytic Association, also contributed to this topic at the congress; see Sigmund Freud/Sándor Ferenczi/Karl Abraham/Ernst Simmel/Ernest Jones, *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen. Diskussion gehalten auf dem V. Internationalen Psychoanalytischen Kongress in Budapest, 28. und 29. September 1918*, Leipzig/Vienna 1919.

40 Sándor Ferenczi, *Symposium on Psychoanalysis and the War Neurosis Held at the Fifth International Psychoanalytical Congress Budapest, September 1918*. *The International Psycho-Analytical Library* 2 (1921), 5–21.

41 Karl Kraus, *The Last Days of Mankind*, 1919, <http://thelastdaysofmankind.com/act-ii-scene-8.html> (28 January 2017).

42 Cited in Thomas Szasz, *Karl Kraus and the Soul-Doctors. A Pioneer Critic and His Criticism of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*, Baton Rouge 1976.

## Ferenczi on Violence and Hypocrisy

Ferenczi was one of the early psychoanalysts who attempted to replace hypocrisy with sincerity. In his works written after 1918/1919, he went on to speculate on trauma in a much wider perspective, focussing on violence on multiple levels: interpersonal, familial, therapeutic, and societal, but never forgetting the war as *The Ice Age of Catastrophes*. Violence, according to Ferenczi, is not a single act but a series of events, which includes its antecedents as well as its consequences. One consequence of a violent act may be the complete annulment or concealment of the act itself. This happens for example between an adult and a child, when the adult uses “language of passion” – that is, of violence – instead of “language of tenderness”.<sup>43</sup> The abuser and his victim, the psychiatrist and the shell-shocked soldier, the psychoanalyst and his patient. Hypocrisies, both professional and everyday, are all based on lies, but not simply on ‘malingering’ or ‘intentional simulation’, as shell-shocked soldiers were often accused of. In fact, according to Ferenczi, all participants of the situation share the same lie: Nothing happened. As we can see in Viktor Gonda’s photographic and cinematographic accounts of his therapies, he, the doctor, pretends that the procedure is a realistic and successful treatment; they, the patients, obey the doctor’s expectations, pretending that they were all cured from one single shock. Moreover, they even enjoyed it, and became happy men again. However, it was not simply a theatrical performance,<sup>44</sup> maybe it was the cure itself: the mutual acceptance of the lies, making the viewer believe in their truth through the power of suggestive-hypnotic images.<sup>45</sup>

This is the common societal, universal, or even cosmic mendacity, the lack of sincerity which Ferenczi condemned in his late writings, especially in his long unpublished *Clinical Diary*, in which he returned several times to the experiences of war: “What is traumatic, is the unforeseen, the unfathomable, the incalculable. If I kill myself, I know what will happen. Suicide is less traumatic (not unforeseen).”<sup>46</sup>

There is no space here to discuss Ferenczi’s theories concerning the cosmic, phylogenetic origin of trauma, and his radical theoretical and therapeutic innovations introducing sincerity, love, mutuality, and tenderness in the doctor-patient relationship. What is important here is to emphasise that Ferenczi’s ideas on lies and concealments as fundamental components of psychological traumatising anticipated later insights into the nature of Holocaust trauma: the silence of the survivors as well as of surrounding society, the conspiracy of silence, the lack of an adequate language to describe the sufferings, and the difficulty of transforming mimetic scenes of the original trauma into memory traces.<sup>47</sup> For Ferenczi, the victim of violence is a victim whose victimhood as such is denied. Traumatization occurs not just as a consequence of external shocks, but because the shock as shock has been denied or repressed, has been declared non-existent, and the repression itself has been accepted by the victim through the identification with the aggressor. This identification as an explanation of survivor’s guilt became a concept often applied later in describing Holocaust trauma.<sup>48</sup>

43 Ferenczi, Confusion of Tongue between the Adults and the Child, in: Julia Borossa (ed.), Sándor Ferenczi, 293-303.

44 On the visualisation of hysteria as ‘theatre of hysteria’, see Márta Csabai, Tünetvándorlás. A hisztériától a krónikus fáradtságig [Wandering of the Symptoms. From Hysteria to Chronic Fatigue], Budapest 2007; Georges Didi-Hubermann, Invention of Hysteria, New York 1992; Julia Barbara Kühne, Kriegshysteriker. Strategische Bilder und mediale Techniken militärpsychiatrischen Wissens (1914–1920), Husum 2009.

45 See Ruth Leys, Trauma. A Genealogy, Chicago 2000; Ruth Leys, From Guilt to Shame. Auschwitz and After, Princeton 2007.

46 Sándor Ferenczi, Clinical Diary, London 1988, 171.

47 See a detailed discussion of Ferenczi’s mimetic theory in Leys, Trauma.

48 See Leys, From Guilt to Shame.



## The Impact of the First World War on the Development of Psychoanalysis

It was not only Ferenczi who drew far-reaching conclusions from the experience of the war. War was indeed like an exploding shell thrown onto the existing body of psychoanalysis, both theoretically and practically. A threatening external social reality broke in on the centre of a discipline which, since its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, was preoccupied with the individual and his/her internal or family conflicts. Psychoanalysts, however, soon realised that the 'war in the souls' had not ceased with the ceasefire, the 'wartime ego' is sustained for a long time and may return in peacetime as repressed, in the form of a 'death instinct', a human compulsion to repeat painful experiences, a concept which was proposed by Freud after the war in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Here he declared:

"Neither the war neuroses nor the traumatic neuroses of peace are as yet fully understood. With the war neuroses some light was contributed, but also on the other hand a certain confusion introduced, by the fact that the same type of malady could occasionally occur without the interposition of gross mechanical force. In the traumatic neuroses there are two outstanding features which might serve as clues for further reflection: first that the chief causal factor seemed to lie in the element of surprise, in the fright; and secondly that an injury or wound sustained at the same time generally tended to prevent the occurrence of the neurosis."<sup>49</sup>

In his address at the 1918 Budapest congress, Freud already spoke about new lines in the development of psychoanalysis after war, and pointed out "the vast amount of neurotic misery which there is in the world, and perhaps need not be".<sup>50</sup> He foresaw a future in which "the conscience of society will awake", and will compel it to take responsibility for its psychological as well as material well-being. Freud proposed the creation of outpatient clinics staffed by psychoanalytic clinicians, where "treatments will be free".<sup>51</sup> At such clinics, analysts would "be faced by the task of adapting [psychoanalytic] technique to the new conditions".<sup>52</sup> In fact, such outpatient clinics were created in the 1920s in Vienna, Berlin, and a decade later in Budapest, too.<sup>53</sup>

The experience of war and the revolutions influenced Freudian theory in many other ways. The introduction of a 'death instinct, one of the most controversial psychoanalytic concepts, was a direct consequence of the war. The introduction of the problems of narcissism and mourning into psychoanalytic metapsychology was also a new development (though not without precedents: see Freud's earlier work on melancholia). Narcissism – whether it is inborn, primary, or a later, pathological phenomenon – became a key problem in Freud's on-going controversy with Ferenczi, too. One of the most important new developments of Freudian theory was the elaboration of a mass psychology, in which the basic models for the mass were the army and the church, two hierarchical organisations which demand loyalty, unconditional obedience, and identification from their members.

There were two more, possibly less evident lines in which the war in the souls went further. The first was child psychoanalysis, as developed after the First World War, first of all in the works of Melanie Klein, a former disciple of Ferenczi, on childhood

49 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud, Standard Edition, Volume XVIII.

50 Sigmund Freud, *Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy*. Freud, Standard Edition, Volume XVII, 159-168.

51 *Ibid.*, 165.

52 *Ibid.*, 165.

53 Elizabeth Ann Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics. Psychoanalysis and Social Justice 1918-1938*, New York 2005.



anxieties and aggressiveness. As the British historian Michael Roper showed, the “anxious child” in Klein’s case studies was pre-figured in the shell-shocked soldier, and the figure of the traumatised veteran reappeared in the figure of the post-war child.<sup>54</sup>

The second important line of advancement in post-war psychoanalysis was group therapy, which in fact already began in the United Kingdom during the First World War at Maghull, a psychiatric hospital near Liverpool. Group methods were further elaborated by British psychiatrists and psychoanalysts (Wilfred Bion, Michael Foulkes, John Rickman, and others) during the Second World War in order to enhance group solidarity and mutual responsibility between the soldiers, and thus to prevent individual breakdowns.<sup>55</sup>

In psychoanalysis, more specific research on trauma due to war and other severe shocks only began in the 1940s, during the Second World War. The pioneer of this more complex approach was the American psychoanalyst Abram Kardiner, a former disciple of Freud.<sup>56</sup> Kardiner emphasised that traumatic neurosis was a “stand-by state of the mind” that served the defence of the ego by trying to eliminate and ward off potential dangers, and it was fixed to these situations as if the stimuli triggering it were still present. The traumatised person may exclude these memories from his or her memory or suppress them, but they continue to live on in his or her dreams, fantasies, hallucinations, and anxieties. The detailed examination of the latter conditions began only after the end of the Second World War, especially in relation to the traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors.

## PTSD and Holocaust Trauma

The problem of war neurosis has remained a central problem of the more traditional psycho-sciences (psychiatry and neurology), too. During the Second World War, a more professional military psychiatry became an elementary part of the medical services. The occurrence of shell shock in its ‘classic’ form had perhaps become less frequent, but the psychological impact of the Second World War was much farther reaching than that of the first; the mental breakdowns and injuries were even more serious, lasted much longer, and extended far beyond the fighting armies. *Shell Shock* was the symbolic representation of the First World War, while *Survivor Syndrome* represented the second. Survivors, including Holocaust survivors, were not necessarily shell-shocked in the proper, physical sense of the term, most of them showing signs of what was later labelled *Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome*. PTSD as an independent syndrome was acknowledged by the American Psychiatric Association only as late as 1980, after the Vietnam War.<sup>57</sup> The introduction of PTSD as a diagnostic category and simultaneously as a theoretical construct became a great challenge for psychoanalysis, especially because PTSD shed new light on Holocaust trauma, which has a long and controversial history in psychoanalysis. After 1933, the year of

54 Michael Roper, *From the Shell-Shocked Soldier to the Nervous Child: Psychoanalysis in the Aftermath of the First World War*, *Psychoanalysis and History* 18 (2016) 1, 39–69.

55 See Tom Harrison, Bion, Rickman, Foulkes, and the Northfield Experiments. *Advancing on a Different Front*. London 2000. It should be mentioned that modern group psychoanalysis was largely inspired by the ideas of Michael Bálint, the émigré Hungarian psychoanalyst, a student of Ferenczi who became well known through the special group method called Bálint groups.

56 Abram Kardiner, *The Traumatic Neuroses of War*, New York 1941.

57 See [http://www.fairobserver.com/region/north\\_america/psychological-wounds-of-conflict-the-impact-of-world-war-one-71084/](http://www.fairobserver.com/region/north_america/psychological-wounds-of-conflict-the-impact-of-world-war-one-71084/) (28 January 2017).

Hitler's assumption of power (and also of Ferenczi's death), psychoanalysis practically disappeared from Central Europe, except in small, provisional 'islands' such as Budapest. Most psychoanalysts continued their lives and careers in the United States, where as émigrés they faced the challenges of new cultural and social circumstances.<sup>58</sup> For most of them, and also for the subsequent generations of psychoanalysts, the Holocaust – the persecution and murder of the European Jews – have remained a “blind spot”.<sup>59</sup> After the Second World War, the main focus of psychoanalysis was on the exploration of the ‘Nazi mind’, that is the specific psychological and characterological traits of war criminals, their supporters, and their collaborators.<sup>60</sup> The focus only shifted from perpetrators to victims in the 1970s. It took several decades until Holocaust trauma was acknowledged in its own right in psychoanalysis. The historiography on the psychological and psychoanalytic assessment of Holocaust survivors is a huge field, ranging from the first post-war psychiatric studies on survivor syndrome to studies on the emotional states of survivors claiming the Holocaust syndrome as an independent entity, which may be subject to reparation and indemnification.<sup>61</sup>

As the Israeli-American psychoanalyst Dori Laub remembers:

“Working as a psychiatrist in a state hospital in 1957 to 1966 we knew that there was Auschwitz patient who was regularly admitted every year during the same month. We administered our usual protocol of 12 electro-convulsive treatments, and he felt better and was discharged. Nobody asked why he returned at the same time on a yearly basis. Decades later I found out that there were thousands of holocaust survivors in Israeli institutions for decades, some since the end of the war [...] One can only wonder about the proximity of terror and the ubiquity of loss and cultural exile such a massive blind spot covers.”<sup>62</sup>

The diagnostic category of PTSD introduced after the Vietnam War seemed a good description of Holocaust trauma inasmuch as it could be easily identified with the survivor syndrome described by psychiatrists and also psychoanalysts immediately after the Second World War. PTSD represented a turning point in the clinical theories of trauma. In both world wars, the individual was held responsible for his breakdown: whether his genetics, family history, morality, character, or unconscious conflicts. Even if they acknowledged the significance of external conflicts and conditions, psychoanalysts also blamed the individual as the ultimate cause of her/his sufferings and pains. PTSD reversed this causal explanation. Everyone, whether citizen or soldier, was potentially vulnerable to the new traumatic disorder if exposed to a life-threatening event. As Nathan Kellermann remarked, however, PTSD “may be felt as a grave underestimation of the trauma of the Holocaust”, since it does not necessarily include complex, long-term traumatising or “victimization sequel disorder, or even a long-term discrimination up to the intention of annihilation based on

58 See Ferenc Erős, Psychoanalysis and the Emigration of Central and Eastern European Intellectuals, in: *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76 (2016) 4, 399-413.

59 See for example Nathan Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma. Psychological Effects and Treatment*, New York/Bloomington 2009; Emily A. Kuriloff, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Legacy of the Third Reich*, New York 2014; Dori Laub, *On Leaving Home and the Flight Trauma*, in: Julia Beltsou (ed.) *Immigration in Psychoanalysis*, New York 2016; and Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*.

60 See for example Daniel Pick, *The Pursuit of the Nazi Mind. Hitler, Hess, and the Analysts*, Oxford 2012.

61 See José Brunner, Gutachten, Geld – Das Trauma als Paradigma des Holocaust, in: José Brunner/Nathalie Zaida (ed.), *Holocaust und Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigma*, Göttingen 2011, 40-71; Nathalie Zaida, *Der Schoah als Paradigma des Holocaust*, in: *Ibid.*, 17-39; and Allen Young, *Vier Versionen des Holocaust-Traumas*, in: *Ibid.*, 185-208.

62 Laub, *On Leaving Home and the Flight Trauma*, 173.

racial stigmatization”.<sup>63</sup> From this angle, PTSD better describes ‘classical’ war neurosis than Holocaust trauma. The concept of PTSD preserved, in some ways, the dominant discourse of First World War psychiatry, continuing, in a subtler way, to stigmatise or blame the victims – not as genetically or morally inferior, but as sick, socially unfit persons. PTSD as a diagnosis implies a dilemma similar to that of the psycho-doctors of the First World War: “If you cure my symptoms, you will be sending me back to death on the battlefield, if you don’t cure me, I’ll be a mental invalid for the rest of my life.” Psychoanalysis once again had to face this moral and political dilemma: ‘medicalising’, fitting Holocaust trauma into the existing scientific nosological system, or understanding it, as Ferenczi did, with all the difficulties and vicissitudes of understanding.

It may be concluded that the history of the discourse on war neurosis, survivor syndrome, and PTSD has remained an open field for discussing the nature of psychological trauma as a social and historical reality.

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63 Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, 36.

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Article

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# Crime and Punishment?

## The Hungarian Gendarmerie during and after the Holocaust

### Abstract

The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie was one of the most important state institutions between 1881 and 1945. Its task was to preserve law and order in the countryside, to prevent peasant uprisings and Socialist agitation in the villages. In 1944, it also became the task the gendarmerie to concentrate and deport the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The contemporary documents so far researched as well as the papers of the people's court trials seem to clearly support the supposition that the gendarmerie, from the lowliest patrols to the gendarmerie district headquarters and to the detective subdivisions, readily took part in the collection and then the deportation of Jews. If deemed necessary, the trainees of the gendarmerie schools and training battalions assisted in the detection and collection.

The first question I attempt to answer in this paper is why Adolf Eichmann and his 'specialists' primarily trusted the Hungarian gendarmerie in the spring and summer of 1944, when the Jews in Hungary were deprived of their property, herded into ghettos and collection camps, and finally deported. This fundamental question thus relates to *the crime*, i.e. the deportation, and the role the gendarmerie played in the Holocaust. Second, I discuss the size of the gendarmerie, the number of those participating in the deportation, their connection to other agencies, above all the police and the administration, as well as their attitudes toward the persecution of Jews and to deportations. Third, I investigate whether the gendarmes were cruel, as most of the survivors claim, or, on the contrary, whether they helped the persecuted, whether they protested and perhaps refused to obey orders, as former gendarmes claim, and as some people in Hungary are still trying to have the public believe. Finally, I investigate what they knew, what they could have known about the destination of the deportation trains, and about the true, final end of the deportations.

My other fundamental question relates to *the punishment*, to the accountability. What was the extent of the gendarmerie's punishment, and how did it proceed? Was it a political show, or was their participation in the deportation the real reason for their punishment? How was evidence collected during the proceedings of the screening committees, the people's prosecutor and the people's court? Was torture resorted to, were the charges based on statements of witnesses, and/or were contemporary documents also attached to the indictments? The comparison to the criminal proceedings of other war criminals will be another important aspect of analysis.

The history of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie, especially its role in the Holocaust, and the prosecution of gendarmes after the Second World War are issues much debated by historians in Hungary and abroad, by survivors, former gendarmes, and even more so by politicians.<sup>1</sup> According to one claim, “the great majority” of the gendarmes “were unlikely to have gone beyond their orders [...] brutality [on their part] must have been rare like white ravens” – so claimed József Parádi, a historian of law enforcement, in 1998.<sup>2</sup> Another claim, based on analysis of DEGOB protocols – *Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság* (National Committee Attending to Deportees): I am going to return to these protocols created in 1945/1946 later in some detail – and formulated by the historians Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági in 2004, states by contrast: “Having examined the material in the DEGOB protocols it would seem that during ghettoisation it was the gendarmes handling the Jews with benevolence and humanity that were ‘white ravens’. [...] The brutal procedure of the gendarmerie was not an isolated phenomenon, but a general and commonly known tendency.”<sup>3</sup>

This latter statement is supported by a letter dated 19 June 1944 which summed up the position of the Jews in Hungary in the following way, with special regard to the brutality of gendarmes: “In other countries the physical suffering of Jews started with the deportation, here [in Hungary] barbaric torture was introduced in the ghettos already, gendarmes submitting people to terrible pain – trying to get them to confess where they had hidden their alleged riches.”<sup>4</sup> Catholic Bishop Endre Hamvas also described the brutality of the Hungarian authorities in the summer of 1944:

“The Prime Minister regards the news about the cruel and merciless procedures as exaggerated. But how can one without cruelty be dragged from one’s home [...] 70-75 people crowded into a boxcar, be transported for 4-5 days, locked, without food and water supply? And there was one more cruelty. [...] Jewish women were undressed and submitted to bodily search (*per inspectionem vaginae*) by midwives and doctors in the presence of men.

What is that if not a perverted humiliation of female dignity and modesty?”<sup>5</sup>

One of the questions this paper focusses on is why it was the Hungarian gendarmerie that Adolf Eichmann and his ‘specialists’ primarily counted on in the spring and summer of 1944, when the Jews in Hungary were deprived of their property, herded into ghettos and collection camps, and finally deported. This fundamental questions thus relates to *the crime*, the deportation, and the role the gendarmerie played in the Holocaust.

To this end, the size of the gendarmerie and the number of those participating in the deportation must be clarified, as well as their connection to other agencies, first

1 I discussed this issue and analysed the people’s court trials of gendarmes at the conferences on the sixtieth anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust in Budapest and Washington D.C. in 2004, see: Judit Molnár, *Gendarmes Before the People’s Court*, in: Judit Molnár (ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. A European Perspective*, Budapest 2005, 648-664.

2 Hiven, becsülettel, vitézül [Faithfully, Honourably, Valiantly]. A Documentary Film on the Gendarmerie, Duna Televízió, 6 December 1998. The discussion by ‘experts’ following the film revealed that the deportations had “proceeded peacefully”; that the gendarmes, “on the bases of Christian principles, did not really want to be cruel”; and that “[i]n those days there was order and discipline”.

3 [www.degob.hu](http://www.degob.hu) (14 March 2016).

4 The letter from an unknown source and written in German was delivered to Imre Tahy, temporary chargé d’affaires of Hungary in Bern. Published in German and in Hungarian in: Ilona Benoschofsky/Elek Karsai (ed.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez* [Indictment of Nazism. Documents on the History of the Persecution of Jews in Hungary], Volume 2, Budapest 1960, 245-258, Here 252.

5 Esztergomi Prímási Levéltár [Esztergom Primate Archives], S 12/a III. Dosszié, papers of Jusztinián Serédi, see: Elek Karsai (ed.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen* [Indictment of Nazism], Volume 3, Budapest 1967, 206-207.



of all the police, which was the other organ of public security, and the administration, and finally their attitudes to the persecution of Jews and to deportations. In other words, were the gendarmes cruel, as most of the survivors claim, or, on the contrary, did they help the persecuted, did they protest, perhaps refuse to obey orders, as former gendarmes claim, and some people in Hungary are still trying to have the public believe? Finally, what did they know, and what could they have known about the destination of the deportation trains, and about the true, final end of the deportations?

My other fundamental question relates to *the punishment*, to the accountability. What led to the punishment of gendarmes after the Second World War? What was the extent of their punishment, and how did it proceed? Was it a political show, or was their participation in the deportation the real reason for their punishment? How was evidence collected during the proceedings of the screening committees, the people's prosecutor and the people's court? Was torture resorted to, were the charges based on statements of witnesses, and/or were contemporary documents also attached to the indictments? The comparison to the criminal proceedings of other war criminals will be another important aspect of analysis.

Before turning to the results of my research, I will briefly survey the literature that has so far discussed the gendarmerie.

For decades, the Hungarian literature on the subject emphasised the brutality of the gendarmes against members of left-wing, Communist, and Social Democratic movements,<sup>6</sup> as well as the role they played in 1944 in the deportation of Jews.<sup>7</sup> Émigré gendarmes, on the other hand, claimed that the opposite was true: there was order in the country, people liked them, but the deportation of Jews is cast over the corps like a "shadow".<sup>8</sup> Important monographs have been published on the functioning, structure, and activities of the gendarmerie by Csaba Csapó, Ferenc Kaiser, and Sándor Szakály since the change of the political regime in 1990.<sup>9</sup> The Hungarian literature on the Holocaust – including works by László Karsai, Gábor Kádár, Zoltán Vági, myself and others – has also contributed publications of documents and partial treatments on the gendarmerie.<sup>10</sup> Some scholars – such as Zoltán András Kovács and Tamás Kovács – have studied the activity of the gendarmerie during the Arrow

6 Ervin Hollós, *Rendőrség, csendőrség*, VKF 2 [Vezérkari Főnökség 2/Chiefs of Military Staff 2] (Police, Gendarmerie, VKF 2), Budapest 1971.

7 Jenő Lévai, *Fekete könyv a magyar zsidóság szenvedéseiről* [Black Book on the Sufferings of Hungarian Jews], Budapest 1946; Jenő Lévai, *Szürke könyv a magyar zsidók megmentéséről* [Grey Book on the Rescue of Hungarian Jews], Budapest, Officina, 1946; Ilona Benoschofsky/Elek Karsai (ed.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen* [Indictment against Nazism], Volume 1, Budapest 1958, Volume 2 Budapest 1960, and Elek Karsai (ed.), Volume 3 Budapest 1967.

8 Károly Kövendy, *Magyar királyi csendőrség. A csendőr békében, háborúban és emigrációban, 1881–1945* [Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie. The Gendarme in Peace, in War, and in Emigration, 1881–1945], Toronto 1973, 46.

9 Csaba Csapó, *A magyar királyi csendőrség története 1881–1914* [The History of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie 1881–1914] Pécs 1999; Sándor Szakály, *A magyar tábori csendőrség története 1938–1945* [The History of the Hungarian Military Police 1938–1945], Budapest 2000; Ferenc Kaiser, *A magyar királyi csendőrség története a két világháború között* [The History of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie between the Two World Wars], Pécs 2002.

10 László Karsai/Judit Molnár (ed.), *Az Endre-Baky-Jaross per* [The Endre-Baky-Jaross Trial], Budapest 1994; Judit Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (szegedi) csendőrkörletben* [Jewish Fate in Gendarmerie District V (Szeged) in 1944] Budapest 1995; Gábor Kádár/Zoltán Vági, *Rendvédelmi szervek és zsidók Magyarországon* [Law Enforcement Agencies and Jews in Hungary], in: *História* (1998) 8, 18–21. Judit Molnár (ed.), *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban. Ferenczy László csendőr alezredes a népbíró előtt* [Gendarme Officer in the Markó. Gendarme Lieutenant-Colonel László Ferenczy before the People's Court], Budapest 2014. The monograph by Randolph Braham, which was also published in Hungarian, is also indispensable for the subject: Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary*, New York 2016.

Cross period.<sup>11</sup> Zoltán András Kovács also published a longer study on the situation of gendarmes after 1945.<sup>12</sup> Historians of law enforcement must be mentioned, too, in connection with the assessment of the gendarmerie, and one must not forget Magyar Királyi Csendőrség Bajtársi Közössége (The Hungarian Royal Gendarme Veterans Association), either. The latter launched their own website in 2005.<sup>13</sup>

Uncovering the facts is rather difficult since we have a very limited range of contemporary sources concerning the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie. Although the papers of the relevant departments in the Ministries of the Interior and Defence have survived in fragments, the papers of the gendarme districts down to the lowest gendarme posts have been lost and cannot be found either in the archives in Hungary or in the archives in the territories annexed by Hungary in 1938–1941, now in neighbouring countries.<sup>14</sup> There are, however, documents of provincial public administrations (those of prefects, deputy-prefects, chief constables, and so on), which include papers in connection with the everyday activities of the gendarmerie (investigations, dispersing political rallies, and so on). In addition, we have secondary sources such as the documents of the people's court trials, the protocols of the DEGOB,<sup>15</sup> memoirs and other statements, as well as contemporary printed materials such as Csendőrségi Lapok (Gendarmerie Papers) and Csendőrségi Zsebkönyvek (Gendarmerie Pocketbooks).

Without claiming completeness, I will focus briefly on the more important treatments that are regularly cited by other scholars.

The first to be picked out from the post-Second World War gendarme emigrant literature is the book by Gendarme Captain Károly Kövendi, published in 1973. The book is based mostly on recollections, proffering deeds of valour, heroic actions, and disclosures. All it has to say with regard to the ghettoisation and entrainment of Jews, who, he claimed, had been living unmolested in Hungary until May 1944, is that it was entrusted to the gendarmerie by the Hungarian government knowing that “not a hair on the Jews’ heads would be hurt!” In addition, he also claimed that “the highest commanders of the gendarmerie protested” about the job. According to Kövendi, 5,000 gendarmes were executed between 1945 and 1949, charged with war crimes and crimes against the people.<sup>16</sup> This claim is absurd: the number of people executed in Hungary between 1945 and 1951 as a result of people's court sentences was altogether 227.

Gendarme Captain Béla Rektor made use of contemporary written documents and some of the documents published in Hungary in addition to recollections in his 1980 book.<sup>17</sup> He conceded that in 1944 “unauthorised means” may have been resor-

11 Tamás Kovács, A Nemzeti Számonkérő Különítmény [The National Accounting Detachment], in: Múltunk (2006) 3, 71–100. Zoltán András Kovács, Ládai Istvánnak, a Szálasi-kormány belügyminisztériumi államtitkárának fogságban írott feljegyzései [Prison Notes of István Ládai, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior in the Szálasi Cabinet], in: Lymbus. Magyarástudományi Forrásközlémények [Hungarological Source Edition] (2008) 321–355.

12 Zoltán András Kovács, Csendőrsors Magyarországon 1945 után [The Fate of Gendarmes in Hungary after 1945], in: Imre Okváth (ed.), Katonai perek a kommunista diktatúra időszakában 1945–1958 [Military Trials under the Communist Dictatorship, 1945–1958], Budapest 2001, 103–140.

13 [www.csendor.com](http://www.csendor.com) (13 March 2016).

14 It is possible that these papers have been destroyed, but then again they may still exist somewhere in archives in Hungary or Russia. The latter hypothesis is supported by the fact that in the course of my research I have sporadically come across original gendarmerie documents or true copies thereof among the papers of the people's court trials.

15 3,666 of the original protocols can be found in Magyar Zsidó Levéltár [Hungarian Jewish Archives] (MZSL), 3,515 of them are accessible online under [www.degob.hu](http://www.degob.hu) (14 March 2016). Some of the protocols have been translated into English: [www.degob.org](http://www.degob.org) (14 March 2016).

16 Kövendi, Magyar királyi csendőrség, 125, 417.

17 Béla Rektor (1911–1989) was one of the instructor officers of the gendarme cadet battalion at Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania) in 1944.

ted to, but “firearms were not used once” during the ghettoisation of Jews.<sup>18</sup> This claim can easily be disproved on the basis of the reports of Gendarme Lieutenant-Colonel László Ferenczy, who as the liaison officer of the gendarmerie with the German security police regularly summarised events in the various gendarmerie districts during the collection, entrainment, and deportation of the Jews in 1944.<sup>19</sup> These reports, incidentally, are perhaps the most important contemporary sources for the role the gendarmerie played in the deportations. On 21 May 1944, Ferenczy reported from Munkács (Мукачів, Mukacsiv, Ukraine) that “the transports took place according to schedule, their departure and running to the border station always happened in impeccable order, totally devoid of disturbances. At Nyíregyháza and Munkács, there were successful uses of firearms on account of attempts to escape, one at each place.”<sup>20</sup> Rektor did not analyse the extent of the punishment, instead he mentioned examples of cases screened by political committees and brought to people’s court in Hungary after the war, and cases of prisoners in Soviet camps.<sup>21</sup>

Honorary Gendarme Zoltán Kőrössi, editor of the website of emigrant gendarmes, discussed the role of the gendarmerie during the Holocaust and their punishment after the war in a number of articles written jointly with his wife in 2010/2011.<sup>22</sup> Kőrössi mentioned that he considered the Jews partially responsible for their own fate: “The complete co-operation of Jews undoubtedly contributed to the rapid execution of the deportations. [...] They did not put up physical resistance at all.”<sup>23</sup> Kőrössi repeatedly returned to this assertion in several of his publications.

According to him, “the gendarmerie protested against being involved in the deportations, [...] but they were forced to do it.”<sup>24</sup> He claimed that although perhaps a few gendarmes might have committed brutalities, all the gendarmes were persecuted after the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> According to Kőrössi, the gendarmerie “was mercilessly eliminated as a body which was ‘the enemy of the people’”, and later “this decision, made for political reasons, was justified by the gendarmerie having taken part in the deportations.”<sup>26</sup> He also stated “the tortures and murders inflicted by ÁVO [the State Security Department] cannot be compared to the alleged accusations and ‘brutalities’ that the gendarmes were charged with.”<sup>27</sup>

Among historians of law enforcement, the works of József Parádi, quoted above, are of definitive importance. The textbook he edited, *A magyar rendvédelem törté-*

18 Béla Rektor, *A magyar királyi csendőrség oknyomozó története* [A Pragmatic History of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie], Cleveland 1980, 256–257.

19 László Ferenczy regularly sent his reports to the two under-secretaries of the interior, László Endre and László Baky, to Gábor Faragho, intendant of the gendarmerie, to Gyula Király, head of Dept. VII of the Ministry of the Interior, and to József Czigány, commander of the central detective department of the gendarmerie. The reports are published in: Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt* a Markóban, 280–317.

20 Ibid., 294.

21 Rektor, *A magyar királyi csendőrség*, 298–306.

22 Zoltán Kőrössi was made an honorary gendarme in the 1970s and has been the central head of the Hungarian Royal Gendarme Veterans Association since 2008. In that capacity, he established and maintains [www.csendor.com](http://www.csendor.com). His father, Zoltán vitéz Kőrössi (1912–1995) was a gendarme captain, see: <http://www.csendor.com/konyvtar/biografia/egyenek/Korossy> (13 March 2016).

23 Zoltán Kőrössi/Dr. Katalin Soltész née Kőrössi, *A m. kir csendőrség és a zsidóság* [The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie and the Jews] (January 2011), 3–5, <http://www.csendor.com/konyvtar/irasok/zsidóság/M.%20kir.%20csendorseg%20es%20zsidóság%20-%20Korossy.pdf> (13 March 2016).

24 Ibid., 2.

25 The basic text by Zoltán Kőrössi/Dr. Katalin Soltész née Kőrössi, *Magyar Királyi csendőrség Bajtársi Közösség* (MKCSBK) [The Hungarian Royal Gendarme Veterans Association] was written in November 2010, and was later updated in July 2012 and March 2015. 2–3, <http://www.csendor.com/site/MKCSBK-m.pdf> (13 March 2016).

26 Kőrössi/Soltész, *A m. kir csendőrség és a zsidóság*, 6.

27 Kőrössi/Soltész, *Magyar Királyi csendőrség Bajtársi Közösség*, 3. The article repeats Kövendi’s claim that “the Communist regime murdered about 5,000 gendarmes”.

nete (The History of Policing in Hungary), discusses the deportation of Jews in a brief passage: "In the spring and summer of 1944 [...] the gendarmerie, that is to say some ten per cent of it, was given a sad job. [...] Following plans made by the Germans, they rounded up and escorted the Jewish population to the trains."<sup>28</sup> We are not told, however, why he thought that just ten per cent of the gendarmerie took part in the entrainment, which according to his calculations meant 1,400 persons.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, he completely omitted that most of the entrained Jews were deported to the extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where approximately eighty per cent of them were immediately murdered.

Parádi discussed all this in more detail in two articles he published in 2009.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, he did not use archival sources in either, all his references being to secondary literature and to texts of decrees. Knowledge of the latter, which consists mostly of printed sources accessible in libraries, is important of course, but these sources contain no information whatsoever on the method and course of the execution. According to Parádi, the deportation of Jews was a "neuralgic point" in the history of the gendarmerie. "There was a small minority that actively participated in the shameful activity of the deportations, others actively worked against it, and the majority merely disapproved, in silence."<sup>31</sup> To support his claim, he referred to one of my dissertations, which, however, does not include any statement of mine that would justify Parádi's claim.<sup>32</sup> Parádi only mentions my dissertation, without any reference to my statements and page numbers. According to Parádi, the gendarmerie was treated as a scapegoat organisation for political reasons, and the fact that the corps had taken part in the deportation of Jews was a pretext that came in handy.<sup>33</sup>

However, it should not be forgotten that the gendarmerie performed not only the deportations in 1944, they also participated in the rounding up and deportation of nearly 18,000 'displaced' Jews to Kőrösmező, most of whom were massacred a few weeks later at Kamenets-Podolski by a unit of Einsatzgruppe C. In January 1942, thousands of people including nearly a thousand Jews were killed in Délvidék (in and around Novi Sad, Southern Hungary, today Norther Serbia) by combined gendarmerie-military units. These events were mentioned as counts of indictments in several cases in the judicial proceedings after the Second World War.

Hungarian historiography has to date hardly discussed the reckoning that the gendarmerie had to face after the war. The article of Zoltán András Kovács entitled *The Fortune of Gendarmes in Hungary after 1945* draws on an extensive amount of source material. His mistakes in the indication of sources notwithstanding, it is the best study so far. He declared that the decree disbanding the gendarmerie in 1945 pronounced

28 József Parádi (editor-in-chief), *A magyar rendvédelem története* [The History of Hungarian Law Enforcement], Budapest 1996, 118.

29 Ibid., 104, 118.

30 József Parádi, *A csendőrség magyarországi története* [The History of the Gendarmerie in Hungary], in: *Rendvédelem-történeti Füzetek* [Notes on the History of the Law Enforcement] (2009) 16/19, 64-88; József Parádi, *Tények és érzelmek egy hajdani magyar rendvédelmi testület története kapcsán* [Facts and Feelings Regarding the History of a Hungarian Law Enforcement Body of Late], in: *Rendvédelem-történeti Füzetek* [Notes on the History of the Law Enforcement] (2009) 17/20, 93-99.

31 Parádi, *A csendőrség magyarországi története*, 77-78. Parádi puts it similarly in his 2012 book: József Parádi, *A Magyar Királyi Csendőrség. Az első magyar polgári, központosított, közbiztonsági őrtestület 1881-1945* [The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie. The First Hungarian Middle-Class, Centralised Guarding Body of Public Safety 1881-1945], Budapest 2012, 107-108.

32 The work cited by Parádi was Judit Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (szegedi) csendőrkörületben* [The Jewish Fate in Gendarmerie District V (Szeged) in 1944], Cand. Diss., Szeged 1995. I did discuss the role of the gendarmerie in my work, which was published by Cserépfalvi Kiadó, but my conclusions were far removed from those drawn by Parádi.

33 Parádi, *A csendőrség magyarországi története*, 79; Parádi, *A Magyar Királyi Csendőrség*, 106.

corporate responsibility. At the same time, he argued that the main reason for the unpopularity of the gendarmerie was – thanks to political propaganda – the deportation, although merely ten per cent of the personnel took part therein.<sup>34</sup> In other words, he accepted and reproduced the argument and data of the police history textbook.

László Karsai and I edited the people's court trial documents of the 'deporting trio', László Endre and László Baký, both Secretaries of State in the Ministry of the Interior, and Andor Jaross, Minister of the Interior,<sup>35</sup> as well as those of Prime Minister Döme Sztójay and his accomplices,<sup>36</sup> but in these documentary volumes we only tangentially discussed the responsibility of the gendarmerie. A few articles on the Hungarian Holocaust cover the responsibility of individual gendarmes, but these works do not provide methodical, comprehensive analysis.<sup>37</sup> I dedicated a short chapter in my book *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (szegedi) csendőrkerületben* (The Jewish Fate in Gendarmerie District V [Szeged] in 1944) to discussing the problem of responsibility, and I also discussed the punishment of the gendarme officers in gendarmerie district V (Szeged).<sup>38</sup> In the edited volume from the conference on the sixtieth anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust, I discussed the judicial proceedings against the commanders of the various gendarmerie districts after the Second World War.<sup>39</sup> Last but not least, I edited the reports and the people's court trial papers of Gendarme Lieutenant-Colonel László Ferenczy in 2014.<sup>40</sup>

The above would indicate that neither the role played by the gendarmerie in the Holocaust nor the holding to account of gendarmes after the war has been methodically examined to this day. Whatever has been published on the subject is either prejudiced or erroneous, discusses the matter merely in passing, or contains partial research results only. The present paper is intended to be a first step toward a comprehensive analysis.

\* \* \*

Let us see after all this the first fundamental problem: *the crime*.

Due to the fragmentary nature of the extant papers of the gendarmerie it is impossible to determine today exactly how many gendarmes were in service in 1944, and how many actually took part in the deportation of Jews. It should be clear from the literature on the subject discussed above that some people try to diminish the responsibility of the gendarmerie by claiming, without any reference to sources, that no more than a fraction of the gendarmerie took part in the ghettoisation and deportation. High-ranking gendarme officers remembered differently in the statements they made at the people's court trials. The figures varied between 16,000 and 32,000.<sup>41</sup>

34 Kovács, *Csendőrsors*, 104.

35 Karsai/Molnár (ed.), *Az Endre-Baký-Jaross per*.

36 László Karsai/Judit Molnár (ed.), *A magyar Quisling-kormány. Sztójay Döme és társai a népbíróóság előtt* [The Hungarian Quisling Government. Döme Sztójay and his Accomplices before the People's Court], Budapest 1956, 2004.

37 László Csősz, "Keresztény polgári érdekek sérelme nélkül...". Ghettoisation Szolnokon 1944-ben ["Without Damage to Christian Middle-class Values...". Ghettoisation in Szolnok in 1944], in: Randolph L. Braham (ed.), *Tanulmányok a holokausztról II* [Papers on the Holocaust II], Budapest 2002, 244; Izabella Sulyok, A 'zsidókérdés' Szombathelyen a népbíróósági perek tükrében [The 'Jewish Question' in Szombathely in the Mirror of the People's Court Trials], in: Ágnes Tamás (ed.), *Mozaikok a magyar történelemből* [Mosaics from Hungarian History], Szeged 2009, 82.

38 Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben*, 179–183.

39 Molnár, *Gendarmes Before the People's Court*, 648–664.

40 Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban*.

41 See for example Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archives, hereafter BFL], B. 18.167/1949, People's Court Trial of József Czigány.



Superintendent Gábor Faragho of the Gendarmerie was not consistent either.<sup>42</sup> On 21 June 1944 at the meeting of the Council of Ministers, he spoke of 20,000 gendarmes, and in a highly interesting context, too: "If we consider that we have deported more than 400,000 Jews for the purpose of labour service and resettlement, then we must dismiss as irrelevant that complaints have been filed against some of the 20,000 Hungarian gendarmes."<sup>43</sup>

The Hungarian literature on the subject is not in agreement on the size of the personnel. The textbook of police history by Parádi assumes that 14,000 is the correct number.<sup>44</sup> However, the same József Parádi counted 22,000 in 2009, and wrote about 20,000 to 22,000 persons in 2012.<sup>45</sup> Ferenc Kaiser estimated the force at 16,000.<sup>46</sup> The scholarly literature on the Holocaust has accepted the 20,000 that Faragho specified in 1944. We do know for certain that the Treaty of Trianon allowed a 12,000 men-strong gendarmerie within the borders specified in the treaty.<sup>47</sup> The figures of the national budgets show that successive governments in Hungary maintained that size until 1939, when the Minister of the Interior planned extra expenditure for public safety services, saying "the number of gendarmerie personnel had to be increased".<sup>48</sup> For the year 1942, they calculated for 16,000 men, and planned for 17,224 men for 1944. Since National Discharge did not take place that year, we do not have a precise final figure. However, the plan of the budget makes it clear that – based on the authorisation of the Defence Act (Act II. 1939, §31) – a gendarmerie battalion was set up of rank and file "for the purposes of creating a gendarmerie reserve, in addition to performing policing activities", and new patrols were also created.<sup>49</sup> This supports the hypothesis that the actual strength of the gendarmerie was indeed around 20,000, as Faragho stated at the meeting of the Council of Ministers in June 1944.

42 General Gábor Faragho (1890–1953), military attaché in Moscow from 1 July 1940 to 22 June 1941, intendant of the gendarmerie from November 1942 to October 1944, then Minister of Public Supplies of the Provisional National Government from 23 December 1944 to 21 July 1945. According to Miklós Mester, Chief of the Regent's Cabinet Office Gyula Ambrózy mentioned Faragho in June 1944 as the third member of the deporting triad on the Hungarian side. Nevertheless, not only did Faragho avoid being taken to task, but as a member of the Provisional National Government, he took part in finally formulating the text of the decree that dissolved the gendarmerie. In the last years of his life, he was forcibly relocated to the countryside, but was allowed to live on his own farm because, at least according to one person, Mátyás Rákosi "would not dare to touch Faragho because he knew Stalin liked him and kept track of him". According to Mester, Faragho had made himself popular in Moscow by "transporting great quantities of Kecskemét apricot brandy [to Moscow] in characteristic Hungarian bottles", see: Miklós Mester, *Arcképek két tragikus kor árnyékában. Visszapillantás a katasztrofális magyarországi 1944. esztendőre, részint annak előzményeire és közvetlen következményeire is, 27 év távlatából* [Portraits in the Shadow of Two Tragic Eras. Looking back on the Disastrous Year of 1944 in Hungary, and partly on its Precedents and Direct Consequences from the Distance of 27 Years], edited by István Kollega Tarsoly, endnotes by Tamás Kovács, Budapest 2012, 76, 127, 564–565.

43 Karsai/Molnár, *A magyar Quisling-kormány*, 755. At the trial of József Czigány, Faragho, while confirming that the Hungarian gendarmerie had played a primary role in the deportation of Hungarian Jews, said their strength had been 16,000 "only". BFL, B. 18.167/1949. 96.

44 Parádi, *A magyar rendvédelem története*, 104.

45 Parádi, *A csendőrség magyarországi története*, 77; József Parádi, *A XIX-XX. századi magyar rendszerváltozások és a csendőrség* [Hungarian Regime Changes in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries and the Gendarmerie], in: *Rendvédelem-történeti Füzetek* (2012) 22/25, 106. Parádi, *A Magyar Királyi Csendőrség*, 63, 66, 139.

46 Kaiser, *A magyar királyi csendőrség története*, 30, 55, 115.

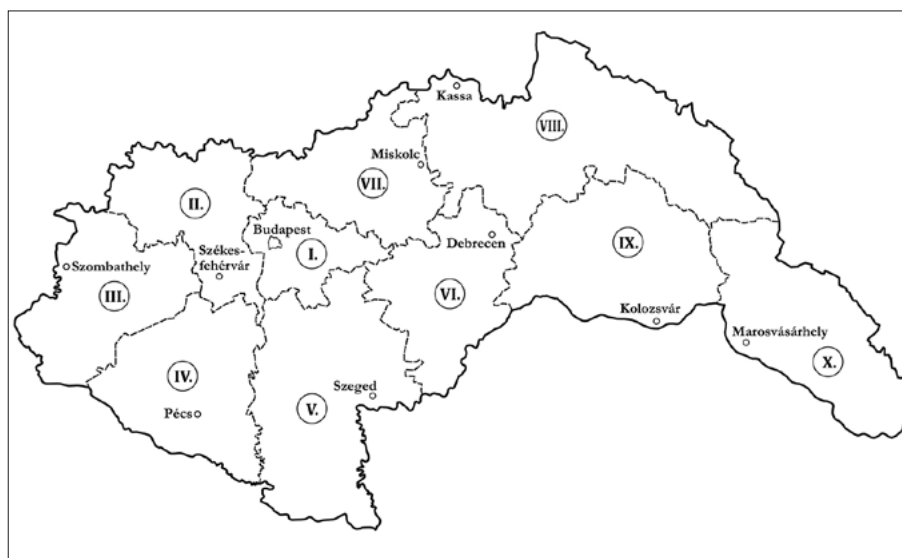
47 The total number (12,000) of the gendarmerie could not have included more than 600 officers. Act VII/1922 on establishing the strength, methods of supplementing, and arming the Royal Hungarian State Police and the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=7518> (29 June 2016). It is worth mentioning that also in the years prior to the First World War, approximately 12,000 gendarmes served in Hungary, except that in those years the area of the country was 283,000 square kilometres, while after the Treaty of Trianon it was 93,000 only.

48 State budget for the 1939–1940 accounting period from 1 July 1939 to 31 December 1940, [http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/AllamiKoltsegvetes\\_1939-1940/?pg=328&layout=s&query=SZO%3D](http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/AllamiKoltsegvetes_1939-1940/?pg=328&layout=s&query=SZO%3D) (30 June 2016).

49 State budget for the year 1944, see: [http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/AllamiKoltsegvetes\\_1944/?pg=100&layout=s&query=SZO%3D](http://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/AllamiKoltsegvetes_1944/?pg=100&layout=s&query=SZO%3D) (30 June 2016).



With regard to the structure of the gendarmerie, the basic difference to the police was that while the latter was supervised by the Ministry of the Interior, the gendarmerie was under dual control, namely of both the Ministries of the Interior and Defence. From its beginnings in 1881, the gendarmerie was a military-style of public security organisation. From November 1942, its highest-ranking military commanding officer, the Superintendent of the Gendarmerie, was Lieutenant-General Gábor Faragho. The division of gendarmerie districts followed the district division of the military. There were seven gendarmerie districts within the borders defined by Trianon, and after the territorial expansions of 1938–1941, this number grew to ten. Each gendarmerie district covered three or four full counties and parts of two or three other counties. The gendarmerie district headquarters consisted of gendarmerie battalions, which were in turn divided into companies, platoons, and patrols. In practice, a gendarmerie patrol was responsible for law and order in two to four villages. In 1930, the Central Detective Division was established, and every gendarmerie district formed their own detective subdivisions. In addition, reinforcements and new recruits were trained in gendarmerie schools and training battalions.



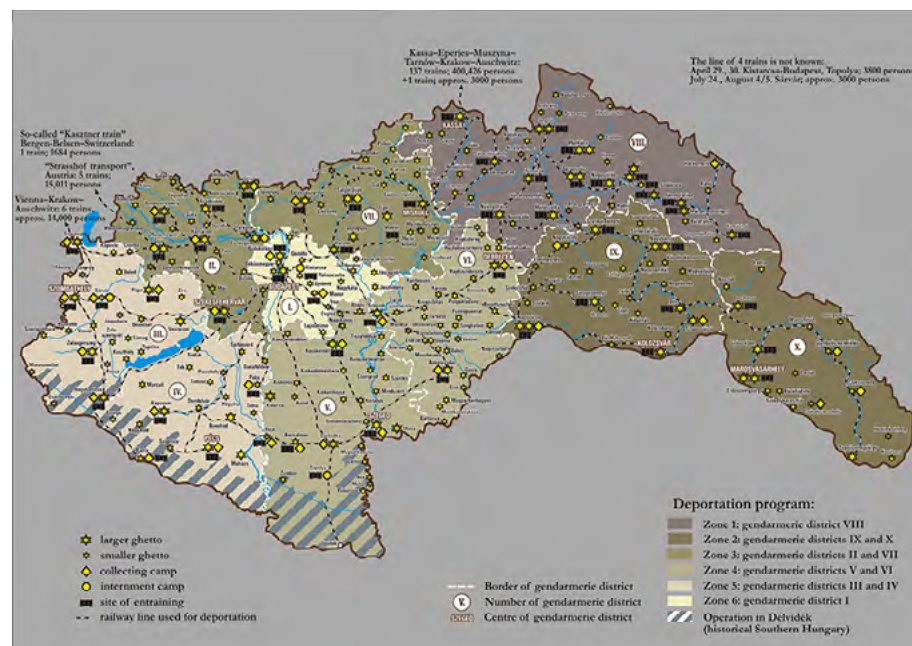
Gendarmerie Districts in Hungary, 1944. © DIMAP, 2017.

With regard to territorial jurisdiction, while the police force performed their duties concerning public safety in the capital, Budapest, and in the inner city areas of cities/towns – in 1944 there were altogether 91 város, cities or towns, in Hungary. The rest of the territory of the country fell under the jurisdiction of the gendarmerie; these included town/city peripheries, the 6,550 villages (in 1944), and thousands of so-called inhabited peripheral places. According to the figures of the 1941 census, approximately three fourths of the population of the country lived in the latter. The number of Jews in this year – including all *Orthodox*, *Neolog*, and *Status Quo* – was 725,000, and there were close to 62,000 ‘Jews of Christian faith’. Of all these people, approximately 300,000 (37.4 per cent) lived in villages. However, as we shall see, the gendarmerie assisted the police force in the towns when it came to collecting and deporting Jews. The confidential order of the Ministry of the Interior issued after the German occupation for the collection of Jews expressly instructed the gendarmerie to support the police, if necessary, in this task.<sup>50</sup>

50 Benoschovsky/Karsai (ed.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen*, Volume 1, 125–126.

Finally, one more important difference between these two organisations of public safety must be mentioned: The police was both a policing authority and policing agency, meaning that it was within the jurisdiction of a city police commissioner to issue decrees and resolutions. The gendarmerie, unlike the police, was only a policing agency, i.e. merely an enforcement branch. On the lower level, they received their orders from the leaders of the subordinate districts, from the chief constables, on a higher level from the sub-prefects of counties, and on the highest level from the Minister of the Interior or the relevant Secretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior. Thus, researching the documents of provincial administrations is highly relevant for a knowledge of the operation of the gendarmerie, even if the contemporary documents are fragmentary in that respect.

It follows from the above that if Eichmann wanted to set a new deportation record, which he did, he needed the gendarmerie, the police force, the public administration, and other public servants like teachers, doctors, railway personnel, in order to perform the 'dejewification' of Hungary. In any case, it was not a coincidence that first and foremost he relied on the militarily disciplined gendarmerie, for the larger part of the country was policed by them. They assisted the police in the remaining places, in the towns, in the deprivation, collection, and deportation of Jews. As a policing agency organised along military lines, its members did not ask questions, but executed orders: They conducted body searches, made lists of *corpus delicti* of Jewish valuables, herded Jews into brick factories and pigsties, and then crammed seventy, eighty, or ninety people at a time into grain waggons or cattle cars. They did all this in a disciplined manner, firmly, mercilessly, and extremely fast. Eichmann, with the two State Secretaries of the Ministry of the Interior, László Endre and László Baký, as well as with Gendarme Lieutenant-Colonel László Ferenczy, worked out the schedule of "dejewification", which in the end divided the ten gendarmerie districts into six deportation zones following the gendarmerie district division.



The Ghettoisation and Deportation of the Jews from the Hungarian Countryside

April-July 1944. © DIMAP, 2017.

(Click here for an enlarged version of the map)

So far, the contemporary documents as well as the people's court trials clearly support the assumption that the gendarmerie, from the lowliest patrols to the district headquarters and the detective subdivisions readily took part in the collection and then the deportation of Jews. If deemed necessary, the cadets of the gendarmerie schools and training battalions assisted in the detection and collection. Thus, it was not a "small minority," a mere ten per cent of the gendarmerie that took part in the deportations. Naturally, further research will have to establish how many individuals from the staff of the various patrols, companies, and so forth in fact executed the anti-Jewish orders, and in what manner. However, it must be clearly stated that the complete force was placed at disposal for the anti-Jewish operation.

The protocols of the DEGOB compiled in 1945/1946 are regarded as one of the basic sources for this subject. The protocols contain the statements of about 5,000 Holocaust survivors. These are mostly testimonies made individually, but 'group' depositions were also taken. Of the 3,666 protocols, 3,515 are accessible on the web-site.<sup>51</sup> In approximately every third document, that is to say, in 1,246 testimonies, the gendarmes are mentioned by the survivors. A significant number of the protocols begin with events that took place after departure from Hungary, and thus the gendarmes are not mentioned in these statements. In many cases, the survivors speak in general about the cruelties that occurred during ghettoisation in Hungary, but they do not say whether the persons inflicting them were policemen, gendarmes, doctors, administrative officials, or German guards. I have found altogether only 22 protocols in which the survivors mention that there were decent gendarmes, too. That is merely 0.6 per cent of all the statements, and 1.8 per cent of the protocols that mention gendarmes. I therefore regard these as the rare ones, the 'white ravens'. If we add the gendarmes who extended help not out of altruism, but gave the victims water and food in exchange for money or valuables, then we have forty more documents that mention good gendarmes, at least "under the circumstances". These are the 'grey ravens'.

Of the 22 documents mentioning gendarmes helping selflessly, eight say in general that some of the gendarmes were decent and fair. In one of these cases it meant that the gendarmes "did not chase away the people trying to help".<sup>52</sup> In another case, the gendarme was not "brutal" because the Jewish person had previously been his physician.<sup>53</sup> In three further cases, the gendarmes smuggled food into the camp.<sup>54</sup> One of the latter also smuggled out a letter.<sup>55</sup> In the period following the Arrow Cross takeover on 15 October 1944, there were two cases in which a gendarme officer prevented an execution and another in which a gendarme refused to perform an execution saying "he was not going to shoot a tied up, helpless man".<sup>56</sup> In the Arrow Cross times, too, there were gendarmes who threw snow into the boxcars, thus providing the deportees with water.<sup>57</sup> In two cases, high-ranking gendarme officers accepted documents of exemption and attempted to keep Jews from being deported.<sup>58</sup> The documents mention only three gendarme officers who, while obeying orders, ac-

51 See [www.degob.hu](http://www.degob.hu) (14 March 2016)

52 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3275: "As they were taking us to the railway cars three kilometres away, unknown persons on the way also gave us food, and the gendarmes escorting us behaved relatively decently, as they did not drive away the donors."

53 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3554.

54 MZSL, DEGOB Protocols 81, 151, 3543.

55 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3543.

56 MZSL, DEGOB Protocols 2347, 3261.

57 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3051.

58 MZSL, DEGOB Protocols 3015, 3605.

tively assisted several people in escaping from the ghetto, or from the death marches after the Arrow Cross takeover.<sup>59</sup>

One case study is László Endre: commander of the gendarme station at Csillaghegy – and namesake of, but not related to the infamous State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior – Endre advised a number of people to escape and saved the lives of nearly 400 people, including Jews, Polish refugees, and Social Democratic politicians.<sup>60</sup> In November 1945, he said that he had disobeyed the law and his superiors because, as the father of three children, he had tried to imagine how the persecuted felt, and how he would feel if his children were treated so cruelly.<sup>61</sup> Most of the 1,246 protocols that mention gendarmes, however, relate the horrors of being robbed, undergoing body searches, being tortured, collected, entrained, and deported. A few samples: “they drove us like horses”.<sup>62</sup> “They took us to the station at Ilosva, beat us up on the way, and put us into wagons as we were, covered with blood.”<sup>63</sup> “Women had electricity conducted into their wombs” in Nagyvárad.<sup>64</sup> “Both the Germans and the gendarmes, the latter even more, raped young girls, who then had to be taken to hospital.”<sup>65</sup> In Monor, “[t]he gendarmes interrogated with electricity, they gathered especially the rich, respectable types, beat them up, searching for jewels and money”.<sup>66</sup>

Even without these interrogations, can herding and cramming thousands of people into brick-drying sheds (Beregszász, Szeged, Monor, and Budakalász), industrial plants (Kecskemét and Szolnok), mills (Barcs, Szabadka, and Dunapentele), pigsties (Szeged), cowsheds (Szandapuszta), stables (Pécs), and so on be called humane treatment? Is there a humane way of locking seventy or eighty people up in a wagon, with two buckets, one for water, the other for waste, until they arrive at an extermination camp? It was the gendarmes who rounded people up into the collecting camps, who guarded these camps, and who crammed people into the wagons.

Cruelty is not an accident.<sup>67</sup> For what was the ‘message’ that the decrees issued by the government of Döme Sztójay communicated?<sup>68</sup> They stated as follows:

“The Royal Hungarian Government will soon cleanse the country of Jews.”<sup>69</sup> This cleansing was to be 100 per cent, meaning that all Jews without regard to sex and age would have to be taken to collection camps. The task of rounding them up was entrusted to the police and the gendarmerie. The latter would help the police in the cities “if necessary”. “Take money and valuables into safe-keeping.” The Jews were

59 MZSL, DEGOB Protocols 987, 1765, 3496, 3642.

60 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3496.

61 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3642.

62 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 1.

63 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 1284.

64 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 5.

65 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 2824.

66 MZSL, DEGOB Protocol 3322.

67 It should be noted that the cruelty of the gendarmerie had been criticised earlier by the Germans, too. In 1936, during a visit to Berlin, Interior Minister Miklós Kozma responded to charges by the Germans concerning the activity of the gendarmerie, namely that gendarmes were adopting extremely brutal measures against German minorities in Hungary, in the following way: “I have no problem admitting that gendarmes in Hungary hit and slap more often than in the West. That’s the way it is with us, however, they do not hit the German minorities, but those slapped in the face include minorities, too. The indignation would be righteous if Hungarians were not hit and slapped, too, but believe me, smacks in the face by Hungarian gendarmes are meted out without regard to race and religion, depending purely on the cases themselves.” Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (MNL), K 429, Diary of Miklós Kozma, 1936.

68 Döme Sztójay (1883–1946) Prime Minister from March 22 to August 22, 1944.

69 So-called collecting camp decree, 7 April 1944, 6163/1944 BM [Minister of the Interior] VII. res. See Benoschovsky/Karsai (ed.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen*, Volume 1, 124–127.

transported as “prisoners”, and the rounding up was carried out according to gendarmerie districts across the whole country.<sup>70</sup>

What was expected of the executors, the gendarmes?

Firm, smooth and quick execution, “relentless severity”, as the commander of gendarmerie district IV (Pécs) wrote.<sup>71</sup> They should perform “other service activities” only if it was vitally urgent, they were to engage exclusively in the ghettoisation of Jews, moving them to collection camps. The commander of gendarmerie district V (Szeged) also issued orders.<sup>72</sup> Operations always commenced at dawn, usually at five o’clock. Valuables, including devotional objects if made of precious metal, were to be confiscated as ‘corpus delicti’.<sup>73</sup> Most of the gendarmes carried out the orders vigorously, often using cruel torture, beating Jews until they confessed where they had hidden their valuables. There were very few whose conscience made them try to help the persecuted. And finally there were those who helped Jews for money or some other form of compensation.

Assessing the activities of Reserve Police Battalion 101, Christopher Browning came to a similar conclusion in his book *Ordinary Men*, based on the experiment Philip Zimbardo had run in Stanford Prison. Zimbardo had divided a test group into guards and prisoners and placed them in a simulated prison. On the basis of their behaviour, he divided the guards into three groups. Browning’s research results harmonised with Zimbardo’s conclusions:

“Zimbardo’s spectrum of guards bears an uncanny resemblance to the groupings that emerged within Reserve Police Battalion 101: a nucleus of increasingly enthusiastic killers who volunteered for the firing squads and ‘Jew hunts’; a larger group of policemen who performed as shooters and ghetto clearers when assigned but who did not seek opportunities to kill (and in some cases refrained from killing, contrary to standing orders, when no one was monitoring their actions); and a small group (less than 20 per cent) of refusers and evaders.”<sup>74</sup>

The gendarmerie also included enthusiastic, explicitly cruel gendarmes. The majority, as research so far has revealed, obeyed and carried out decrees and orders strictly but did not exceed them. Finally, an extremely small group, a mere fraction of three to four per cent of gendarmes helped Jews out of compassion or for money. This ratio is far below Browning’s 20 per cent. Most of the gendarmes certainly did not know about the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Naturally, however, just as the persecuted received the news from forced military labourers or soldiers coming home from the front on leave, from refugees who had fled to Hungary, or from reading between the lines in newspapers, that Jews were being massacred by Nazi Germany, gendarmes could similarly have acquired knowledge of these horrors. It is a fact, in any case, that they did not expect the unfortunate women, children, and old people they ‘escorted’ to Kassa (Košice, Slovakia) and there handed over to the Germans ever to return. In more than one place, gendarme officers submitted claims for Jewish apartments and houses for themselves and their families, or for accommodating gendarme guardhouses. Gábor Faragho, on the other hand, had heard about the gas

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the State Security Services, hereafter ABTL], V-146.147, People’s Court Trial of László Hajnácskóy.

<sup>72</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Csongrád Megyei Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives – Archives of Csongrád County] (MNL – CsML), Nb. 35/1945, People’s Court Trial of Béla Tóth.

<sup>73</sup> MNL – CsML, Nb. 1253/1945, People’s Court Trial of Andor Keresztes.

<sup>74</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, London 2001, 168.



chambers in June 1944, yet he did not propose to have the deportations stopped at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on June 21. At the same time, he even underplayed the cruelty of the gendarmerie, regarding it as “irrelevant” that “complaints have been filed against some of the 20,000 Hungarian gendarmes”.<sup>75</sup> László Ferenczy also received the so-called Auschwitz Protocols in mid-June, which described precisely what was happening to those deported to Auschwitz. Yet it was only early in July that he reported to Prime Minister Döme Sztójay, and then to Regent Miklós Horthy, that the contents of the protocols should be checked.<sup>76</sup>

Horthy already heard about the brutalities of the gendarmes at the end of May. In his letter to Prime Minister Sztójay in early June 1944, he wrote: “[...] lately I have received information that in that field [that of the ‘solution of the Jewish question’], in several respects, much more has happened here than with the Germans themselves, and that in such brutal, indeed, sometimes inhumane manner that even the Germans themselves would not resort to carrying out these measures.”<sup>77</sup> Although he mentioned more than once that the gendarmerie should not be involved, it took him another month before he made up his mind to suspend the deportations on 6 July. By that time, however, more than 400,000 people had been deported.

And now to the second fundamental problem: *the punishment*.

In the first months of 1945, according to public administration documents, leaders in the provinces were not thinking about terminating the gendarmerie as an organisation. In several places, indeed, steps were taken to reorganise it under other names, such as citizens’ guard, national guard, or peace-keeping guard.<sup>78</sup>

A government decree published on 10 May 1945, however, “establishe[d] the responsibility of the gendarmerie as a body, terminate[d] its institution, and dissolve[d] its organisation”.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, gendarmes’ pensions were terminated, except in cases in which the person involved was declared ‘clean’ or ‘cleared’.<sup>80</sup> Gendarmes were not covered by general screening procedures, but at their own request they could be subjected to a special screening procedure. The importance of being declared ‘clean’ was important for gendarmes because it was a requirement if they wanted jobs in their own profession, meaning with the police force.

This decree went through months of preparation, between January and May. Some, including Gábor Faragho, former Superintendent of the Gendarmerie, then Minister of Public Supplies, spoke up against the establishment of collective responsibility. Therefore, the original text was modified to include “the responsibility of the

75 Karsai/Molnár, A magyar Quisling-kormány, 755.

76 Molnár, Csendőrtiszt a Markóban, 31-34, 143, 206, 302-309.

77 Miklós Szinai/László Szücs (ed.), Horthy Miklós titkos iratai [The Confidential Papers of Miklós Horthy], Budapest 1963, 451. Edmund Veessenmayer, the plenipotentiary commissioner, remarked in his telegram to Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop on 21 June 1944 that “the Regent sent a secret letter to Sztójay in which he held the government responsible for the harsh handling of the Jewish question”. György Ránki/Ervin Pamlényi/Loránt Tilkovszky/Gyula Juhász (ed.), A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944 [Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German Diplomatic Papers on Hungary, 1933–1944], Budapest 1968, 870.

78 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Somogy Megyei Levéltára (Kaposvár) [Hungarian National Archives – Archives of Somogy County] (MNL – SML), 273/1945, 804/1945, papers of the district clerk, Szigetvár district.

79 No. 1690/1945. M. E. in: Magyar Közlöny, 26, 10 May 1945, 3-4. According to the first passage in paragraph 1 of the decree, the gendarmerie “served the anti-people governments in the past with unconditional obedience, strove to annihilate Hungarian democratic movements by merciless means, and committed innumerable acts of violence against Hungarian peasants and Hungarian workers”.

80 Widows or orphans of gendarmes were only entitled to benefits, and pensions if the gendarme in question had died prior to 1 September 1939, or if he had died after 1 September 1939, but he was cleared by the screening committee.



gendarmerie as a body”.<sup>81</sup> According to the original version of the decree, gendarmes would have been obliged “to report to undergo the screening procedure” with the screening committee operating at the place of their former service. According to the final version of the text, however, “they do *not* [emphasis, J.M.] fall under general screening proceedings”. It followed from this change that the provision was also omitted that if a gendarme did not report before a screening committee by 1 June 1945, he could be interned for at least six months if caught.<sup>82</sup> This, naturally, did not mean that gendarmes were not interned already before the screening proceedings.

Only one committee for screening gendarmes was set up, in Budapest. Simultaneously, as papers of the public administration indicate, bills were posted in the countryside at the places of residence of the persons concerned for anyone “with favourable or unfavourable information” on them to report to the authorities.<sup>83</sup> The literature on the subject offers differing figures, if at all, when it comes to the number of gendarmes in Hungary after the Second World War, of their losses in the war, of how many of them were “cleared”, how many were convicted, and the severity of their sentences. The former gendarme officers in emigration (Kövendy and Rektor) spoke of war losses of over fifty per cent: 10,000-11,000 people. In one of his articles on the website [www.csendor.com](http://www.csendor.com), Kőrössi mentioned a loss of 4,000, and in another of 10,000.<sup>84</sup> According to the summary of the Államvédelmi Hatóság, the State Security Authority (ÁVH), of 15 May 1950, the number of former gendarmes in Hungary was at that time 15,828.<sup>85</sup> If we accept that in 1944 the gendarmerie was approximately 20,000 strong, then the loss it suffered was about 4,000, this number also including those captured by the Red Army, those who had not returned, as well as those who had died between 1945 and May 1950.

The numbers of those subjected to screening proceedings and those ‘cleared’ also fluctuate in the literature. As to the latter, the figures range between 211 and 271. Zoltán András Kovács gave more detailed figures broken down over the years between 1945 and 1948, but without indicating his source(s). He stated that “the committee screening gendarmes examined the cases of 2,252 former gendarmes during its forty months of activity (until 31 October 1948), and it cleared only 271”, a proportion of twelve per cent.<sup>86</sup>

Annual Activity of the Committee Screening Gendarmes (1945–1948)<sup>87</sup>

Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	Total
Persons Screened	658	491	687	416	2,252
Persons Found ‘Clean’	64	169	27	11	271

81 László Szűcs (ed.), Dálnoki Miklós Béla kormányának (Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány) minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvei 1944. december 23.-1945. november 15. [Meetings of the Cabinet of Miklós Béla Dálnoki (Provisional National Government), 23 December 1944-15 November 1945], Volume A, Budapest 1997, 332, 336, 359, 365-367.

82 Ibid 366; Magyar Közlöny [Official Gazette], 26, 10 May 1945, 3-4.

83 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Baranya Megyei Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives – Archives of Baranya County] (MNL – BML), 849/1946, Pécs város polgármesterének iratai [Papers of the Mayor of Pécs].

84 Kőrössi/Soltész, A m. kir. csendőrség története [History of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie], 29, 55. note, <http://www.csendor.com/site/tortenelem-m.pdf> (30 June 2016). Kőrössi/Soltész, Magyar Királyi csendőr Bajtársi Közösség, 3. In the latter they wrote the following: “360 officers and 10,000 men of the gendarmerie survived the war. The Communist regime exterminated some 5,000 gendarmes. Approximately 3,000 were sent to Soviet forced labour camps, and some 1,500 found their way to the West.”

85 ÁBTL, A-618.

86 Kovács, Csendőrsors, 124. According to Kovács, the committee screening gendarmes had its first meeting on 9 June 1945, and ceased functioning on 31 October 1948 in accordance with decree No.11200/1948. M.E.

87 Kovács, Csendőrsors, 124.

The findings of my own research does not support Kovács's data in more than a few cases. It must be noted that the documents of the committee screening gendarmes have not survived. On the other hand, a significant part of their index books, namely those from between 1945 and 1948, can be found in the Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, the Historical Archive of the State Security Services. So far, I have not been able to find the volumes for 1949 and 1950. However, contrary to Kovács' claim, this screening committee did not cease to exist in October 1948.

The notices posted in Magyar Közlöny (Official Gazette) by the committee for screening gendarmes are also accessible in libraries and archives. The notices issued by the chairman of the committee continuously published who came under screening proceeding and when, and the names of those declared 'clean'. If anyone came up before the people's court after the screening, the trial documents may include the completed form requesting the certificate as well as the resolution of the screening committee.

Thus the activity of the screening committee can be traced in the index books and in Magyar Közlöny until the spring of 1950. Its functioning was terminated by a government decree of the Hungarian People's Republic effective from 15 April 1950.<sup>88</sup> The notices published in Magyar Közlöny provide more precise information than the index books do on the working process of the committee for screening gendarmes. The number of cases per day was between 11 and 71, but there was a day when 172 cases were heard. However, from November 1946 the number of cases was regulated, and until April 1947 forty cases were processed per day most of the time, with between 40 and 50 cases being processed per day thereafter. In 1948, 49 to 50 cases were heard per session. In 1949, the number of cases gradually went down from 50 to 30, and then to ten per session. Finally, in 1950, Magyar Közlöny published only a few 'cleared' verdicts. In the first two years, the number of sessions lay between two to five per month. In 1947/1948, this number was between six and eleven, save a few months. By 1949, the number of sessions went down to between one and five per month. The number of 'cleared' individuals is relatively easy to establish because the notices, from the first published in 1945 to the last in 1950, gave the name, former rank, and place of residence of the cleared person complete with a serial number.

Number of Screening Cases Tried and of Gendarmes Found 'Clean' according to the Notices Published in Magyar Közlöny in 1945–1950							
Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	Total
Persons Screened	867	1,513	3,857 <sup>1</sup>	4,786	876	--	11,899 <sup>2</sup>
Persons Found 'Clean'	64	195	73	52	77	16	477 <sup>3</sup>

- 1 Three notices from 1947 are either missing or an error occurred in the numbering. The former is more probable. If the former is true, we must count with about 120 more persons.
- 2 If we assume an additional 120 persons for the year 1947, the total number of persons in the screening procedure was 12,019.
- 3 According to the serial numbers, 481 persons were cleared. However, in 1946 one decision was annulled, and three serial numbers are missing from 1947. The final decision on these cases is unknown so far.

<sup>88</sup> Decree No. 108/1950. (IV.15.) M.T. of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic on the Subject of the Termination of the Procedures Concerning the Screening of Former Gendarmerial Persons: Magyar Közlöny minisztertanácsi és miniszteri rendeletek tára [Official Gazette Collection of Decrees Issued by the Council of Ministers and the Ministries], 15 April 1950, No. 64, 552.

Thus, on the basis of the sources researched so far it can be said that, contrary to the claim in the scholarly literature on the subject and in other publications, the special screening committee established for former gendarmerie personnel examined approximately 12,000 cases, of which 477 were declared 'clean', a proportion of four per cent.

The picture is further refined if one examines individual cases, too. Gyula Balázs-Piri, former head of Department XX (Gendarmerie) of the Ministry of the Interior was found clean, but he was later removed from Budapest and relocated within the country.<sup>89</sup> János Papp, former commander of Gendarmerie District X was found clean by the committee in 1945 (Balázs-Piri among others wrote a supporting statement for him), but he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1950, pardoned in 1957, and acquitted in 1962 for lack of criminal offence. The same János Papp was sentenced to death in absentia by the people's court in Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania), and in 1955 the Hungarian authorities were considering extraditing him to Romania.<sup>90</sup>

It seems safe to conclude that compared to the activities of the screening committees, especially other screening committees working in Budapest, the committee for screening gendarmes passed its verdicts and made its decisions based on significantly more severe principles. As it was spelled out in *Népbírószági Közlöny* (Official Gazette of the People's Courts), "the screening of gendarmes is performed according to the strictest rules".<sup>91</sup> Compared to the general 80 to 90 per cent of 'cleared' cases in civil service procedures,<sup>92</sup> the committee for screening gendarmes cleared only four per cent.

The retribution against the gendarmes after the Second World War in Hungary, apart from the screening procedures, can be broken down into several phases. In the first phase, between 1945 and 1950, the people's prosecutors and the people's courts initiated legal proceedings against gendarmes with charges of war crimes and crimes against the people, based among other things on information obtained from the screening committee. After the people's courts had been dissolved, criminal courts often continued the cases involving war crimes and crimes against the people until 1956. Simultaneously, charges were brought against some of the prisoners of war taken over from the Soviet Union. Finally, after 1956, fresh proceedings were started "against reactionary forces at home", among them gendarmes as well. I am still in the process of researching the documents in connection with these proceedings. There are, however lists and reports that indicate that during the criminal proceedings against the gendarmes after the Second World War, only a fraction of the charges included wartime crimes, such as participation in the robbing of Jews, in their ghettoisation, and deportation. In the list of 618 chief war criminals compiled on 30 April 1946, only 31 were gendarmes. Most of them had been wanted for participating in the Újvidék (Novi Sad, Serbia) massacre, probably at the request of the Yugoslav authorities. Three Arrow Cross members were on the list for accepting leading positions after the Arrow Cross takeover, and three more for working in the Nemzeti Számonkérő Szervezet (National Organisation of Accountability). This latter organisation also operated during the Szálasi era. Only one officer, László Ferenczy, was described as "the chief organiser of the Jewish deportations", and wanted for that crime.<sup>93</sup>

89 ÁBTL, A-547, A-940, A-974.

90 ÁBTL, A-547, A-940/1, A-974, V-140.906/2, V-142.803/1.

91 *Népbírószági Közlöny* [Official Gazette of the People's Courts], 19 January 1946. 13.

92 Tibor Zinner, *Háborús bűnösök pereit. Internálások, kitelepítések és igazolási eljárások 1945–1949* [Trials of War Criminals. Internments, Forced Relocations, and Screening Procedures, 1945–1949], in: *Történelmi Szemle* [Historical Review] (1985) 1, 129–132.

93 ÁBTL, A-612. The names of the 31 gendarme officers are listed in: Kovács, Csenedőrsors, 110–111.

We can state with certainty that 5,000 gendarmes were not executed in Hungary after the war. According to the report of the ÁVH in May 1950, the people's courts had convicted 2,473 gendarmes – 142 were at that time still in custody, 2,331 had already been released –, making up nine per cent of all the sentences of the people's court.<sup>94</sup> In Hungary, altogether 59,429 persons were brought before the people's courts, 26,997 of whom were convicted.<sup>95</sup> Until 24 February 1951, altogether 227 condemned persons had been executed, this number including fewer than ten gendarmes.<sup>96</sup>

In November 1961, a sub-department of the Ministry of the Interior (II/5-b) compiled a list of names of "Gendarme officers and rank and file serving under Horthy having committed crimes, living in Budapest", accompanied by "incriminating and compromising data".<sup>97</sup> There are 172 names on the list, and in 47 cases (27.3 per cent) the personal data is followed by the information that the person took part in investigations against left-wing, Communist elements during the war. 62 of them (36 per cent) were "against democracy" or *nyugatos* ('Westerners' – which means they liked, or were attracted to, or had connections in, the West) in the 1950s, or took part in the 'counter-revolution' in 1956. Only 19 names (eleven per cent) include the additional information that the person took part in establishing one or other of the Jewish ghettos and/or took part in the deportations. The others were "Arrow Cross", "embezzlers", or "illegally possessing firearms".

By July 1962, the relevant department of the Ministry of the Interior had completed the national register of former gendarmes. Of the 10,000 former gendarmes, merely 113 (1.1 per cent) were marked as having taken part in the persecution, ghettoisation, and deportation of Jews, or as having been cruel to the persecuted or to military forced labourers.<sup>98</sup>

After the Second World War, the gendarmerie could no longer operate as an agency of public security since it symbolised the Horthy regime.<sup>99</sup> The few gendarmes who were cleared had difficulties finding jobs, and most of them were employed as unskilled workers, or worked in agriculture. Those who were indicted received prison sentences ranging from a few years to fifteen years or internment, the punishments being handed down by the people's courts until 1950, and later by municipal and county courts. However, the ghettoisation and deportation of Jews were included in only a fraction of the charges of war crimes or crimes against the people that were brought to the courts. The interrogating officers, attorneys, and judges were much more interested in the anti-Communist, than anti-Jewish activities of the gendarmes. To quote György Gyarmati, after the Second World War "[t]here was no mercy for the ruling class and the lackeys of the former regime, the Horthy era". The latter included gendarmes, too.<sup>100</sup>

94 ÁBTL, A-618.

95 Tibor Zinner, *XX. századi politikai perek. A magyarországi eljárások vázlata, 1944/1945–1992* [Twentieth-Century Political Trials. The Scheme of the Procedures in Hungary 1944/1945–1992], Budapest 1999, 32.

96 Ibid.

97 ÁBTL, A-973.

98 The register of former gendarmes is contained in ten folders in: ÁBTL, A-969–A-969/9.

99 Gendarmes between the two world wars took their oath upon Regent Horthy first, and then upon the constitution.

100 György Gyarmati, *Ellenségek és bűnbakok kavalkádja Magyarországon (1945–1956)* [Patchwork of Enemies and Scapegoats in Hungary, 1945–1956], in: 24 (2000) July–August/7–8, 17.

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Article

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# Gefeierte und Verdamnte

Der Slowakische Nationalaufstand 1944  
als nationaler Erinnerungsort<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The Slovak National Uprising in 1944 was an important act of military resistance against the collaboration of the Tiso regime with Nazi Germany. It was initiated by members of the Civic movement and to a lesser extent by the Communists, and was eventually brutally crushed by the SS, the Wehrmacht, and pro-Nazi Slovak forces. The insurrection is hardly remembered outside of Slovakia although it became an important *lieu de mémoire* for Slovak nation-building. Nevertheless, academic studies as well as public history and remembrance of the event was and still is highly controversial. The reason for these disputes are manifold. They are rooted on the one hand in the entrenched hegemonic Communist reading, which created a partisan myth around the uprising while minimising the role of the Civic resistance, and on the other hand in the different representations and interpretations in Czech, Czechoslovak, and Slovak historiographies, which in their respective orientations and ideologies attribute different functions to the uprising. Slovak ultra-nationalist narratives also play their role, seeing the revolt as an international conspiracy against independent Slovakia to re-establish a centralist Czechoslovak Republic. In different periods and power constellations – 1945, 1945–1948, 1948–1968, 1968/1969, after 1969 and 1989 – these various interpretations prevailed or stood at stake, and the fighters of the uprising were either “celebrated” or “cursed”.

Bewaffnete Konflikte können häufig zu Gedächtnisorten, zu *lieux de mémoire* geraten. Oft stellen sie sich dabei als eine die Zukunft der jeweiligen Gesellschaft prägende, heldenhafte Geschichte bzw. Tragödie dar. Laut dem französischen Historiker Pierre Nora gibt es keine spontane kollektive Erinnerung, die Entstehung eines Gedächtnisortes ist folglich nicht selbstverständlich, sondern erfolgt durch die Einrichtung von Archiven oder anderen Urkundensammlungen, durch Jubiläumsfeiern, Trauerreden oder Abhaltung anderer Feiern. Der Gegenstand der Erinnerung muss dabei nicht unbedingt über eine dezidiert materielle oder geografisch festlegbare Substanz verfügen, soll aber eine Art Kollektivität oder historisches Erbe vergegenwärtigen können. Dieses kann dann, nunmehr dem Vergessen entrissen, durch Gedenkfeiern, durch Etablierung und den Besuch von Gedenkort oder durch andere Formen der Präsentation im öffentlichen Raum nunmehr zu einem *lieu de mémoire* werden. Bei solchen Anlässen kann auch eine affektive Bindung entstehen, die aber keinesfalls konstant oder stabil sein muss. Museen, Archive, Friedhöfe, Feiern, Jubiläen, Verträge, Protokolle, Denkmäler, Heiligtümer und Vereine –

1 Dieses Projekt wurde von der Agentúra na Podporu Výskumu a Vývoja [Agentur zur Förderung von Forschung und Entwicklung] mit der Vertragsnummer APVV-14-0644 Continuities and Discontinuities of Political and Social Elites in Slovakia in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries gefördert, veröffentlicht in: Miroslav Michela, Trianon labirintusaiban. Történelem, emlékezetpolitika és párhuzamos történetek Szlovákiában és Magyarországon [Im Labyrinth von Trianon. Geschichte, Erinnerungspolitik und Parallelgeschichte in der Slowakei und in Ungarn], Békescsaba/Budapest 2016, 157-177.



sie alle legen Zeugnis ab von einer anderen Zeit, von der Illusion der Unsterblichkeit und tragen eine aktuelle Botschaft in sich.<sup>2</sup>

Erinnerungsrituale, die sich zudem häufig im öffentlichen Räumen abspielen, bilden eine bestimmende Komponente einer politischen Kultur. Sie halten fest, was als sozial relevant und produktiv erachtet wird, und lassen sich zugleich als Instrumente für die Demonstration und Bekräftigung der Macht deuten. Durch diese Gedenkfeiern entstehen die Vergangenheit mit Gegenwart und Zukunft verbindenden Erzählungen, die dann in weiten Kreisen als authentisch anerkannt werden. Die Feiern dienen somit der Bestätigung, Reproduktion, aber auch Diskussion der Grundwerte einer gegebenen Gesellschaft. Die allgemein verständlich inszenierte und repräsentierte Vergangenheit bestärkt darüber hinaus das Vertrauen in die Gegenwart, unterstützt die Beständigkeit der von der Gruppe vertretenen Werte und schafft somit einen Kontext, worin gesellschaftliche Werte auch reproduziert werden. Die Rituale des Gedenkens werden dabei häufig für ein bestimmtes Milieu ‚maßgeschneidert‘, um es ansprechen und die sich aus der Interpretation der Vergangenheit und den aktuellen Bedürfnissen zusammensetzende ‚Botschaft‘ verbreiten zu können.

Die Rituale des Erinnerns können durchaus auch als ein performativer Akt interpretiert werden, dessen Ziel es ist, ein historisches Ereignis allgemein verständlich heraufzubeschwören bzw. um die von den herrschenden Eliten gemeinsam geschaffenen aktuellen politischen Verhältnisse zu legitimieren. Bei solchen Anlässen interagieren die Organisatoren, die Produzenten des Bedeutungsgehalts der Veranstaltung, mit den auftretenden und sich erinnernden Akteuren. Aber das ist keine kommunikative Einbahnstraße, sondern stellt ein wechselseitiges, dialektisches Verhältnis dar, das sich mehr oder weniger im ganzen Ereignis bzw. in seinen späteren Wiederholungen manifestiert. Die Teilnehmer solcher Veranstaltungen werden in der Retrospektive als Figuren erachtet, die ihr Einverständnis nicht nur mit der zelebrierten, mit dem Ereignis assoziierten Geschichte, sondern auch mit der aktuellen Situation zum Ausdruck brachten. Dies gilt aber auch umgekehrt: Ein fehlendes Einverständnis wird üblicherweise nicht toleriert, was sich auf unterschiedliche Weise manifestiert. Problematischere Fälle werden mit Polizeieinsatz geahndet, eine öffentlich zur Schau gestellte Missbilligung staatlich organisierter Ereignisse zieht nicht selten gerichtliche Konsequenzen nach sich. Die Organisatoren der Gedenkfeiern stellen also ihre eigene Vorgangsweise so ein, als ob diese ‚im Interesse der Menschen‘ bzw. der ‚historischen Botschaft‘ des gegebenen Ereignisses stünde, womit natürlich auch ihre eigene Position nur bestärkt wird.

Was die Konstruktion von Historie betrifft, unterschied der 2003 verstorbene slowakische Historiker Lubomír Lipták drei wesentliche Schichten.<sup>3</sup> Die eine – die offizielle – Schicht wird vom herrschenden Regime und den ihm verbundenen sozialen Akteuren repräsentiert. Es geht dabei um einen institutionell etablierten und (re-)produzierten historischen Kanon, der die herrschende ideologische und Werteorientierung sowie die dadurch präferierte gesellschaftliche Praxis legitimiert. Dies lässt sich bei staatlichen Festakten, bei den Feierlichkeiten anlässlich einzelner historischer Ereignisse, bei Gesetzen oder legislativen Maßnahmen oder den approbierten Lehrplänen beobachten: Allein der Staat verfügt über jene wirtschaftlichen, kontrollierenden und repressiven Institutionen und Ressourcen, die den jeweiligen Kanon aufrechterhalten können.

2 Pierre Nora, Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis: Die Gedächtnisorte, in: Ders., Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis, Berlin 1990, 11-33.

3 Lubomír Lipták, Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov [Das Jahrhundert, das länger währte als hundert Jahre], Bratislava 1999, 231-232.

Aber auch die Historikerzunft wirkt an der Ausformung eines historischen Kanons maßgeblich mit, besteht doch ihre erstrangige Aufgabe darin, die Vergangenheit nach bewährten Regeln und verifizierbaren Quellen kritisch aufzuarbeiten. Die nächste Schicht ist somit der wissenschaftliche Diskurs, der auf den Prinzipien der mehr oder weniger autonomen, freien und verantwortungsvollen Forschung und auf kritischem Denken beruht. Dennoch wirkt die jeweilige Macht dieser wissenschaftlichen Autonomie auf vielfältige Weise entgegen: von der Projektfinanzierung über Gründungen von Instituten, der Ernennung von deren Direktoren bis hin zur Thematisierung des aktuellen öffentlichen Diskurses. Resultat dessen ist Konformismus aber auch jene Abwehrreaktion, die zu einer kritischen Reflexion führt.

Die dritte Schicht oder Dimension wiederum ist eine rein persönliche: Sie wird von den sozialen Strukturen und den persönlichen Erfahrungen gestaltet, wobei sie nicht selten den vorhin genannten Schichten diametral entgegengesetzt sein kann oder auch ist. Persönliche Erfahrungen und Vorstellungen können schließlich auch die Funktionsweise der bereits erwähnten Institutionen prägen und beeinflussen. Aber diese drei Schichten können miteinander durchaus koexistieren, sich einmal überlappen, ein andermal miteinander konkurrieren oder sich wechselseitig ausschließen.

Mit anderen historischen Ereignissen vergleichbar durchliefen offizielle Geschichte und Gedenkfeiern des Aufstands von 1944 in der Slowakei – in der Regel als *Slowakischer Nationalaufstand* bezeichnet – mehrere Wandlungen. Diese wurden in erster Linie von der politischen Situation beeinflusst, aber auch von jenen gesellschaftlichen Akteuren gelenkt, die über entsprechende Ressourcen verfügten, ihrer eigenen Erinnerungsweise Geltung zu verschaffen. Auf die Motive dieser Auseinandersetzungen haben die Historiker Jozef Jablonický, Lubomír Lipták, Elena Mannová und Milan Zemko bereits hingewiesen.<sup>4</sup> Dabei lassen sich einige wesentliche Tendenzen mit Blick auf die Interpretation des Aufstandes, auf seine Erinnerung und die Organisation von Gedenkfeiern unterscheiden: Es gibt hier Darstellungen als eine koordinierte Aktion in- und ausländischer Kräfte, des bürgerlichen oder kommunistischen Widerstands ebenso wie Bemühungen, den Aufstand so weit wie möglich zu entideologisieren. Ebenso spielten aber auch Tendenzen eine Rolle, die versuchten, den Aufstand als antinationalen Putsch zu interpretieren. Diese Bemühungen gingen in erster Linie von den „ludaci“ aus, von Vertretern der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSLS), der Staatspartei der unabhängigen Slowakei 1939–1945.

Die Veränderungen der Masternarrative über den Aufstand lassen sich so auf mannigfaltige Weise untersuchen: mit Blick auf ihren inhaltlichen und Bedeutungswandel, mit Blick auf die Beurteilung jener Personen, die die Bedeutung und die wichtigsten Figuren bestimmten, mit Blick auf die Intensität, Örtlichkeit und Geist der Gedenkveranstaltungen, bis hin zu deren Ikonografie. Im Folgenden wird dar-

4 Lubomír Lipták, Pamätníky a pamät povstania roku 1944 na Slovensku [Denkmäler und Erinnerungen des Aufstandes in der Slowakei im Jahre 1944], in: Historický časopis [Historische Zeitschrift] 43 (1995) 2, 363–369; Elena Mannová, Slovenské národné povstanie a politická pamät [Der Slowakische Nationalaufstand und das politische Gedächtnis], in: Edita Ivaničková et al. (Hg.), Z dejín demokratických a totalitných režimov na Slovensku a v Československu v 20. storočí [Zur Geschichte der demokratischen und totalitären Regime in der Slowakei und in der Tschechoslowakei im 20. Jahrhundert], Bratislava 2008, 215–230; Milan Zemko, Les monuments du Soulèvement national slovaque et péripéties de la mémoire historique [Denkmäler des slowakischen Nationalaufstandes und Peripetien der historischen Erinnerung], in: Antoine Marès (Hg.), Lieux de mémoire en Europe centrale [Gedächtnisorte in Mitteleuropa], Paris 2009, 95–108; Jozef Jablonický, Glosy o historiografii SNP. Zneužívanie a falšovanie dejín SNP [Glossen über die Geschichte des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes. Die missbrauchte und gefälschte Geschichte des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes], Bratislava 1994.

gelegt, wie sich das offizielle Bild des historischen Ereignisses in seinem Verhältnis zu den slowakischen (innen-)politischen Veränderungen seit 1944 bis zur Gegenwart immer wieder veränderte.

## Krieg, Legitimität und Staat

Die offizielle Erzählung über die Entstehung der ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik wird in hohem Maße von der Tradition der Legionäre geprägt, die auf die Gründung eines tschechoslowakischen Staates hinarbeiteten – von einer Tradition also, die u. a. die militärische Teilnahme von ‚Tschechoslowaken‘ am Krieg gegen die Mittelmächte rechtfertigt.<sup>5</sup> Der Autonomie der Slowakei im Oktober 1938 und der Proklamation des Slowakischen Staates am 14. März 1939 folgten tiefgreifende Änderungen in der Beurteilung dieser bisherigen Staatspolitik und ihrer Überlieferung. Nach Jozef Tisos bekannter und häufig zitierter Aussage im Preßburger Rundfunk am 14. März 1939 sei der Slowakische Staat aus dem politischen ‚Willen‘ der slowakischen Nation ‚geboren‘ worden:

„Unser slowakischer Staat wurde nicht aus Hass, sondern aus inniger Liebe zur Heimat und dem entschlossenem Willen geboren, für dieses Ideal zu arbeiten und dafür Opfer zu bringen. Möge uns allein dieser Gedanke leiten! Nicht der Hass gegen irgendjemanden, sondern eine innige Liebe zum eigenen Staat. Was noch aus dem Bestand der Vergangenheit zu beseitigen ist, wird beseitigt, aber nicht hasserfüllt, sondern leidenschaftlich, nicht grob und rücksichtslos, sondern in christlicher Manier.“<sup>6</sup>

Nach der Staatsgründung entfachte sich jedoch bald ein bewaffneter Konflikt an der neuen, durch den Ersten Wiener Schiedsspruch festgelegten südöstlichen Grenze des Landes mit Ungarn. Dieser Konflikt wurde mehr oder weniger von den Nationalsozialisten dirigiert, die vorgaben, die Zukunft der Region mittels sogenannter Verträge über Freundschaft und Zusammenarbeit zu sichern, in Wirklichkeit aber den Status einzelner Staaten der Region als Vasall des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ nur festschreiben wollten.<sup>7</sup>

Ein weiteres wichtiges Moment war, dass die Slowakei sich im Krieg gegen Polen und die Sowjetunion auf die Seite der Deutschen schlug, was der öffentlichen Meinung erst einmal zu vermitteln war. Nach der zeitgenössischen Terminologie war die Slowakei ein selbstständiger ‚christlicher Nationalstaat‘, der in Hitlers ‚Neuem Europa‘ nunmehr seinen Platz gefunden hätte: Der Krieg im Osten wurde aus dieser Perspektive als Kampf um Werte dargestellt, als Kampf um die nationale und religiöse Freiheit, als Kampf gegen den ‚Judeobolschewismus‘, und sein oberstes Ziel sei der Schutz der grundlegenden menschlichen Werte gewesen.

Diese Argumente der herrschenden slowakischen Elite wurden im heimischen Umfeld – von einer Öffentlichkeit kann man wohl kaum reden – akzeptiert, entsprachen sie doch der damaligen, von der nationalistischen Argumentation gepräg-

5 Ivan Šedivý, Die Tschechoslowakischen Legionäre: Ein historischer Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Edita Ivaničková/Dieter Langewiesche/Alena Mišková (Hg.), *Mythen und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert. Deutsche – Slowaken – Tschechen*, Essen 2013, 91-99.

6 <https://www.herder-institut.de/resolve/qid/2731.html> (10. Februar 2017).

7 Vgl. z. B. István Janek, A szlovák-magyar „kis háború“ története és annak interpretációi a nemzeti történetírásokban [Die Geschichte des slowakisch-ungarischen „kleinen Kriegs“ und seine Interpretationen in den nationalen Historiografien], in: Csilla Fedinec (Hg.), *Kárpáti Ukrajna. Vereckétől Husztig. Egy konfliktustörténet nemzeti olvasatai* [Die Karpato-Ukraine. Vom Verecke-Pass nach Chust. Nationale Lesarten einer konfliktbeladenen Geschichte], Budapest 2015, 173-195.

ten Atmosphäre. Gleichzeitig befanden sie sich auch durchaus im Einklang mit jenen wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Vergünstigungen, die das neue System ausgewählten sozialen Gruppen zukommen ließ. Da die slowakischen Soldaten an der Ostfront mit nie zuvor gesehenem Elend konfrontiert waren, sahen sie ihre erstrangige Aufgabe vor allem im Kampf gegen den ‚Bolschewismus‘. Schließlich pflegten sie ja auch ein durchaus freundschaftliches Verhältnis zur Zivilbevölkerung, mit der sie durch eine ähnliche Sprache und gelegentlich auch durch die Slawophilie verbunden waren.<sup>8</sup>

Aber im Sommer 1944 war es bereits mehr oder weniger allgemein bekannt, dass sich im Land illegale Gruppen auf den bewaffneten Widerstand vorbereiten. Es kursierten Nachrichten über Partisanenaktionen. In dieser Situation erklärte Jozef Tiso, dass

„den Slowaken und der Slowakei noch niemand so viel geben konnte wie der Slowakische Staat. [...] Kein Slowake würde diese Staatlichkeit zugunsten des Terrors oder feindlicher Propaganda aufgeben und auf die Staatlichkeit verzichten.“<sup>9</sup>

Der nationalistisch überformte Optimismus des Präsidenten sollte sich jedoch nicht bewahrheiten: Der Aufstand brach am 29. August 1944 aus und breitete sich rasch auf den Großteil des Landes, auf ein Gebiet von etwa 20.000 Quadratkilometer aus. Die Vertreter des bürgerlichen und kommunistischen Widerstands, denen sich ein wesentlicher Teil der örtlichen Bevölkerung anschloss, verkündeten gegen den Faschismus und für die Wiedererrichtung der Tschechoslowakei zu kämpfen – was mit der Existenz einer Slowakischen Republik natürlich unvereinbar war.

Die staatliche Propaganda behauptete aus diesem Grund, dass verantwortungslose ‚tschechoslowakistische und bolschewistische Banden‘ einen Putsch durchgeführt hätten und es ihnen gelungen sei, das einfache Volk irrezuleiten. Die Propaganda setzte alles daran, die Aufständischen als ungebildete, zügellose, randalierende und plündernde Alkoholiker zu verunglimpfen. Um den Charakter einer ‚gesamtnationalen Aktion‘ abzuschwächen, wiesen sie unermüdlich darauf hin, dass sich nicht die ganze Bevölkerung dem Aufstand angeschlossen habe. Das Organ der faschistischen paramilitärischen Hlinka-Garde *Gardista* (Der Gardist) schrieb etwa, dass das

„slowakische Volk – mit Ausnahme der unpassenden, moralisch versagenden Individuen – nicht gewillt ist, irgendetwas mit dem Randalieren der tschechisch-bolschewistischen Banden zu tun zu haben, und es hat damit auch nichts zu tun. Dass es seine Empörung nicht aktiv kundtut, lässt sich mit seiner Friedensliebe und Wehrlosigkeit erklären. [...] Die Bevölkerung musste die Befehle der Banditen mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen und wehrlos ausführen.“<sup>10</sup>

Bekanntlich wurde der bewaffnete Widerstand in zwei Monaten niedergeschlagen, und nachdem deutsche Einheiten am 27. Oktober 1944 das Zentrum des Aufstandes, Banská Bystrica (Neusohl) besetzt hatten, gab es keinen organisierten Widerstand der Aufständischen mehr. Nach der erfolgreichen Militäraktion der Natio-

8 Zur Geschichte der Slowakei zwischen 1939 und 1945 siehe jüngst Martina Fiamová/Ján Hlavinka/Michal Schvarc et al., *Slovenský štát 1939–1945: predstavy a reality* [Der Slowakische Staat 1939–1945: Ideen und Realität], Bratislava 2014; Katarína Hradská/Ivan Kamenec et al., *Slovensko v 20. storočí. Bd. 4: Slovenská republika 1939–1945* [Die Slowakei im 20. Jahrhundert. Bd. 4: Die Slowakische Republik], Bratislava 2015.

9 Marína Zavacká, *Vojna slov – protiodbojová propaganda v Povstaní a o Povstaní* [Der Krieg der Wörter – Antiwiderstandspropaganda im Aufstand und über den Aufstand], in: Edita Ivaničková et al., *Z dejín demokratických a totalitných režimov*, 180.

10 Siehe ausführlicher Zavacká, *Vojna slov*, 178–200.

nalsozialisten und ihrer slowakischen Handlanger wurden Vergeltungsmaßnahmen gegen die Bevölkerung eingeleitet.<sup>11</sup> Die tragischen Geschehnisse, die Erzählungen von Gewalt und Mord wurden im Späteren zu einem bestimmenden Teil des Erinnerungskultes des Aufstandes.

### Sieg und Ehrerbietung im Geiste der scheinbaren Zusammenarbeit

In Sachen öffentlicher Diskurs entscheiden in erster Linie die herrschenden Gruppen und kulturellen Eliten darüber, was ‚wichtig‘ und ‚richtig‘ ist – und können gegebenenfalls diese Axiome auch wieder zur Disposition stellen. Bis zum Sturz des Tiso-Regimes war so die offizielle Darstellung des Aufstandes eindeutig negativ, bis es 1945 zu einer radikalen Wende kam und die bisherigen Machthaber aus dem öffentlichen Leben ausgeschlossen wurden. An ihre Stelle traten bereits früher tätige bzw. neue Politiker, die häufig selber aktive Teilnehmer des Aufstandes waren. Für sie war der Slowakische Nationalaufstand ein wichtiger Bezugspunkt, ein symbolischer ‚Persilschein‘ in die damals noch funktionierende, erfolgreiche antifaschistische Koalition.

Diesen Trend bestärkte auch der Slowakische Nationalrat, der – als staatliche Exekutive der befreiten Tschechoslowakei – gleich in seiner ersten Sitzung am 15. Mai 1945 beschlossen hatte, einzelne Städte und Dörfer, militärische Formationen und verschiedene Institutionen nach den Helden des Aufstands zu benennen. Ebenso kündigte er die Errichtung von Denkmälern und Statuen, die Verleihung von entsprechenden Auszeichnungen an.<sup>12</sup> Der Nationalrat erklärte am 3. Juli 1945 mit Erlass Nr. 1945/73 den 29. August zum Nationalfeiertag.

Unmittelbar nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg verschüttete so die offizielle Erinnerung an den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand und den antifaschistischen Widerstand fast vollständig eine öffentliche Erinnerung an den Slowakischen Staat, der politisch wegen seiner Kollaboration mit den Nationalsozialisten zum Vergessen verurteilt wurde. Im Geiste des Kaschauer Programms<sup>13</sup> erfolgte der Wiederaufbau des vom Krieg zerstörten Landes ohne Mitwirkung der ehemaligen Führungselite: Ein großer Teil dieser hatte sich für die Emigration entschieden, ein anderer wurde im Zuge von Volksgerichtsverfahren zur Verantwortung gezogen. In Bezug auf die Bestrafung der Kollaborateure und Faschisten herrschte im damaligen politischen Diskurs relative Übereinstimmung: Offiziell war nun vom ‚Volk des Widerstands‘ und von ‚slowakischer Zusammengehörigkeit‘ die Rede – als Gegenpol zur ‚faschistischen Unterjochung‘. Nicht viel später wird dieser Problemkreis zum Gegenstand des politischen Kampfes zwischen der Demokratischen Partei und der Kommunistischen Partei der Slowakei. Bezeichnend für die slowakische Vorgangsweise war, dass die Mitgliedschaft in der Hlinka-Garde oder in der Deutschen bzw. Ungarischen Partei (sowie derer angeschlossenen Organisationen) nicht automatisch, sondern erst nach genauer Ermittlung bestraft wurde, inwieweit jemand involviert war. Tatsache bleibt aber, dass die Strafen letztlich strenger waren als im tschechischen Teil des Landes: schon allein deshalb, weil es in der Slowakei den besonderen Straftatbestand eines ‚Verrats am Aufstand‘ gab. Bekannt ist beispielsweise das Schicksal von Major Ján Šmigovský, dem Garnisonskommandanten von Nitra (Neutra), der zum Tode ver-

11 Lenka Šindelářová: *Finale der Vernichtung. Die Einsatzgruppe H in der Slowakei 1944/1945*, Darmstadt 2013.

12 <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1945snr/stenprot/003schuz/s003001.htm> (7. Februar 2017).

13 Deutscher Text des Programms vgl.: <http://www.mittleuropa.de/kaschauprog01.htm> (10. Februar 2017).



urteilt wurde, weil er verhindert hatte, dass sich seine Garnison dem Slowakischen Nationalaufstand anschloss. Der ehemalige Präsident Tiso wurde ebenfalls für diese Straftat verurteilt.<sup>14</sup>

Wie der Aufstand unmittelbar nach dem Krieg politisch aufgefasst wurde, lässt sich auch aus der Rede des Politikers und KP-Funktionärs Karol Šmidke anlässlich des ersten Jahrestages des Aufstandes vor dem Kongress der Nationalausschüsse entnehmen. Er würdigte die am Befreiungskampf beteiligten Einheiten und sprach ihnen seinen Dank aus:

„Wir sagen Dank und zollen unseren aufständischen Soldaten und Partisanen, des Weiteren den Mitgliedern der tschechoslowakischen Armee und jedem Nationalkämpfer Respekt, der zur Freiheit der Nation und der Republik beitrug und heute am Aufbau unseres volksdemokratischen Staates in der ersten Reihe seinen Platz finden soll. Schließlich bedanken wir uns auch bei den Alliierten, die unseren nationalen Kampf ebenfalls schlagkräftig unterstützten und sich aktiv für die Sache unserer Freiheit einsetzten.“<sup>15</sup>

Šmidke wich aber auch bedeutenden tagespolitischen Fragen nicht aus: Ihm zufolge legitimierte der Slowakische Nationalaufstand die „Bestrafung der Deutschen, der Ungarn und der Kollaborateure“, „die unverzügliche Ausrottung der Überbleibsel des Faschismus“, die „Neuverteilung der Produktionsmittel“, d. h. die Bodenreform und die Verstaatlichung, „und die Reformen im Bereich Kultur und Bildung“, aber auch „die Abwehr der Versuche, die Macht der lokalen und Bezirks-Volksausschüsse zu verringern“.<sup>16</sup>

Presseparolen mit dem Zweck die Bevölkerung zu mobilisieren sprachen bereits vor dem ersten Jahrestag des Aufstandes von Teilnahme und Einheit, und die Inszenierung der Feierlichkeiten verstärkte diesen Trend weiter. Sie wurden zu einer Demonstration von Einheit und Partizipation mit dem großen Ziel, das vom Krieg zerstörte Land wieder aufzubauen und die Gesellschaft im neuen Geiste der sozialen und nationalen Einheit zu verändern. Auf die Zusammenarbeit im Inneren verweist die breite Palette der örtlichen Organisatoren, die Tätigkeit der politischen Parteien und verschiedener Verbände. Auch am Wiederaufbau des zerstörten Banská Bystrica nahmen viele Freiwillige teil. Der internationale Kontext wurde – über die geladenen Gäste aus Ländern, die gegen den Faschismus gekämpft hatten, hinausgehend – mit der festlichen Dekoration der öffentlichen Plätze zusätzlich verstärkt: Der symbolische Mittelpunkt der Feierlichkeiten, das Podium wurde so mit den Fahnen der vier Alliierten, der Sowjetunion, Frankreichs, der Vereinigten Staaten und Großbritanniens geschmückt. Anwesend waren die Partisanenführer aus der Sowjetunion und Mitkämpfer aus anderen Ländern. Die Feierlichkeiten galten zugleich als bedeutende Manifestation des tschechisch-slowakischen Beitrags, verliefen sie doch in der Regel in Anwesenheit von hochrangigen tschechischen Gästen, Regierungsvertretern und natürlich von Edvard Beneš. Der Staatspräsident bedankte sich in seiner Rede bei den Aufständischen für ihre Opfer bzw. dafür, dass sie seine Arbeit im Ausland erleichtert hätten. Dabei sprach er konsequent vom „Aufstand in Banská Bystrica“,<sup>17</sup> um dessen spezifisch lokalen Charakter zu betonen. Damit entwarf er ein Bild, wonach der Aufstand nur ein Teil der in London koordinierten, die gesamte Tschechoslowakei umfassenden Widerstandsbewegung gewesen sei. In der Slowakei

14 Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945–1992* [Tschechen und Slowaken im 20. Jahrhundert. Die tschecho-slowakischen Beziehungen 1945–1992], Bratislava 1998, 76–79.

15 <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1945snr/stenprot/012schuz/s012007.htm> (16. Jänner 2017).

16 Ebd.

17 *Čas* [Zeit], 28. August 1945, 1.



wiederum dominierte von Anfang an die Bezeichnung *Nationalaufstand*, was wiederum signalisieren sollte, dass die slowakischen Kräfte eine Neudefinition der tschechisch-slowakischen Beziehungen einforderten: Die Bezeichnung *Slowakischer Nationalaufstand* – *Slovenské národné povstanie* – ist seitdem Terminus technicus.

Abgesehen von den zentralen Gedenkfeiern – denen mehrere Veranstaltungen, politische Treffen und Volksfeste folgten – stand der erste Jahrestag des Aufstandes in der Slowakei aber eher im Zeichen der Ehrerbietung und des Respekts. Lubomír Lipták hat schon auf die Tatsache verwiesen, dass es nach dem Krieg zuallererst spontan zu Errichtungen lokaler Denkmäler und Gedenktafeln kam, die an die Gräueltaten vom Herbst 1944 erinnern sollten. An den letzten Ruhestätten gefallener Kämpfer, am Schauplatz brutaler Kämpfe und Tragödien tauchten einfache Kreuze, Steinhügel und Obelisk auf, die von ehemaligen Mitkämpfern, Verwandten oder anderen Teilnehmern errichtet worden waren. Diese Initiative ‚von unten‘ war durch gemeinsame Bande und von gemeinsamen Erlebnissen beflügelt und war dem Respekt vor den Gefallenen gezollt.<sup>18</sup> Bedeutend für diese Tendenz ist das 1946 in Kremnička an jener Stelle errichtete Denkmal, wo mehr als 700 Menschen ermordet worden waren. Das Denkmal hatte die Form eines traditionellen Grabhügels mit drei Kreuzen und wurde vom berühmten Architekten Dušan Jurkovič gestaltet. Später kam ein rotes Kreuz hinzu, das seit den 1950er-Jahren zum zentralen Motiv der Ikonografie des Aufstands geriet.

Gustáv Husák, der stellvertretende Präsident des Nationalrats der Aufständischen (und spätere Präsident der Tschechoslowakischen Sozialistischen Republik) machte bereits am zweiten Jahrestag des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands darauf aufmerksam, dass der Aufstand unterschiedlich erinnert wird, hielt aber auch sofort fest, dass bei einem Ereignis, welches das Leben von Hunderttausenden beeinflusst hatte, persönliche Befindlichkeiten bzw. Ansprüche, die sich aus der Parteienvielfalt ergeben, unzulässig seien. Husák definierte den Aufstand als bewaffneten Kampf gegen die Deutschen und die Verräter bzw. als internen Zweifrontenkampf gegen den „Hlinka’schen Separatismus“ und „die irrige Idee einer tschechoslowakischen nationalen Einheit“.<sup>19</sup> Erst später wurden die Spannungen zwischen der den bürgerlichen Widerstand verkörpernden Demokratischen Partei und den Kommunisten offensichtlich: Debatten über den Charakter des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes ließen sich in der Folge nicht mehr vermeiden. Anfangs vertraten alle die Meinung, dass die Kollaborateure bestraft werden müssten. Es zeigte sich aber sehr rasch, dass die bürgerlichen und kommunistischen Politiker in vielen Detailfragen keinen gemeinsamen Nenner finden konnten.<sup>20</sup> Die offiziellen Gedenkfeiern des Aufstandes erfuhren aber erst mit der kommunistischen Machtübernahme 1948 tiefgreifende Veränderungen.

### Mit dem Kampfvokabel des Fortschritts in die sozialistische Diktatur

Die Feierlichkeiten unter der Ägide des Staatssozialismus standen ganz im Zeichen der Losungen einer tschechoslowakisch-sowjetischen Freundschaft und des heldenhaften Kampfes der Kommunisten, betonten fortwährend die wirtschaftlichen Leistungen sowie Verpflichtungen. In der offiziellen Repräsentation des Slowa-

<sup>18</sup> Lipták, *Pamätníky a pamät povstania roku 1944 na Slovensku*, 364.

<sup>19</sup> Mannová, *Slovenské národné povstanie a politická pamät*, 216.

<sup>20</sup> Marek Syrný, *Slovenskí demokrati '44–48. Kapitoly z dejín Demokratickej strany na Slovensku v rokoch 1944–1948* [Slowakische Demokraten '44–48. Kapitel aus der Geschichte der slowakischen Demokratischen Partei in den Jahren 1944–1948], Banská Bystrica 2010.

kischen Nationalaufstands kam nun die totale Kontrolle der Partei zur Geltung, was sich auch in der zentralen Planung und in der inhaltlichen, ideologischen Vereinheitlichung zeigte. Individuelle Gefühle und Erlebnisse wurden allmählich von zentral vorbereiteten Ritualen und ideologischen Formeln des Gedenkens überdeckt. Aus dem Slowakischen Nationalaufstand wurde nun eine kommunistische Insurrektion. Oder wie es Elena Mannová verdeutlichte:

„Mit den festlichen Ritualen (z. B. mit den militärischen Vereidigungen und den Gelöbnissen der Pioniere an den Gedenkstätten), mit der Besetzung öffentlicher Plätze (nicht nur mit der Errichtung von Denkmälern, sondern auch durch die Umbenennung von Straßen, Plätzen und Betrieben oder durch die allseits vernehmbaren propagandistischen Losungen), mit der Umgestaltung des Festkalenders usw. wurde der Mythos des Aufstands verbreitet, der nun dem Kommunismus den Weg ebnete.“<sup>21</sup>

Der Stellenwert des nichtkommunistischen Widerstands wurde zurückgedrängt, einige Teilnehmer des Widerstands sogar diffamiert oder ermordet. Bekannt sind beispielsweise der Prozess und die Hinrichtung des bedeutenden Partisanenkommandeurs Viliam Žingor im Jahre 1950. Die Interpretation des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes war nun mit den parteiinternen Spannungen und den Veränderungen der politischen Lage im Sowjetblock verwoben. Wesentliche Änderungen zeitigte die ‚Abrechnung mit der bürgerlich-nationalistischen Abweichung‘ innerhalb der Partei. Das Ergebnis war die Verurteilung von mehreren bedeutenden Kommunisten wie Gustáv Husák und Ladislav Novomeský, die sich vormals im Widerstand engagiert hatten. Diese historischen Persönlichkeiten wurden nun aus der offiziellen Geschichte des Aufstands gestrichen und sogar im offiziellen Blatt der Kommunistischen Partei der Tschechoslowakei KPTsch *Rudé právo* (Rotes Recht) als Verräter der Arbeiterklasse und der Partei stigmatisiert, die dem slowakischen Volk die Errungenschaften des Kampfes abstreiten wollten.<sup>22</sup> Dabei waren es nach der zeitgenössischen Interpretation gerade die Arbeiterklasse bzw. die in diesem Fall sehr abstrakte Kategorie slowakisches Volk, das sich unter der Führung der KP für den nationalen Befreiungskampf entschied, der ausgerechnet im Slowakischen Nationalaufstand seinen Gipfel erreicht hatte.

Bezeichnend für die damalige Ideologisierung ist die Verknüpfung von Juraj Jánošík (1688–1713), dem Räuberführer und Nationalhelden, einer Art slowakischem Robin Hood mit der Partisanentradition, die sich eben auf die Zeit des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands zurückführen lässt.<sup>23</sup> Die romantischen Geschichten von Widerstand, Kampf für Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit oder von Verrat entsprachen dabei durchaus den Bedürfnissen der kommunistischen Propaganda – und mehrere Regimes des sozialistischen Lagers haben dieses tradierte, populäre Bild des rebellierenden ‚Outlaws aus dem einfachen Volk‘ benutzt, um ganz eigentümliche Narrative zu konstruieren. Die Figur des Gesetzlosen diente dabei der Delegitimierung der vergangenen Systeme – des Feudalismus und des Kapitalismus –, während die Partisanen als ‚unerschrockene Volkshelden‘, als neuzeitliche Jánošíks erschienen. Hier arbeitete man also mit auf die frühere Epochen zurückgreifenden kulturellen Codes,

21 Mannová, Slovenské národné povstanie a politická pamäť, 228–229.

22 Plnime odkaz Slovenského národného povstání [Wir erfüllen das Vermächtnis des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes], in: *Rudé právo*, 29. August 1951, I.

23 Vgl. Ute Raßloff, Juraj Jánošík. In: Marcel Cornis-Pope/John Neubauer (Hg.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe. Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Band 4. Types and Stereotypes. Amsterdam, 2010, 441–456; Dies., Bier oder Käse? Transformationen des Karpatenräubers Juraj Jánošík als Symptome kultureller Interferenz, in: Ute Raßloff (Hg.), *Wellenschläge. Kulturelle Interferenzen im östlichen Mitteleuropa des langen 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2013, 379–436.

bei denen voraussetzen war, dass sie allgemein verständlich waren, Gefühle erwecken und Identifikation mit den Zielen des Regimes affektiv vermitteln konnten: Die vorgeblich revolutionäre Ideologie wurde somit erfolgreich mit älteren Symbolen verbunden.<sup>24</sup>

Die damalige Propaganda verknüpfte die Erinnerung an den Aufstand auch mit dem ökonomischen Projekt des Staatssozialismus, mit der Industrialisierung und der Kollektivierung der Agrarwirtschaft. Dieses Moment unterstrich die ideologisch inspirierte Verbindung von Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft, die der Stärkung der Legitimität des Systems dienen sollte. Die Parole zum 15. Jahrestag des Aufstandes lautete dann 1959 auch: „Unter der Führung der KPTsch, in der freundschaftlichen Einheit der Tschechen und Slowaken, für die Vollendung des Aufbaus des Sozialismus!“ Zu Ehren des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands wurden mit Ernten, Dreschen und Ankäufen verbundene Wettbewerbe ausgeschrieben und verschiedene Arbeits- und sonstige Aufträge entgegengenommen.

Auch in der Benennung der Fabriken erschien der Verweis auf den Aufstand bzw. auf das Datum seines Ausbruchs: Der vom tschechischen Unternehmer Jan Antonín Baťa gegründete Schuhbetrieb in Partizánske (deutsches Äquivalent wäre Partisansiedlung, früher: Batovany) wurde in *Schuhfabrik 29. August* umbenannt und die Fabrik in Žiar nad Hronom (Heiligenkreuz an der Gran) hieß *Aluminiumwerk Slowakischer Nationalaufstand*. Dass es sich dabei wesentlich um die Erfindung einer Tradition handelte, beweisen auch zahlreiche Faktoren und Hinweise etwa innerhalb der Armee, im Bereich des Tourismus und des Sports sowie die Benennung öffentlicher Plätze.

In den 1950er-Jahren wurde der Slowakische Nationalaufstand nicht nur als historisches Ereignis, sondern auch als Verpflichtung der sozialistischen Zukunft gegenüber präsentiert:

„Die Botschaft des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes, das gemeinsame Blutopfer des heldenhaften slowakischen, tschechischen und sowjetischen Volkes verpflichtet uns, die Einheit der Republik, das Bündnis mit der Sowjetunion zu verfestigen und bis zum letzten Mann zu arbeiten, für die weitere Entwicklung unserer Wirtschaft und Kultur, für das Glück unseres Volks zu kämpfen.“<sup>25</sup>

Der Aufstand wurde also keineswegs als isoliertes Phänomen, sondern als Bestandteil der Befreiung durch die Rote Armee gefeiert, wobei die Erinnerungen an die Schlacht am Duklapass das wichtigste feierliche Ereignis – mit Kranzniederlegung an den Gedenk- und Grabstätten der gefallenen sowjetischen Soldaten – darstellten. Zentrales Argument war, dass

„die sowjetische Armee die Nationen unserer Republik aus der faschistischen Gefangenschaft befreite und die demokratische Erneuerung unseres Vaterlandes, der Tschechoslowakischen Republik ermöglichte. Der Slowakische Nationalaufstand trug zur Verwirklichung dieses Ziels bei.“<sup>26</sup>

24 Siehe jüngst Anton Hruboň/Juraj Kríštofik, *Medzi dobrým úmyslom a zneužitím. Jánošíkovská tradícia na Slovensku v rokoch 1938–1989* [Zwischen Wohlwollen und Missbrauch. Die Tradition von Juraj Jánošík in der Slowakei in den Jahren 1938–1989], in: Miroslav Nemec/Peter Vitek (Hg.), *Zbojníctvo na Slovensku* [Gesetzlose in der Slowakei], Krakau 2014, 147–159.

25 Národný Archiv [Nationalarchiv] Prag (NA), fond KSČ-ÚV-02/2, f. KSČ – Ústredný výbor 1945–1989 [ZK der KPTsch 1945–1989], Praha politické byro 1954–1962 [Politbüro Prag 1954–1962], zv. 12, a.j. 16, bod 10 [Bd. 12 u. a. 16, Punkt 10].

26 NA, fond KSČ-ÚV-02/2, fond KSČ – Ústredný výbor 1945–1989, Praha politické byro 1954–1962 [Politbüro Prag], a.j. 99.

Allein der Slowakische Nationalaufstand konnte mit der die Befreiung besiegelnden Operation der Roten Armee oder mit der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution nicht wirklich konkurrieren und so blieb die Deklaration des positiven Verhältnisses zur Sowjetunion bis 1989 der essentielle Bestandteil der von den Kommunisten gelenkten Gedenkfeiern.

Nach der Wende von 1948 vermehrte sich die Zahl kommunistischer Symbole – Roter Stern, Sichel und Hammer – an den Denkmälern und Gedenktafeln. Diese Änderungen im offiziellen Kanon zeigen auch die Bevorzugung „generalisierender Denkmäler“, so etwa das Denkmalensemble am Platz des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands in Bratislava, das einer hybriden Tradition verpflichtet ist: mit der Darstellung eines zivilen Kämpfers mit Umhang und Maschinengewehr mit Tellermagazin werden so Partisanen- und die sowjetischen militärischen Traditionen miteinander verflochten. Aber die Einmischung staatlicher Organe zeigte sich auch im Fall der Errichtung von anderen Denkmälern. Diese wurden an herausragenden Orten, an wichtigeren öffentlichen Plätzen, in Stadt- und Dorfzentren platziert, d.h. nicht mehr nur an den Schauplätzen der Ereignisse. Dies unterstreicht nach Lipták die nunmehrige Metamorphose einer ehrfürchtigen Erinnerung in die Huldigung des Heldentums und die Hommage an den Sieg des Sozialismus. Allein die Demut verschwand dennoch nicht spurlos von diesen Mahnmalen.<sup>27</sup> Auch die Tatsache, dass auf dem Gebiet des Aufstandes viel Blut vergossen wurde und dass die im Slowakischen Verband der antifaschistischen Kämpfer (Slovenský zväz protifasistických bojovníkov) vereinten Teilnehmer des Aufstandes bei den Feierlichkeiten regelmäßig anwesend waren, trug wesentlich zur Bewahrung der Authentizität der Erinnerung bei.

Am ersten Jahrestag des Aufstandes wurde in Banská Bystrica vom Präsidenten Edvard Beneš der Grundstein für eine Gedenkstätte des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes gelegt. Der Weg zu einer zentralen Gedenkstätte war aber komplizierter, als es auf den ersten Blick erscheinen mag: Erst 1955 wurde das Museum des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands in Banská Bystrica eröffnet, das in der Folge aus einer regionalen Institution zu einer Gedenkstätte von landesweiter Bedeutung avancierte. Die feierliche Eröffnung des heutigen Gebäudes fand erst am 25. Jahrestag, im August 1969 statt, und das Museum verzeichnete zwischen 1955 und 2004 mehr als neun Millionen Besucher.<sup>28</sup>

1960 wurde die sog. sozialistische Verfassung erlassen, die die Tschechoslowakei zu einer sozialistischen Republik erklärte und das neue Staatswappen einführte: Ein roter Stern dominierte, doch auf der Brust des böhmischen Löwen wurde das historische slowakische Doppelkreuz nun durch die Silhouette des slowakischen Nationalsymbols, des auf dem Gebiet des Aufstandes liegenden Kriwan-Gipfels bzw. durch die ebenfalls auf den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand hinweisenden Flammen des Lagerfeuers ersetzt. Ungeachtet dessen brachte aber die neue Verfassung eine Abwertung slowakischer Exekutivorgane mit sich. In der folgenden Periode wurde gerade die Interpretation des Aufstandes zum Lackmustest innenpolitischer Spannungen. Besonders in der zweiten Hälfte der 1960er-Jahre war das historische Ereignis mit Debatten über das tschechisch-slowakische Verhältnis verknüpft, mit den Forderungen der Föderalisierung und der Demokratisierung des Staates. Einen besonderen Akzent erhielt dabei die nationale Emanzipation der Slowaken – im Kon-

<sup>27</sup> Lipták, *Pamätníky a pamät povstania roku 1944 na Slovensku*, 367-368.

<sup>28</sup> Siehe ausführlicher *Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania* [Museum des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes], Banská Bystrica 1985; Tomas Sniegon, *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture*, New York/Oxford 2014, 168-173.

text des Stellenwerts des slowakischen Anteils am Aufstand. Diese Interpretation wurde durch die politische Rehabilitierung der diffamierten slowakischen Kommunisten wesentlich beeinflusst. So nahm beispielsweise Gustáv Husák regelmäßig an den Debatten über den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand teil und publizierte 1964 seine Erinnerungen. Historiker, wie etwa Jozef Jablonický, behandelten in der Folge auch die Geschichte des nichtkommunistischen Widerstandes, deren Mitglieder zu dieser Zeit wieder offiziell an den Gedenkfeiern teilnehmen konnten: Die Geschichte des Widerstandes wurde wieder vielschichtig. Dieser Prozess wurde jedoch nach der Okkupation der ČSSR durch die sowjetische Armee und die Truppen anderer Staaten des Warschauer Paktes im Sommer 1968 und nach den umfassenden Säuberungen nach 1969 gestoppt. Viele ehemalige Mitglieder der KPTsch fielen nun in Ungnade und wurden gezwungen, sich aus dem öffentlichen Leben zurückzuziehen, wie etwa eben der Historiker Jozef Jablonický und sein tschechischer Kollege Vilém Prečan, der eine bis heute relevante Dokumentation über das Thema zusammenstellte:<sup>29</sup> Die Neuinterpretation wurde nun vom durch die Sowjets installierten neuen Generalsekretär der KPTsch Gustáv Husák überwacht und gesteuert, der dieses Gebiet ursprünglich aufgrund seiner moralischen Autorität, nach 1969 aber auch durch seine Machtposition beherrschte und dafür sorgte, dass in der nächsten Periode seine national-kommunistische Einschätzung des Aufstands dominant wurde.

So wurden gerade in 1970er-Jahren viele Denkmäler des Aufstands errichtet. Husáks Buch *Svedectvo o Slovenskom národnom povstaní* (Zeugnis über den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand)<sup>30</sup> wurde zur Grundlage des offiziellen Kanons, das auch mit einer teuren Fernsehproduktion, dem populären Achtteiler *Povstalecká história* (Geschichte eines Aufstandes)<sup>31</sup> erfolgreich beworben wurde. Es ist interessant anzumerken, dass diese Serie trotz ihres ideologischen und verzerrenden Gehalts auch nach 1989 aus Anlass der Jahrestage häufig im slowakischen Fernsehen gezeigt wurde.

### Eine europäische und demokratische oder eine zum Vergessen verurteilte Tradition?

Die Wende von 1989 brachte keinen tiefen Einschnitt, was die Inszenierung der jährlichen Gedenkfeiern betraf, wirkte sich aber deutlich auf deren Inhalt aus. Abgesehen von früheren festlichen Sitzungen von Staat und Partei fanden die Feierlichkeiten weiterhin nach ähnlichen Vorgaben statt, wurden doch in ihrem Umfeld verschiedene kulturelle und soziale Veranstaltungen, Ausstellungen, Kranzniederlegungen usw. organisiert. Auch die Tradition der Teilnahme heimischer und ausländischer Spitzenpolitiker an den Feierlichkeiten wurde fortgesetzt, die Massenmedien berichteten wie früher. Gleichzeitig wurden aber auch Möglichkeiten für neue Forschungen eröffnet, und es setzte eine wahre Publikationsflut zum Thema ein. Unter anderen erschienen nun Jablonickýs lange verbotene Studien und mehrere Erinnerungen von Zeitgenossen. Auch neue Autoren kamen zu Wort. Die kommunistische Bewegung und die sowjetische Hilfe, die bis dahin die Darstellungen des Aufstandes beherrscht hatten, wurden zunehmend in den Hintergrund gedrängt, und

29 Vilém Prečan, *Slovenské národné povstanie* [Der slowakische Nationalaufstand], Bratislava 1966.

30 Gustáv Husák, *Svedectvo o Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, Bratislava 1969; deutsche Übersetzung: Gustáv Husák, *Der slowakische Nationalaufstand*, Berlin 1972.

31 *Povstalecká história* [Geschichte eines Aufstandes], TV-Serie, ČSSR 1984; Regie: Andrej Lettrich.



es kamen ‚neue‘, gesamteuropäische Themen wie der Holocaust auf. In der Debatte über den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand sind aber auch Meinungen publik geworden, die auf der Tradition der HSLS und derer Epigonen beruhen und den Aufstand als ‚antislowakischen Putsch‘ entstellen. In dieser Hinsicht waren womöglich die Konferenz und der daraus hervorgehende gleichnamige Band *Dies Ater. Nešťastný deň: 29. August 1944* (Dies Ater. Der unglückliche Tag 29. August 1944) von 1993 bzw. 1994 ausschlaggebend.<sup>32</sup> In dieser Periode ist die Geschichte des Aufstandes wieder dichter, komplizierter geworden, Gruppen des militärischen und zivilen Widerstands erhielten nun in den Erinnerungen eine besondere Betonung und auch die Übergriffe der Partisanen wie Diebstähle oder gar Morde an den Zivilisten fanden nun auch Erwähnung. Mit der Pluralisierung der Ansichten brachte so die erneute Thematisierung des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes auch ambivalente Bewertungen im Sinne von „Rettung der Nation“ bzw. „nationale Tragödie“ mit sich.<sup>33</sup>

Das Ende des Staatssozialismus untergrub letztlich den bis dahin vorherrschenden Husák'schen Aufstandsmythos, und die Debatten über den Aufstand tendierten immer mehr in Richtung der Herstellung eines europäischen Kontextes, was auch die Sonderausstellung von 2004 zum 60. Jahrestag im Museum des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands widerspiegelte. An diesen Feierlichkeiten in Banská Bystrica nahmen sowohl der slowakische als auch der tschechische Ministerpräsident, Mikuláš Dzurinda und Stanislav Gross, teil. Beide betonten die Idee der Partnerschaft und der Zusammenarbeit, in der die gemeinsame Vergangenheit den aktuellen Bedürfnissen der beiden selbstständigen, freundschaftlich verbündeten Staaten entspreche. Gross hob in seiner Rede hervor, dass

„der Slowakische Nationalaufstand zweifelsohne eine Periode war, in der man in der Slowakei nicht nur für die Demokratie und Autonomie der Slowakei kämpfte, sondern auch für die Erneuerung der Demokratie auf dem ganzen Gebiet des tschechoslowakischen Staates“.

Dzurinda wiederum stellte die Erbschaft des Slowakischen Nationalaufstands durch fünf Botschaften dar, die sich als offizielle zeitgenössische Reflexion des Themas deuten lassen. Die erste Botschaft betraf die Vergebung und die Erinnerung: „Vergeben und nicht Anklagen der Nachfahren jener, die die Brennöfen und Konzentrationslager mit Blut füllten“ – womit er in erster Linie die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Zukunft (in der Europäischen Union) lenken wollte. Die zweite Botschaft war der Stolz, hatte doch Dzurinda zufolge der Aufstand bestätigt, dass „unsere Geschichte nicht die Geschichte der Niederträchtigen und Feiglinge ist“. Die dritte Botschaft bildete der moralische Imperativ, dass man keine Angst vor der Bekämpfung des Bösen haben dürfe, die vierte Botschaft, dass nach dem Sturz des Kommunismus eine gerechte Lustration erfolgt sei, womit „die historische Wahrheit den ihr gebührenden

32 Peter Bielík/Peter Mulík (Hg.), *Dies Ater. Nešťastný deň: 29. august 1944. Výber príspevkov zo seminára Dies ater uskutočneného 26.8.1993 v Bratislave, doplnený o výpovede svedkov a dokumenty* [Dies Ater. Der unglückliche Tag: 29. August 1944. Auswahl von am 26.8.1993 in Preßburg vorgetragenen Beiträgen im Rahmen des Seminars Dies Ater, ergänzt durch Zeitzeugenaussagen und Dokumente], Bratislava 1994.

33 Siehe ausführlicher Norbert Kmeť, *Zápas o minulosť, prítomnosť a budúcnosť* [Kampf um Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft], in: Ders./Marek Syrný et al., *Odvalujem balvan: pocta historickému remeslu Jozefa Jablonického* [Ich wälze den Felsbrocken fort: Zu Ehren des historischen Werkes von Jozef Jablonický], Bratislava/Banská Bystrica 2013, 411–440; Miroslav Pekník, *Slovenské národné povstanie a verejnosť po roku 1989* [Der Slowakische Nationalaufstand in der Öffentlichkeit nach 1989], in: Ders. (Hg.), *Slovenské národné povstanie 1944: súčasť európskej antifasistickej rezistencie v rokoch druhej svetovej vojny* [Der Slowakische Nationalaufstand 1944: Teil des europäischen antifaschistischen Widerstandes in den Jahren des Zweiten Weltkriegs], Bratislava 2009, 425–453; Monika Vrzgulová, *Komu patri Slovenské národné povstanie?* [Wem gehört der Slowakische Nationalaufstand?] in: Katarína Popelková et al., *Čo je to sviatok v 21. storočí na Slovensku?* [Was bedeutet ein Feiertag im 21. Jahrhundert in der Slowakei?], Bratislava 2014, 66–108.



Platz wieder erlangt“ habe. Die letzte Botschaft bestand in der Mahnung zur Übernahme der Verantwortung:

„Der Aufstand war nicht siegreich, aber befreiend. Wir befreiten uns vom Joch der Kollaboration. Und im Zuge des Aufstandes sind wir – wie vor 15 Jahren – frei geworden und zugleich verantwortlich. Verantwortlich für unser Schicksal und dafür, was wir tun und lassen.“<sup>34</sup>

In ähnlichem Sinn äußert sich auch die aktuelle slowakische politische Führung. Ministerpräsident Robert Fico, der ja bekanntermaßen ein positives Verhältnis zum Slowakischen Nationalaufstand hat, führte unter anderem aus, dass dieses Ereignis „nicht zur Legende in den Lesebüchern werden darf, denn es bildet den Rückgrat des slowakischen Selbstbewusstseins“. Und am 69. Jahrestag wies er darauf hin, dass der Aufstand ein „vaterländischer Krieg“ gegen die Nationalsozialisten gewesen sei, und forderte die Slowaken auf, nicht allzu sehr bescheiden zu sein und die Welt immer wieder an ihre großen Taten auf der Seite der antifaschistischen Koalition zu erinnern.<sup>35</sup>

Ungeachtet dessen, dass der Aufstand eine sehr starke Tradition zu haben scheint – einige Forschungen belegen, dass 80 Prozent der Befragten die Ansicht teilen, wonach der Aufstand ein positives Ereignis, eines der ruhmvollsten Kapitel der slowakischen Geschichte gewesen sei –, machte Elena Mannová neulich auf ein besonders interessantes Phänomen aufmerksam. Aufgrund der Untersuchungen nach 1989 zeigte ein Teil der Befragten genauso viel Sympathie für den Slowakischen Nationalaufstand wie für das Tiso-Regime.<sup>36</sup> Ein ähnliches Phänomen zeichnet sich auch in der heutigen slowakischen Historiografie ab, was die Konstruktion der ‚neuen‘ Geschichte des in Frage stehenden Zeitraums widerspiegelt: einer Geschichte, die – mit der früheren vergleichbar – von den aktuellen Möglichkeiten, Bedürfnissen und von den Vorstellungen ihrer Produzenten sowie ihres Publikums geprägt ist. Dieser Trend schlug sich auch in der Auseinandersetzung über den neuesten slowakischen Dokumentarfilm *Povstanie. Slovensko 1939–1945* (Der Aufstand. Die Slowakei 1939–1945)<sup>37</sup> aus dem Jahr 2013 nieder. Dieser staatlich finanzierte Film bot eine stark revisionistisch gefärbte Annäherung an das Thema an und wirkte so dem seit Längerem bestehenden Konsens entgegen, was den Stellenwert dieses Ereignisses in der slowakischen Geschichte anbelangt.<sup>38</sup>

34 Barbara Lášticová/Andrej Findor, From Regime Legitimation to Democratic Museum Pedagogy? Studying Europeanization at the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising, in: Barbara Lášticová/Andrej Findor/Sophie Wahnich (Hg.), Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-war Europe, Wien/Berlin/Münster 2008, 237–257.

35 <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/snp-na-oslavy-69-vyrocia-snp-prislo-vyse-tritisic-ludi/> (17. Jänner 20127); <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/291339-na-oslavy-69-vyrocia-snp-prislo-vyse-tritisic-ludi/> (17. Jänner 2017).

36 Mannová, Slovenské národné povstanie a politická pamäť, 229.

37 *Povstanie Slovensko 1939–1945*, TV-Film, Slowakei 2013, Regie: Vladimír Štric.

38 Vgl. Martin Mocko, Nad dokumentárnym filmom Vladimíra Štrica *Povstanie. Slovensko 1939–1945* [Zur Dokumentation von Vladimír Štrica „Der Aufstand“. Die Slowakei 1939–1945], in: [http://www.noveslovo.sk/c/Nad\\_dokumentarnym\\_filmom\\_Vladimira\\_Strica\\_Povstanie\\_Slovensko\\_1939\\_1945](http://www.noveslovo.sk/c/Nad_dokumentarnym_filmom_Vladimira_Strica_Povstanie_Slovensko_1939_1945); Adam Hudek, The Unlucky Seven. Too Many Controversies Around the Celebration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising in August 2014, in: <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debating-20th-century-history/slovakia/the-unlucky-seven-too-many-controversies-around-the-celebration-of-the-seventieth-anniversary-of-the-slovak-national-uprising-in-august-2014> (10. Februar 2017).

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Article

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Laura Almagor

# A Territory, but not a State

The Territorialists' Visions for a Jewish Future after the Shoah (1943–1960)<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The Jewish Territorialists, represented as of 1934 by the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation, searched for places of settlement for Jews outside Palestine/Israel. I here argue that Territorialist ideology demonstrated both continuity and change in the post-1945 years, and continued to focus on an investment in Diaspora life, Yiddishism, anti-statism, colonial and postcolonial attitudes, and Socialist Revolutionary idealism. This article thus challenges the notion that the Shoah spelled the end of non-Zionist Jewish political activities, by demonstrating the ways in which the Freelanders, headed by the enigmatic Isaac N. Steinberg (1888–1957), imagined an alternative Jewish cultural and political future after the Shoah. By mapping the Territorialist movement's continued endeavours after 1945, this study also adds to our broader understanding of the rich spectrum of post-Shoah Jewish political ideologies.

*"In a world full of 'Real-Politiker' and practical Shlemiels the accusation of being dreamers is perhaps not so hard to take."*

After the Shoah, the Jewish Territorialists, organised since 1934 as the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation, continued to imagine a Jewish cultural and political future that was territorial, but not centred on a Jewish state in Palestine. The following analysis of those visions challenges the notion that the Shoah spelled the end of virtually all non-Zionist Jewish political activities.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, this study joins a corpus of recent works dealing with non-Zionist or heterodox-Zionist Jewish political movements and groups such as the Jewish Labour Bund and several Dias-

1 This article is largely based on papers presented at the American Jewish Historical Society Biennial Scholar's Conference, New York City, 19–21 June 2016, and at the Young Scholars Workshop *Promised Lands: Israel-Diaspora Relations and Beyond*, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, 23–25 May 2016. I thank both the organisers and participants of these events for offering me a platform on which to present my work, as well as for the helpful comments and questions I received on these occasions. For a larger study of the history of Jewish Territorialism, see: Laura Almagor, *Forgotten Alternatives. Jewish Territorialism as a Movement of Political Action and Ideology, 1905–1965* (PhD Dissertation), European University Institute, Florence 2015.

2 M. Levadin [Isaac N. Steinberg], *The Jewish Press On Freeland*, in: *Freeland* 8 (September–October 1954) 8, 3–4, here 4.

3 The assumption that Zionism was the only Jewish political movement to actively survive the war features strongly in studies on Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs). See for example Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope. The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany*, Cambridge 2002; Anita Shapira, *The Holocaust and World War II as Elements of the Yishuv Psyche until 1948*, in: Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking About the Holocaust after Half a Century*, Indiana 1997, 61–82, here 63; Angelika Königseder/Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope. Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, Evanston 2001; Hagit Lavsky, *The Experience of the Displaced Persons in Bergen-Belsen. Unique or Typical Case?*, in: Avinoam J. Patt/Michael Berkowitz (ed.), *"We Are Here". New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, Detroit 2010, 227–256. Other studies on Jewish DPs take a more nuanced or even critical stance. See for example Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust. Rebuilding Jewish lives in Postwar Germany*, Princeton 1997; Margarete Myers Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945–1957*, Cambridge 2010.

pora Nationalist trends and initiatives in Europe and the United States, thus deviating from the more established Zionism-dominated scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

The focus here is on the thought and activities of the most important post-war Territorialist leader, Isaac N. Steinberg (1888–1957). While acknowledging the problematic nature of zooming in on one individual's views to reflect those of a larger collective, in this case Steinberg's prolific public and personal writings do form a valid point of departure for an analysis of Territorialist thinking in the period under consideration. By this time, the Freeland League had become a fairly small organisation, and Steinberg, together with his daughter Ada Siegel and a handful of close collaborators, largely defined the movement's ideological direction.

The current exploration shows both continuity and discontinuity in the Freeland League's ideology in the post-1945 years, as compared to the pre-war era. In 1942, the Freeland League headquarters moved from London to New York City, compelling the Freelanders to start operating on the American Jewish political scene. This new context forced a redefinition of Territorialist activities. Also, as in the case of other Jewish political movements and organisations, the Shoah severely affected the Freeland League, both in terms of membership and potential for growth, and regarding the Freelanders' views for a Jewish future. Nevertheless, as the Territorialists had always anticipated some sort of catastrophe to befall the Jewish people, many of their core aims and beliefs remained in place after 1945, albeit often in changed form. Central and never-abating features of Steinberg's thinking were his Socialist Revolutionary and at the same time Jewish religious and even messianic convictions, as well as his staunch criticism of the Zionist state-building project in Palestine and the treatment of the local Arab population there. The Territorialists had been critical of the 'Arab Question' from the outset, but only under Steinberg's leadership did this issue become consolidated as one of the main elements of the growing verbal Territorialist attacks on the Zionist project. The intrinsically colonial nature of the Territorialist project also remained central after the Second World War, but changed shape by adjusting itself to the postcolonial and even anticolonial attitudes that now defined the geopolitical discourse.

The Territorialists, who were a small but nonetheless intriguing part of the Jewish political scene during the first half of the twentieth century, believed that only concentrated agro-industrial Jewish settlement outside both Europe and Palestine could solve the Jewish plight. The movement was first organised in 1905 when Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill, together with some fifty other Zionists, left the Zionist movement to form the Jewish Territorialist Organisation (ITO). This secession was the result of the Zionist rejection of the so-called Uganda-offer of the British government. Zangwill and his fellow Territorialists disagreed with the Zionists' refusal to seize the territorial opportunity presented to them, and they now dedicated themselves to finding places of settlement for Jews outside Palestine.

To this end, the ITO during the following two decades approached colonial government representatives: Zangwill sought negotiations not only with British politicians in his own country, but also with Portugal regarding Angola as a potential haven for Jewish refugees. The latter plan, on the table in 1912 and 1913, was one of

4 Recent examples of this scholarship are the works by David N. Myers, Noam Pianko, Joshua Karlip, Kenneth B. Moss, Gur Alroey, David Slucki, Kalman Weiser, James Loeffler, Dimitry Shumsky, Adam Rovner, David E. Fishman, Jeffrey Shandler, Stefan Vogt, Joshua Shanes, and Simon Rabinovitch. This scholarship is partly indebted to Jonathan Frankel's pioneering and by now classic work on Socialism and the emergence of modern Jewish politics in Russia (and Poland): Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917*, Cambridge/New York 1981.

those most seriously explored in the ITO days. Between 1907 and 1914, the ITO was also a partner in American philanthropist Jacob Schiff's Galveston Movement, which aimed to direct Jewish immigrants arriving in the United States towards the less populated parts of the country rather than to the already overflowing cities on the East Coast.<sup>5</sup> During these years, the ITO set up numerous local offices within Tsarist Russia, as well as in the major Jewish centres in Western Europe, in order to screen and inform prospective Territorialist settlers. Thousands of local Jews in distress signed petitions in support of Territorialist initiatives.<sup>6</sup> Despite this ostensible interest in the ITO's work amongst Russian Jewry, Zangwill disbanded the organisation in 1925 due to his own failing health, as well as because of a more generally perceived loss of interest in non-Zionist settlement after the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

The organisation was reinstated in 1934 in Warsaw as the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation, in reaction to growing antisemitism throughout Europe, especially following Hitler's rise to power one year earlier. Because of increasing difficulties for Jewish organisations to function in Central and Eastern Europe, the Freeland League soon moved its headquarters to London. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, the Freelanders negotiated with the British government regarding British Guiana, and with the French government regarding French Guiana and other French colonial possessions, most notably Madagascar. This latter destination was to go down in history as arguably the most infamous option discussed for Jewish settlement. Multiple actors simultaneously explored the idea, but with very different motivations, some of which were openly antisemitic: Not only the Freeland League, but also the Nazis, the Polish government, and even the leader of the World Jewish Congress Nahum Goldmann considered the island for Jewish settlement.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, Isaac Steinberg spent the years between 1939 and 1943 in Australia, trying to lobby for the establishment of a Territorialist settlement in the Kimberley, in the northwest of the country. Steinberg's charisma and perseverance aided him in his Australian endeavours to gather influential supporters for the plan. Unfortunately for the Territorialists, the Australian federal government could not be convinced and the project was rejected in 1944.<sup>8</sup>

In 1942, the Freeland League headquarters were moved to New York City. Shortly thereafter, Steinberg emerged as the organisation's most important leader and ideologue. His political idealism, the result of the merging of his orthodox religious and Socialist Revolutionary convictions, defined the outlooks and approach of the move-

5 Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston, Ellis Island of the West*, Albany 1983; Gary Dean Best, Jacob H. Schiff's Galveston Movement. An Experiment in Immigration Deflection, 1907–1914 in: *American Jewish Archives Journal* 30 (1978) 1, 43–79; Gur Alroey, *Galveston and Palestine. Immigration and Ideology in the Early Twentieth Century*, in: *American Jewish Archives Journal* 56 (2004) 1&2, 129–150.

6 Gur Alroey, *Zionism without Zion. The Jewish Territorial Organization and Its Conflict with the Zionist Organization*, Detroit 2016, 96–97, 110.

7 Eric Thomas Jennings, *Writing Madagascar Back into the Madagascar Plan*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, (2007), 2, 187–217, here 203–204. For an extensive study of Madagascar as a place for Jewish settlement or exile, and especially of the Nazi Madagascar plans, see: Hans Jansen, *Het Madagascar Plan. De Voorgenomen Deportatie van Europese Joden naar Madagascar* [The Madagascar Plan. The Proposed Deportation of European Jews to Madagascar], The Hague 1996; Magnus Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden. Antisemitische Idee und Politische Praxis 1885–1945*, Munich 1997. For more on the Freeland League's Madagascar plan, see Rovner's chapter, *The Lost Jewish Continent. Madagascar (1933–1942)*, in: Adam Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion. Promised Lands before Israel*, New York 2014, 117–147.

8 For more about the Kimberley Scheme, see the relevant parts of Rovner's chapter, *New Jerusalem, Down Under. Port Davey, Tasmania (1940–1945)*, in: Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion*, 149–159; Leon Gettler, *An Unpromised Land, South Fremantle 1993*; as well as Steinberg's own account of the project: Isaac Steinberg, *Australia. The Unpromised Land. In Search of a Home*, London 1948.

ment as a whole. Admittedly, the Freeland League had not acquired a mass following before the war, nor did it have the Eastern European infrastructure that the ITO had established in its day. The Territorialist organisation now counted only at most several hundred active members around the globe. These were nonetheless prominent and well-connected individuals, both in Jewish and non-Jewish circles, with Isaac Steinberg as their frontman. Because of his centrality to the Freeland League's post-war orientation, tracing Steinberg's political journey is essential for understanding the development of Territorialist ideology in these years.

In a eulogy written after his death in 1957, the American journalist William Zuckerman described Steinberg as a member of the "generation of Russian-Jewish intellectuals, born, as it were, on the fringe of the pre-Communist Russian Revolution, which absorbed some of the greatness, vision, spirit of rebellion, and yearning for freedom and justice which were in the very air of that period".<sup>9</sup> Steinberg grew up in a prominent religious Jewish family in present-day Latvia. In 1906, when he was 18 years old, he joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party and was promptly expelled from Russia for several years, during which time he obtained a law degree from the University of Heidelberg.<sup>10</sup> After his return to Russia, Steinberg shortly served as the People's Commissar of Justice in 1917 and 1918, as a member of the Left Socialist Revolutionary party that co-operated with Lenin's Bolsheviks until the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk moved the Left Socialist Revolutionaries to resign from the Soviet government in March 1918. After his Russian political days, Steinberg continued to believe in a Socialist-inspired universal betterment of mankind through an investment in the particular needs of a particular group of people. In Russia, this group had been the proletariat and the agrarian underclass. After his Russian political days came to an end in 1918, Steinberg held on to his belief in universalism through particularism. The only thing that changed in Steinberg's vision was a shift of focus from the Russian people to the Jews.<sup>11</sup>

This shift most likely occurred during the decade that Steinberg spent in Berlin, to where he moved his family in 1923. The Steinberg home in Germany was frequented by many illustrious Jewish political figures such as Diaspora Nationalists Simon Dubnow and Elias Tcherikower, the economist Jacob Lestschinsky, and the 'heterodox' Zionist thinker Simon Rawidowicz.<sup>12</sup> In 1933, the Steinbergs moved to London, where Isaac became involved with Freeland League affairs shortly after the movement's foundation. Even though he had not been one of the organisation's founding members, he was elected to its propaganda committee in 1935.<sup>13</sup> After the Freeland League headquarters relocated to New York during the war years, Steinberg became the movement's official leader when he himself settled there in 1943.

9 W. Zuckerman, Dr. I.N. Steinberg, in: *Freeland* 10 (January-February 1957) 1, 5-6, here 5.

10 Reports From The Press: *Jewish Chronicle* (London, 3 January 1957), in: *Freeland* 10 (January-February 1957) 1, 11.

11 Mikhail Krutikov/Isaac Nahman Steinberg, From Anti-Communist Revolutionary to Anti-Zionist Territorialist, in: *Jews in Eastern Europe* (1999) Spring-Fall, 13, 17, 21; Philippe Kellermann, Interview mit Hendrik Wallat zu Isaac Steinberg, 3 December 2013, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, <http://www.rosalux.de/news/40063/interview-mit-hendrik-wallat-zu-isaak-steinberg.html> (22 August 2015). For Steinberg's own account of his revolutionary years, see Isaac Steinberg, *In the Workshop of the Revolution*, New York/Toronto 1953.

12 A. Bialistoker/Ada Steinberg-Siegel, in: *Freeland* 9 (November-December 1956) 4, 6-7; Willy Birkenmaier, *Judentum Ohne Rückkehr Nach Palästina*. Isaac Steinberg und der Territorialismus als Alternative zum Zionismus, in: *Trumah* (2010) 19, 86-101, here 93.

13 YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Archives (YIVO), RG255, Tanhum Ber Herwald Papers, Box 1, Josef Kruk to Myer Nathan, 9 August 1935; YIVO RG255, Box 1, Zalman Majzner to the Freeland Liga Polish central bureau in Warsaw, 13 September 1935; Joseph Leftwich/Yitskhok-Nakhmen Steinberg, in: *Freeland* 11 (January-March 1958) 1, 3-4; Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion*, 157.



In the United States, the Freeland League began to actively reinvent itself as part of the American Jewish political and cultural scene. As the war drew to a close, the movement also aspired to become part of the United States-led efforts to solve the problem posed by millions of European refugees, soon to be termed Displaced Persons (DPs).<sup>14</sup> British Freeland Jack Philips wrote to the Territorialist periodical *Freeland* in 1945:

“It is not without a little heart-ache that we have watched the centre of gravity of our movement shift to America; but this is progress, this is development, and it is appropriate that it should find its setting today within the great Jewish community of the United States. To you, now, all Jewish eyes must turn, as the eyes of all this stricken world are turned towards your great country, virile, throbbing, benevolent bastion of liberty and freedom.”<sup>15</sup>

There appeared to be fertile ground for Territorialism in the United States. The political scene showed “a rancorous intra-Jewish battle between Zionists and non-Zionists for control of the American Jewish community.”<sup>16</sup> Before the Second World War, Zionism had not yet been a mass movement in the United States. The Balfour Declaration was received lukewarmly due to the fear of American Jews that they would be suspected of having dual loyalties.<sup>17</sup> As Steinberg wrote in October 1945 – with disputable accuracy – the atmosphere surrounding Palestine in American Jewish political circles had even worsened during the war years, reducing the chances of success in the Middle East and rendering the work of the Freeland League more urgent than ever before.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the Jewish Reform movement in America and the Jewish Socialist Federation were openly against Political Zionism, and Jewish-dominated workers’ unions declared Zionism incompatible with the international class struggle. Moreover, they saw it as a threat to the rights of Arabs in Palestine.<sup>19</sup> The Territorialists made an effort to present themselves as part of these Socialist and labour-oriented segments of the American Jewish political landscape by publishing tributes to, and studies of, other movements and organisations. This move made sense, as an important part of American and especially New York-based Jewry had liberal, left-wing, Socialist leanings.<sup>20</sup> In turn, labour organisations, often dominated by Jews, offered important financial and moral support.<sup>21</sup>

Even if these particular bodies were not in favour of Zionism, the Zionist movement did start to gain ground in the American Jewish community as a whole after 1945, adding even more diversity to an already large plethora of possible political affiliations for American Jews. This development left Steinberg displeased with the Jewish political situation that he encountered upon arriving to the United States. In

14 Washington Testimony, in: *Freeland* 2 (March 1946) 2, 3, 4, 12–13, here 3.

15 Letter from London, in: *Freeland* 1 (June 1945) 5, 4.

16 James Loeffler, *The Conscience of America. Human Rights, Jewish Politics, and American Foreign Policy at the 1945 United Nations San Francisco Conference*, in: *Journal of American History* (September 2013), 401–428, here 403–404, 406, 425.

17 James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade. The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance 1914–1918*, New York 2007, 131; Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*. Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn, Bloomington 2010, 21.

18 YIVO, RG366, Isaac N. Steinberg Papers, Folder 210, Isaac Steinberg to Waley Cohen, 19 October 1945.

19 Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, 140, 143, 147.

20 For more about the Jewish leftist scene in New York see Tony Michels, *A Fire in their Hearts. Yiddish Socialists in New York*, Cambridge 2005.

21 Especially after 1948, space in *Freeland* was devoted to the activities of organisations and unions such as the International Ladies Garments Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Workmen’s Circle. For example: William Stern, *The Second Generation*, and David Dubinsky [president of the ILGWU] Celebrates His 60ieth Birthday, in: *Freeland* 6 (April–May 1952) 4, 6–7.

1946, he wrote of an ideological 'hysteria' that was raging throughout the Jewish world.<sup>22</sup> Pre-war Territorialism had been at odds with both Zionist Palestinocentrism and with the Jewish Labour Bund's striving for cultural rather than territorial rights for Jews in Europe. Even though some remnant of Bundism survived after the war and tried to (re-)establish its position on the American Jewish political scene,<sup>23</sup> in the eyes of the Territorialists it was Zionism that was responsible for the discord that was sown amongst political groups in the United States. Steinberg deplored the lack of inner solidarity in the Jewish world: All factions had "their bureaucracies, their long-established leadership, their 'tricks of the trade'", but the Jewish masses were excluded from decision-making processes.<sup>24</sup> The Freeland League hoped to promote a move towards more cooperation between the different Jewish political denominations. By achieving a more centralised system, obviously under Territorialist leadership, a democratisation process within American Jewish politics would come about and offer a way out of the existing chaotic situation.<sup>25</sup> As late as 1956, William Zuckerman repeated this position: nationalistic propaganda had created "[a] spiritual and psychological mess [...] in the minds and hearts of American Jews". According to Zuckerman, Steinberg was one of the few in the United States who endeavoured to create an awareness of this process.<sup>26</sup>

The new American circumstances under which the Freeland League now operated also brought other issues onto the Territorialist agenda. For one, the Freelanders recorded not only directly anti-Jewish feelings amongst and actions by non-Jewish Americans, but they also observed a general lack of tolerance for minorities such as African Americans and Mexican immigrants. Territorialists worried that American society was no safer for Jews than Europe had been and that there might not be a place for Jews in the long run: "It might surprise you [American Jews] when you find out how many organizations are devoted to your welfare – and how many more are concerned with your downfall."<sup>27</sup> American Jewish youth should be prepared to settle on the land, as they might in due time face the same fate as their European co-religionists.<sup>28</sup>

The realities of American Jewish life also increased the urgency to explicitly address religious matters. Some Freelanders saw religion as counterproductive to the establishment and preservation of Jewish culture.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, they also worried about the decrease in the religiosity of American Jews and the implications of this development for the future of Jewry in the United States, for which religion was such a binding factor.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, religious topics were discussed as aspects of, and contributing to, Jewish cultural heritage.<sup>31</sup> In turn, Yiddish culture had religiously

22 Isaac Steinberg, *End the War!*, in: *Freeland* 2 (November-December 1946) 6, 5-7, 14-15, here 5.

23 David Slucki, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945. Toward a Global History*, New Brunswick 2012.

24 Steinberg, *Free Land and Free People* [reprinted from *Oifn Shvell*], in: *Freeland* (August 1944), 7; Steinberg, *From Our Point of View. What is the Address?*, in: *Freeland* 2 (April-May 1946) 3, 4.

25 *Our Press: In the United States*, in: *Freeland* 1 (December 1944) 1, 19.

26 W. Zuckerman, *Where Is Our Inferiority*, in: *Freeland* 9 (January-February 1956) 1, 13; W. Zuckerman, Dr. I.N. Steinberg, in: *Freeland* 10 (January-February 1957) 1, 5-6, here 6.

27 M[achbi] Y. D[obkin], in: *Freeland* 2 (April-May 1946) 3, 7-8, 12.

28 A. Glan[tz], *Here and Over There*, in: *Freeland* 2 (September-October 1946) 5, 11-12.

29 Saul Goodman, *Territorialism, Autonomy, Nationhood*, in: *Freeland* 3 (January-February 1947) 1, 9-10, here 9.

30 James G. McDonald, *A Call to Jewishness. Summary of a Speech Made At Torah Conference, Thursday, 13 December 1945*, in: *Freeland* 2 (March 1946) 2, 11-12; Saul Goodman, *The Faith of a Jewish Secularist*, in: *Freeland* 2 (November-December 1946) 6, 8, 18; *Twenty-Seven Per Cent* [only 27 per cent of Jewish American children received a Jewish education, L.A.], in: *Freeland* 6 (February-March 1952) 3, 1.

31 An example of such an evaluation of the Jewish religious past within a cultural framework is Rabbi Litvin's article about the famous Lithuanian Volozhin Yeshiva: Rabbi J. Litvin, *About A Seat of Learning*, in: *Freeland* 7 (November-December 1953) 5, 13-14.

moralising responsibilities, too.<sup>32</sup> According to the Freeland League, Territorialism thus offered ‘the way’ for both deeply religious and freethinking groups.<sup>33</sup> In this manner, the Territorialists tried to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. If Jewish traditional values and customs could be understood in cultural terms, then they could be appropriated for a reanimation and reinvention of Jewish life after the Shoah. For the Freelanders, eager to present their own work as perhaps the most modern Jewish political programme available, Jewish tradition therefore became a version of Jewish modernity.

This perceived compatibility between traditional religious-cultural values and the project of modernity was not a novel idea. In fact, it had been a central component of the interwar Diaspora Nationalists’ way of thinking, to which the Territorialists also subscribed. Territorialism was not Diaspora Nationalist, however. After all, its adherents did not believe in a collective Jewish future in Europe and sought territories elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Freelanders did actively support Chaim Zhitlowsky’s explicitly secular Diaspora Nationalist isolationist approach, which considered the Yiddish language a binding factor for the Jewish people, in opposition to the larger, hostile non-Jewish world. At the same time, unlike Zhitlowsky, the Freelanders did not fully reject the attachment of Simon Dubnow – the other central Diaspora Nationalist thinker of the era – to Jewish religion as fulfilling a similar connecting function.<sup>34</sup>

After 1943, the Freelanders continued to consider Jewish Diaspora life of great importance. Since this Diaspora was seen as the source and protector of Jewish culture, even more so after the Shoah, the Freelanders supported its continued existence, both in Europe and the United States, but also in the aspired Territorialist settlement. The Shoah, therefore, increased rather than diminished the importance of the Diaspora in the eyes of Steinberg and his cohort, especially now that it was reduced to a tiny remnant of what it had been before. Diaspora life was to retain its right to exist, alongside the Freeland work, and even next to the Zionist project: “We are equally concerned with the Jew who insists on rebuilding his European life, the Jew who wants to create a political state in Palestine, and the Jew who will settle in a FREE LAND to continue there his Jewish heritage.”<sup>35</sup>

The Jewish Diaspora experience stood out as an important part of Jewish history, and the Territorialists did not fail to utilise this fact in their endeavours to diminish the exclusive character that the Zionists ascribed to Palestine. Indeed, the holy city of Jerusalem was located there, but according to Steinberg and his disciples, *Jerusalem* carried a much broader meaning: It referred to the Diaspora as well. A dualistic or bifurcated *Jerusalem*, one version “earthly” and the other “heavenly”, had been part of Jewish traditional thought throughout the centuries of dispersion.<sup>36</sup> Without forfeiting the heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem, according to the Territorialists, Jerusalem on earth would be wherever Jewish life took shape in the Diaspora.<sup>37</sup> With the establishment of the State of Israel, a role reversal between Jerusalem and the Diaspora took place. The former now became a fixed place on earth and the capital of the new Jewish state, whereas the Diaspora came to represent all that was lost of Jewish life

32 L. Bayon, People, Education, and Morality, in: Freeland 8 (November-December 1955) 12, 4-6; Israel Knox, Statehood or Peoplehood, in: Freeland 9 (April-May 1956) 2, 4.

33 In The Freeland League, in: Freeland 8 (April-May 1955) 10, 10-12; A. Schwebel, We Fight for Our Future, in: Freeland 9 (January-February 1956) 1, 2-3.

34 David E. Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, Pittsburgh 2005, 62-63, 67-68, 75, 101.

35 Steinberg, Free Land and Free People [reprinted from Oifn Shvell], in: Freeland (August 1944), 7.

36 Barbara E. Mann, Space and Place in Jewish Studies, New Brunswick 2012, 42-43.

37 Pianko, Zionism and the Roads Not Taken, 75.

and spirituality in the Shoah, as well as those elements of this life that might still be preserved.<sup>38</sup>

The continued Territorialist appreciation for the wishes of those who decided to continue or restart their lives on the European continent did not mean that the Freelanders did not acknowledge the major impact that the Shoah had on the possibilities of a Jewish future in Europe. Jews were still “exposed to a ruthless anti-Semitism and the threat of physical extinction”.<sup>39</sup> During the war, British Territorialist Tanhum Herwald had already asked rhetorically whether Jews thought “that the antagonism to the Jew will cease when hostilities are over, and that the remnants of the persecuted Jews of Europe should help to build up a destructed Europe and be again the scapegoat of bad governments”. The answer was obviously “no”.<sup>40</sup> What remained of European Jewry needed to be moved quickly to a new location as a group and not through individual immigration, “for you do not drain a river by sucking at it with a straw”.<sup>41</sup> The destination for these Jews would lie in the non-Western world, which was in many ways preferable to a Western location: Polish Territorialist M. Balbierski wrote that he would have preferred to see his family survive in the so-called uncivilised world, “rather than among ‘highly civilized’ nations, and under the technologically flawless Gestapo machine”. The future leader of the Freeland League Mordkhe Schaechter added from Vienna: “We are sick of the ‘civilized’ nations.”<sup>42</sup>

After the horrific experiences of the recent genocide, Territorialism became focussed not just on the physical survival of Jews, but also on their spiritual and cultural “revival”.<sup>43</sup> Colonising “on the basis of healthy colonization principles” and thereby leaving behind the “blood-stained soil of Europe” would have a cleansing effect.<sup>44</sup> In 1944, Steinberg already dramatically announced the post-war aims of the Freeland League: It was to become more than just a Territorialist movement, “a healthy, fresh stream of Jewish popular strength; [...] a desire for the renaissance of the energies of the people”. The Kimberley Scheme, for instance, would not lead to Jewish assimilation into Australian society, but to the regeneration of these Jews, turning them into a new type of Australian Jews. Steinberg even imagined such a cultural process inspiring Jewish poems about kangaroos, “[y]et their [the poets] voice would be the voice of Israel, and the rhythm and the sigh of their songs would be Jewish”.<sup>45</sup> A regenerated and fully developed Jewish existence would also help to redeem the non-Jewish world. Territorialist sources contain many references to such a universal mission for the Jews which Territorialism could enable, paradoxically by geographically isolating groups of Jews in agro-industrial settlements. Both Zangwill and Steinberg had envisioned the Jewish return to political history as a first step on the way to the fulfilment of the ancient Jewish task of acting as a moral vanguard to the rest of humanity. Zangwill saw a ‘Mission of Israel’ for both Zionism and Territorialism by lifting the Jewish people to a higher civilisational status in a territory of its own.

38 Isaac Steinberg, Vilno and Jerusalem, in: *Freeland* 9 (April-May 1956) 2, 5-6.

39 YIVO RG682, Mordkhe Schaechter Papers, Folder 600, Leaflet Freeland League. URGENT, [1947].

40 YIVO RG255, Box 1, T.B. Herwald, Solution of the Jewish Problem (ITO Pamphlet no. 8), January 1943.

41 See *Freeland* 3 (November-December 1947) 3, back page; Why the D.P.S Can't Wait, in: *Freeland* II (May 1948) 2, 7.

42 Left-Handed Zionism, *Freeland* 4 (May-June 1948) 2, 8-12, here 11.

43 Washington Testimony, in: *Freeland* 2 (March 1946) 2, 3, 4, 12-13, here 3; Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization (ed.), Statement and Discussion by Dr. I.N. Steinberg before the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine, 14 January 1946, Washington D.C., New York 1946, 2.

44 YIVO, RG366/114, Resolutions of the First Freeland Conference of the D.P. Camps held in Upper Austria on 5 October 1947.

45 Steinberg, Australia, 118-120.

Steinberg carried this line of thought even further. The disillusionment of the Russian Revolution and the birth of National Socialism had instilled in the Territorialist leader a “realization that universal brotherhood could not be achieved unless each human, group or nation acquired the possibilities for its own social and cultural development”.<sup>46</sup> Steinberg did not believe that antisemitism should become a driving force for Jewish political work. Instead, a positive idealistic activism should offer a free choice to Jews as to where they wished to settle, but with strong spiritual ties forged between these different parts of the world community. Jews would then be able to survive both as individuals and as a community, while maintaining their “immortal system of ideas, beliefs, actions and hopes which is enshrined in our hearts as Judaism, – Yiddishkeit”.<sup>47</sup> Investing in a renewed *Yiddishkeit* (also spelled *Yiddishkayt*) would benefit not only the development of Jews as a people: “A collective Yiddishkayt [...] would again best contribute to the world’s *Menschlechkayt* [humanness].”<sup>48</sup>

Despite this optimism about the Jewish moral tasks and their fulfilment, after May 1948 Steinberg became uniformly critical of the Zionist project. He saw the State of Israel as inspiring a decline in “moral perspective” among many Jewish leaders. Exclusivity rather than universalism was a key element of Israel’s policy, as were militarism and an active denial of the European Jewish past. Steinberg considered these features to be the main reasons for growing moral defects in world Jewish leadership, as more and more of its representatives adhered in one way or another to Zionism.<sup>49</sup> Even more fundamentally, for Steinberg, the course that world political history had taken during the previous decades had discredited “the state” as the most desirable form of political organisation. His Socialist Revolutionary past had ideologically shaped him to actively strive for alternative structures. “All my life I have fought against the idea of a Jewish State even in Palestine”, he wrote in a private letter in 1938.<sup>50</sup> This fierce anti-statism was not only based on the Freeland League’s leader’s anarchist sympathies, but also on his general disappointment in the failed state-building process he had been briefly involved with in 1917 and 1918.

As early as 1891, Simon Dubnow had described statelessness as a higher stage in the Jews’ national development.<sup>51</sup> The ITO’s stance towards statehood had been somewhat unclear: Some of the early Territorialists, including Zangwill himself, contemplated different options for obtaining not just cultural, but also political autonomy for the Territorialist settlement(s). After all, only shortly before, these “fresh” ITO members had been Zionists. Now they considered Territorialism to be the truest form of Zionism and the movement adhering most to Theodor Herzl’s true intentions.<sup>52</sup> Thirty years later, with the establishment of the Freeland League, statehood had lost much of its earlier appeal. The Freelanders did not believe that “the world as it is developing today is very much in need of a new State”.<sup>53</sup> From a religious and moral point of view, Steinberg believed that Jewish statehood was undesirable:

46 YIVO, RG682/327, Draft speech Lesser Fruchtbaum, Evaluation of Dr. I.N. Steinberg, [1957].

47 Steinberg, Australia, 106; Isaac Steinberg, The Three Roads, in: Freeland 1 (December 1944) 1, 1-3.

48 Isaac Steinberg, The Ignorant and the Am-Hooretz, in: Freeland 6 (April-May 1952) 4, 2-3.

49 In The Press, in: Freeland 8 (November-December 1954) 9, 10.

50 YIVO, RG366/468, Steinberg to Charles Seligman, 30 November 1938.

51 Cecile Esther Kuznitz, YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture. Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation, Cambridge 2014, 4-5.

52 Hani A. Faris, Israel Zangwill’s Challenge to Zionism, in: Journal of Palestine Studies 4 (1975) 3, 89; David Glover, Imperial Zion. Israel Zangwill and the English Origins of Territorialism, in: Eitan Bar-Yosef/Nadia Valman (ed.), The Jew in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture. Between the East End and East Africa, New York 2009, 131-143, here 132-133.

53 Steinberg, Statement and Discussion, 4.



"It would be a tragic irony of our history if the Jewish people after generations of experience would transplant the same tribal state life into Palestine, the very place where the prophets of Israel warned us against the dangers and crimes of tribes and states."<sup>54</sup>

Steinberg claimed that the Russian experience should serve as a lesson for both the young Jewish state and for the Jewish people as a whole: "The change-over from a glorious spiritual path, albeit lacking political power, to a route strewn with the glittering symbols of state-power and military prestige, appears to be a hazardous one." The Russian Revolution had been morally and intellectually prepared like no other revolution preceding it. "Yet rarely has a people, in so short a time, been so thoroughly drained of its moral capital by its new regime, as has the Russian people." Eventually, Steinberg believed, the era of statehood would come to an end, and with non-statist Diaspora spiritualism as its guiding spirit, the Jewish people would be more than ready for this change. After all, "[i]n the midst of the Jewish people stood not the majestic throne of royalty [statehood], but the invisible glory of the Mount of Sinai [moral and divine revelation]".<sup>55</sup>

During the previous two millennia, Steinberg claimed, the Jewish people had witnessed but managed to stay aloof from the statism that had been so damaging to the societies in which they lived. All of this changed with the arrival of the Jewish state. Jewish statehood had led to Jews oppressing other people. The Territorialists had specific moral objections to a confrontation with the Palestinian Arabs: "Our true tragedy occurred [...] when Jews abandoned their dignity and inner security, when they suddenly adopted the role of persecutr [sic] of another minority. With this they are creating moral anguish for themselves."<sup>56</sup> Jewish statehood had turned Jews all over the world from a "people of mercy" into a "people of brutality", for whom a violent treatment of Arabs had become acceptable.<sup>57</sup>

The Freelanders saw the adoption of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine on 27 November 1947 as the beginning of more violent encounters between Jews and the Arab world: "It cannot be supposed that great numbers of dispossessed Arabs would agree to renounce their claim to their homes and lands which are as dear to them as Palestine is to the Jews."<sup>58</sup> The Territorialists deplored the ensuing instances of anti-Arab violence, such as the Deir Yassin Massacre of 9 April 1948, and the Qibya Massacre of 14 October 1953. The Israeli Nationality Law of 14 July 1952 was deemed discriminatory, as it required only the Arabs in Israel to provide proof of their presence during the mandate period in order to obtain citizenship. For similar reasons, the Territorialists criticised the 1953 Land Acquisition Act.<sup>59</sup>

In numerous public addresses and publications, the Freelanders pointed to the fact that the creation of a Jewish state, in the face of persistent Arab hostility towards it, would lead to the undesirable militarisation of Jewish life. This life had

54 YIVO, RG366/519, Steinberg, reply to article [Joseph] Steigrad, Is Palestine the only Solution for the Jewish Problem? [1943].

55 Isaac N. Steinberg, Yavneh or Jerusalem?, in: Judaism 4 (1955) 3, reprinted in Willy Birkenmaier (ed.), Isaac Steinberg in London und New York, in: Russica Palatina 40, Heidelberg 2002, 94-101, here 94-99, 101.

56 On the Mental Health of the Jewish People. A talk between Dr. Erich Fromm and Dr. I.N. Steinberg, in: Freeland 6 (June-July 1952) 5, 2-4, here 3.

57 Gleanings from The Press, in: Freeland 7 (March-April 1953) 2, 12-13.

58 The Palestine Decision, in: Freeland 3 (November-December 1947) 2, 3, 15, here 3; YIVO, RG366/337, Handwritten note Steinberg, 14 December 1947; YIVO, RG682/480, S. Stedman, The Shpaltung Fun a Folk, 1950.

59 Deir Yassin, in: Freeland 4 (May-June 1948) 2, 4; Isaac Steinberg, The Jubilee Of An Idea, in: Freeland 7 (November-December 1953) 5, 2-3; Letter Rabbi Benyamin [Reb Benyomin] to annual Freeland League Banquet 1954, in: Freeland 8 (March-April 1954) 6, 18; Gleanings From The Press. The Nationality Act In Israel, in: Freeland 6 (June-July 1952) 5, 15; Gleanings From The Press, in: Freeland 7 (April-May 1953) 3, 15.



so far, Steinberg wrote, always “kept aloof from Etatism, Chauvenism [sic], Militarism”.<sup>60</sup> Now, in the eyes of the world, and especially in the eyes of the Arabs, Jews had become political fighters. “It is no good for people”, Steinberg told the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine in 1946, “to emerge from the hell of Europe and immediately to plunge into new political troubles.”<sup>61</sup> The Jewish state had become “the focal point of a thousand conflicting and irreconcilable religious, economic, political, military and social interests. It is burdened with a thousand lies and prejudices and hates. It is a battleground and a highway to battlegrounds.”<sup>62</sup>

*Freeland* complained that the Irgun’s leader, Menachem Begin, was falsely considered a hero, including by American Jews. “Have they all been hit with the blindness of vulgar chauvinism?” Begin, who was likened to French President Charles de Gaulle, represented a harmful nationalism that was willing to sacrifice freedom and development to forge the people into an instrument of the state.<sup>63</sup> In summary, the land had become more important to the Zionists than the people: Potential immigrants were actively solicited, even though the Jewish state was not capable of absorbing them. This large influx of people led to a segregation between members of the *Yishuv* (the established Jewish community in Palestine), the ‘haves’, and the new arrivals, the ‘have nots’. In order for the new state to function in the long run, the immigration rate had to be slowed down and the Diaspora sustained for a longer period of time. The homelessness this might entail for a part of this Diaspora could be solved by a Territorialist project.<sup>64</sup> As Steinberg phrased it:

“Zionism will now mostly care for the upbuilding [sic] of a Jewish political nation, while the *Freeland* League has in mind the interests of the Jewish people as a whole, i.e. of every individual within the people. It is evident that this difference of conceptions causes also a deep difference in their next practical work. The Fr. League emerges out of this crisis with an even greater responsibility [sic] for the existence of our wandering masses and for the creation for them of a new sound and politically secure home.”<sup>65</sup>

In other words, the Zionist conception of the Jewish nation included only a limited part of the Jewish people, namely those instrumental to the creation of a state, whereas the Territorialists cared for everybody, seeking to provide them with a ‘home’. *Freeland* stated it in much harsher terms: As long as the Zionists held on to their rigid position regarding Palestine, it was no longer only ‘Hitlerism’ that was to blame for the Jewish plight.<sup>66</sup>

All in all, the *Freelanders* did not support the establishment of the Jewish state, but they were nonetheless concerned with its wellbeing. After 1948, they established warm contacts with known Zionist pacifists such as Nathan Chofshi (Nathan

60 YIVO, RG366/337, Handwritten note Steinberg, 14 December 1947; YIVO, RG366/519, In search of a Jewish *Freeland*, [1947/1948]; Isaac Steinberg, ‘The Way Of *Freeland*’, in: *Freeland* 6 (September-October 1951) 1, 2-4; Fruchtbaum, ‘An Evaluation Of Territorialism’, in: *Freeland* 8 (September-October 1954) 8, 5-6.

61 Steinberg, ‘Now is the Time’, in: *Freeland* 2 (February 1946) 2, 4-5, 19, here 5; Steinberg, ‘Statement and Discussion’, 5.

62 YIVO RG366/584, Samuel J. Stoll, ‘An Appeal to Jewish Reason’, attached to letter to Steinberg, 24 March 1944.

63 ‘Degradation and Blasphemy’, in: *Freeland* 5 (January-February 1949) 1, 2-3.

64 YIVO, RG682/298, Isaac Steinberg, ‘Free Israel and “*Freeland*”’, in: *Freeland Bulletin* (December 1949).

65 YIVO, RG366/337, Handwritten note Isaac Steinberg, 14 December 1947.

66 ‘From Our Point of View. The Crisis in Palestine’, in: *Freeland* 2 (June-July 1946) 4, 3-4.

Fraenkl) and Rabbi Benyamin (Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann),<sup>67</sup> as well as with Martin Buber, Judah L. Magnes, and Hans Kohn, prominent former members of the binationalist movement Brit Shalom and now central figures in Ihud (Unity), Brit Shalom's successor organisation.<sup>68</sup> Steinberg praised Ihud, which "stood up against the tendencies in Israel to national arrogance, to state glory, to military self-confidence, to every manner of moral assimilation".<sup>69</sup>

Despite the support of its famous adherents, Ihud was small and not very influential in Israeli politics. The movement's existence notwithstanding, according to the Territorialists, the new Jewish State seemed to be willingly ignoring potential moral scruples. Apart from the Zionist treatment of the Palestinian Arabs, another example of such behaviour that the Freelanders deplored was the rapprochement between Israel and Germany in the 1950s.<sup>70</sup> Still, the 'Arab Question' remained central. As late as 1962, Freeland Judah Zelitch pointed out that the creation of the Jewish state had caused major tensions with the larger Arab world. The Zionist project, led by Ben-Gurion, had only worked because of the removal of 700,000 Arabs from Palestine. As long as the Palestinian refugee issue remained unsolved, Israel would find no peace.<sup>71</sup>

Their growing critique of the Jewish state made it clearer than ever that the Territorialists were not after statehood but, by contrast to other non-Zionist movements such as the Folkist and Bundist movements, they did seek concrete territories. To obtain these pieces of land, the Freelanders tied their fate to a still existing colonial world system: The ITO negotiated with the British and the Portuguese, and the Freeland League approached the British, French, and Dutch governments regarding several of their overseas colonial possessions. This is perhaps not surprising for the ITO days, which ended in the mid-1920s, but it is striking that colonial thinking continued to be part of Territorialism in the Freeland League era both before and after the Shoah.

The Territorialists were not alone in their continued interest in colonial projects. Colonial concepts continued to shape global political debates, albeit in changed forms and with altered content. The Freelanders were apt followers of these developing trends. In the Zangwill days, the ITO had appealed directly to colonial powers to ask them to grant the Territorialists parts of some overseas territories, whilst largely ignoring the rights or even the existence of indigenous peoples. After 1945, following Steinberg's lead, the Territorialists became ever more aware that contemporary decolonisation trends demanded good relationships with the indigenous inhabitants of the territories where they aspired to create Jewish settlements. Steinberg even saw a direct link between his own Russian experiences of 1917 and 1918 and the post-war 'awakening' of colonial subjects. The latter should draw lessons from the past by understanding that Bolshevism was not the only and surely not the best alternative to

67 See e.g. The Other Voice Of Israel. Man And Agriculture, in: Freeland 6 (September-October 1952) 6, 7-8; Aaron Staff, Contrasts In Personalities, in: Freeland 7 (November-December 1953) 5, 4-6; Rabbi Benyamin [Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann], For The Sake Of Survival, in: Freeland 7 (November-December 1953) 5, 9-10; Letters Nathan Chofshi and Rabbi Benyamin [Reb Benyomin] to annual Freeland League Banquet 1954, in: Freeland 8 (March-April 1954) 6, 18; Greetings To The Freeland Banquet [letters from Benyamin and Chofshi], in: Freeland 9 (April-May 1956) 2, 8-9.

68 Judah L. Magnes, Responsibility, in: Freeland 5 (January-February 1949) 1, 11-13; Hans Kohn, In Memory Of Two Great Teachers, in: Freeland 6 (February-March 1952) 3, 3-4. Steinberg knew Martin Buber personally, and the latter even contributed to the Steinberg memorial book that was published in 1961: Benjamin Jacob Bialostotzky/Melech Ravitch, Yitshok Nahmen Shteynberg, 1961, 159-166.

69 Steinberg, On the Tenth Anniversary of the "Yikhud" in Israel, in: Freeland 7 (March-April 1953) 2, 4. See also Aaron Staff, Impressions from Israel, in: Freeland 7 (May-June 1953) 3, 2-3.

70 On the Cultural Front, in: Freeland 7 (November-December 1953) 5, 15-16.

71 Judah Zelitch, To the International Community – Jewish Migration is also Your Problem, in: Freeland XV (December 1962) 3. See also Leo Heiman, Israel's Occupation Problem [Reprinted from Bnai Brith's The National Jewish Monthly], in: Freeland 21 (December 1968) 2, 9-10.

the capitalist system of their former oppressors.<sup>72</sup> Decolonisation also became a frame for the Freelanders' critique of the Zionist dealings with the Palestinian Arabs. The Arab demands were to be reckoned with: "Highly civilized peoples have been whipped into rage directed against an element alien to their lives. Then why not the Arabs?" The Palestinian Arabs felt strengthened by the contemporary colonial developments and they might even receive support from the Soviets. The only way forward lay in an alliance between Jews and Arabs as part of the peoples' resistance against the colonial powers.<sup>73</sup>

For the Territorialists' purposes, a postcolonial approach to territorial colonisation was therefore considered desirable.<sup>74</sup> This was evident during negotiations regarding a settlement in the Saramacca District in Suriname between 1946 and 1948, when the Freelanders communicated with both the Dutch and Surinamese governments. After all, the 'Surinamers' were in the process of gaining more political independence, which rendered the explicit recognition of this new and fragile local autonomy of the utmost importance. A Freeland League delegation headed by Steinberg himself even travelled to Paramaribo to convince local politicians and people's representatives of the Territorialist plans, and to show the Freelanders' willingness to recognise the nascent Surinamese authority.<sup>75</sup>

Several years later, in 1955, the first Afro-Asian Conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia. Attended exclusively by non-Western countries, the conference reinforced Steinberg's heightened awareness of the new world order: This was the moment for Jews to forge relationships with the Muslim and postcolonial worlds. Unfortunately, he concluded, the "chauvinistic" and "militaristic" State of Israel was unsuited for this task. That was why other Jews should take it upon themselves to make peace with these non-Western forces, for the good of all mankind: "Bandung" is not merely a fact; it is a challenge to us, to our sense of justice and to our understanding.<sup>76</sup> As a result of Bandung, "the well known critical Zionist"<sup>77</sup> Robert Weltsch published an address in the Israeli press to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, one of the 'stars' of Bandung. Weltsch implored Nasser to not only turn to the powerful capitals of the West and the East, namely Washington and Moscow, but also to find co-operation much closer to home, namely in Jerusalem.<sup>78</sup> Steinberg further developed Weltsch's thought experiment in what was to be his last published article. He set out to show that a new world order had arrived, represented by China, the Soviet Union – despite its "sins" and problematic past still the locale of the "social-revolutionary uprising of humanity" – and Jawaharlal Nehru's India. The Jewish people and Jewish morality, in one word "Jerusalem", were part of this new order as well.<sup>79</sup>

This Jerusalem, a concept rather than the actual geographical place, still had an important moral role to play in the world. It was in this forging of a non-violent tra-

72 Steinberg, In the Workshop, x.

73 Ada Siegel, Palestine. The Problem, in: *Freeland* 2 (June-July 1946) 4, 10, 14, here 10.

74 In the Freeland League, *Freeland* 7 (January-February 1953) 1, 16.

75 For more about the Saramacca plan, see Almagor, *Forgotten Alternatives*, 194-196; Laura Almagor, *Een Vergeten Alternatief. Het Freeland League Plan voor Joodse Kolonisatie in Suriname* [A Forgotten Alternative. The Plan of the Freeland League for a Jewish Colonisation in Suriname], (MA thesis), Utrecht 2007; Alexander Heldring, *Het Saramacca Project. Een Plan van Joodse Kolonisatie in Suriname* [The Saramacca Project. A Plan for a Jewish Colonisation in Suriname], Hilversum 2011.

76 Steinberg, Jews in Asia, in: *Freeland* 8 (June-July 1955) 11, 5-6.

77 Isaac Steinberg, The Mountain Peaks, in: *Freeland* 9 (November-December 1956) 4, 9-11.

78 Robert Weltsch, What I Would Say to Nasser of Egypt [reprinted from *Haaretz*, 1 June 1956], in: *Freeland* 9 (June-July-August 1956) 3, 4-6.

79 Isaac Steinberg, The Mountain Peaks, in: *Freeland* 9 (November-December 1956) 4, 9-11.

ditional connection between politics and morality that the Jewish people had been unique, and not in its modern technological and military accomplishments. This fact had become obscured by the transformation of Israel into a state like any other.<sup>80</sup> Strikingly, in all of his writings, Steinberg used “the Jewish people” and “the Freeland League” or “the Territorialists” interchangeably. By suggesting that the work of the Territorialists was in fact the work for and by all Jews, the Freeland League became part of a larger moral mission: “The Jewish people [or: the Freeland League] will continue these efforts in the knowledge that solving the problem of its homeless goes hand in hand with the problem of humanity as a whole.”<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

The history of Territorialism does not challenge the centrality of the Shoah in twentieth-century Jewish history. It does, however, contribute to a burgeoning body of scholarly works problematising the claim that the Shoah made all non-Zionist political behaviour obsolete. It also demonstrates that these events, even if hugely influential, did not change all aims and ideologies of every Jewish political movement. In the case of the Territorialists, even though the Shoah helped to define their post-war aims and approaches, it also served as an extreme confirmation of what the ITO and later the Freeland League had been arguing all along, namely that an imminent territorial solution for persecuted Jews needed to be found in a sparsely populated region in the world.

The war in Europe did force the Territorialists to move their headquarters to New York, and they lost numerous European members to the Nazi genocide. In all likelihood, the Shoah contributed to the movement’s inability to attain a mass following: The Freeland League never managed to attract more than several thousand active supporters around the world, mainly in the European DP camps. The refugee crisis that followed the war’s conclusion was therefore of great importance, as the Freelanders now explicitly engaged with the DPs. The DP issue altered their approach and rhetoric and provided the Freeland League with a new rationale for its continued existence. American Jewish politics and culture also strongly determined the nature of the issues on the Territorialist agenda, by introducing a focus on Jewish communal affairs in the United States.

Simultaneously, the Shoah intensified the Territorialists’ already existing pre-war engagement with Jewish Diaspora life. It confirmed the Diaspora’s symbolic and practical value for the preservation of Jewish culture, religion and language, first and foremost of Yiddish. The Territorialists deplored the Zionist anti-Yiddish language policies, partly because many Freelanders were themselves active in Yiddish literary circles. Investing in the Yiddish language and in *Yiddishkayt* more generally speaking also served to offer a counterweight to the Zionist state-building project in Palestine, which, in the eyes of Steinberg and his cohort, posed a moral threat to the Jewish future. The Freelanders increasingly felt that the realities of the militarising Israeli society were at odds with essential Jewish traditional and moral values. They rejected the Zionist preoccupation with statehood as un-Jewish and as potentially detrimental to a truly Jewish future. Territorialism, they claimed, offered a non-statist addition or alternative to Zionism, one that was better capable of dealing with postcolo-

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Steinberg, *Australia*, 8.

nial realities. Still, despite Zionist accusations to the contrary, Territorialism was never explicitly anti-Zionist. Even though Steinberg and other Territorialists criticised the realities on the ground in Palestine, they were never opposed to an organised Jewish presence in Palestine. The movement even directly related to the inner diversity of the Zionist movement, by aligning itself with heterodox Zionist movements such as Ihud. The Territorialists simply did not believe that Zionism was able to offer a full solution to the problem of Jewish homelessness; in its current militaristic form it was even counterproductive to the furthering of such an aim. In order for a wholesome Jewish future to be realised, both a Territorialist solution and a continuation of European Diaspora life needed to exist alongside an improved version of Zionism.

For Steinberg in particular, Jewish politics meant a continuation of his Russian Socialist Revolutionary career, even if by the 1950s he did not himself explicitly connect these two incarnations of his political existence.<sup>82</sup> Territorialism was to be a tool to improve both the state of Judaism and the human condition in general. The Shoah had demonstrated to the Freelanders the need for a redefinition of Jewish sovereignty, without it translating into a state-focussed approach. By believing in such a predominantly cultural and collective notion of sovereignty, they opposed the geopolitical move towards a focus on individual rights rather than on ethnically defined collective group rights. After all, the Territorialists underlined, during the Shoah Jews had been singled out as Jews and not as individuals. In effect, in the post-war world they needed their rights as Jews protected rather than their rights as individuals.<sup>83</sup>

Unfortunately for Steinberg, his anti-statism did not fit a post-war reality in which the role of the state had increased rather than subsided.<sup>84</sup> Internationalism and cosmopolitanism were at times valued, but also regarded with suspicion in the West, especially as they gained Communist connotations in a context dominated by Cold War anxieties. After the short-lived popularity of the idea of a world government in the 1940s, international politics and the new discipline of international relations turned against internationalist idealism.<sup>85</sup> The mismatch between Steinberg's ideals and political realities thus contributed to Territorialism's failure to have any of its plans materialise.

This failure to achieve practical results did not render Territorialism as such irrelevant, at least not in the eyes of all. In 1956, American Jewish philosopher Israel Knox reflected on Territorialism's continued relevance. A practical Territorialist settlement might never be created,

"[b]ut to some one like me, a student of Jewish organizations and philosophies, it does not matter, because to me the great significance of a group like the *Freeland League* would be this: it is a group with a *regulative* ideal which serves as a corrective to the actuality in Jewish life. Its very existence is a criticism of *what is* on behalf of *what ought to be*."<sup>86</sup>

82 In his own account of his Russian political career, Steinberg hardly mentioned Jews or Jewish matters. Steinberg, In the Workshop, 99.

83 Ada Siegel, The International Bill of Rights, in: *Freeland*, 1 (February 1945) 2, 5-6.

84 Mark Mazower, Reconstruction. The Historiographical Issues, in: Mark Mazower/Jessica Reinisch/David Feldman (ed.), *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe. International Perspectives, 1945-1949*, Oxford 2011, 17-28, here 24.

85 Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea*, London 2012, 231; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton 2009, 9.

86 Israel Knox, Statehood or Peoplehood, in: *Freeland* 9 (April-May 1956) 2, 4.

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[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1\\_Articles\\_Almagor/Articles\\_Almagor02.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1_Articles_Almagor/Articles_Almagor02.pdf)

Article

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Éva Kovács

# The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014

Some Remarks

## Abstract

From the perspective of the past two (almost three) years, it seems that the significant anniversary of 2014 went down in the annals of history as a remarkable fiasco of Hungarian memory politics. *Controversial Monument, Divided Hungarians, Angered Jewish Community* – these newspaper headlines are still fresh in our minds. Over the course of the year, the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year turned to become somewhat infamous, and scandal followed upon scandal not only in domestic media but also in foreign newspapers. However, everything had started off well in the beginning. This essay will first briefly introduce the broader context of this fiasco, discussing the main differences between Eastern and Western European memory politics before and after 1989. It will then distinguish some milestones of the Hungarian ambiguity and delay in coping with the European tendencies in Holocaust remembrance. After that, it will turn to its central subject, analysing the main events of the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014. Toward the end, the essay will map the different initiatives between the coordinates of memory politics and show some unintended consequences of the unsuccessful governmental intentions.

After long decades of more or less parallel processes in European memory politics – namely the common usage of the antifascist narrative of the extermination of Jews during the Second World War in Western and Eastern Europe alike – this memory reached a crossroad in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>1</sup> In Germany and later in many countries of Western Europe, it has become *the Holocaust*, the universal metaphor of the suffering of Jews, and has evolved into the hegemonic discourse of European history of the twentieth century, while in the Soviet bloc the forms of memory of the 1970s and 1980s underwent only minor changes with regard to the antifascist narrative of the 1950s. During the years of political transition in 1989/1990, many scholars estimated that this relatively new a-synchronicity between Eastern and Western memory politics would be overcome relatively quickly.<sup>2</sup> After 1990, a number of new domestic institutions, museums, and NGOs started to import Western know-how such as museum pedagogy, educational materials, commemoration techniques and so forth into the former Ostblock with the clear intention of implementing the predominantly German and American memory framework in these

1 See e.g. Richard Ned Lebow/Wulf Kansteiner/Claudio Fogu (ed.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, Durham 2006; Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory. Essays in the History of Ideas*, London/New York 2013.

2 Henry Rousso, *Das Dilemma eines europäischen Gedächtnisses*, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe 1 (2004), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Rousso-3-2004> (17 January 2017).

countries as well.<sup>3</sup> However, even these 'Westernisers' of memory culture did not take into consideration the fact that the harmonisation and the '(Western-)Europeanisation' of different narratives and memory practices of the Holocaust would require another two or three decades in both parts of Europe – considering that the construction of a common memory is the overall aim.<sup>4</sup>

### The Prior Conditions of Hungarian Memory Politics after 1989

Why are there still significant differences in memory politics between Eastern and Western Europe? Retrospectively, some of the reasons can be listed while focusing on the Hungarian case but also taking into consideration the broader Eastern European tendencies.

Immediately after the transition, mainstream Western memory studies ignored or at least marginalised the experience of Stalinist terror and post-Stalinist dictatorships in the Communist countries, while, during the political transition, it was precisely the conflicts around these experiences that played a crucial role in the (re-)formation of national identity and memory politics in the former Communist countries.<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of fact, in Eastern Europe the Holocaust as a formative part of a national history has not become as important in memory politics as in the West. In many countries of the former *Ostblock*, the Holocaust has yet to become an inherent part of the national historiography. In this sense, researchers on the other side of the Iron Curtain often divided the history of the twentieth century into two different, often contradictory or reciprocally excluding narrations: the Holocaust and the Gulag – with the former falling outside of the scope of historical studies.<sup>6</sup>

However, rivalry can often help to shape scientific knowledge, institutional positions and so forth, and to make them more transparent. As a matter of fact, in Germany the re-forming of the public memory of *Flucht und Vertreibung* in the 1990s did not contravene the fundamental principles of memory politics of the Holocaust but opened a new discursive field not only of German identity but also of Polish-German and Czech-German memory landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

In Hungary, the memory landscape is in parts even more complicated than in other East and Central European countries due to the presence of a third topic in the

3 See e.g. Daniel Levy/Natan Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter. Der Holocaust*, Berlin 2001; James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven 1993; Katja Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust. Museale Repräsentationen zwischen Individualisierung, Universalisierung und Nationalisierung*, Göttingen 2015. For the latest developments in the field, see Olga Gershenson/Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *New Jewish Museums in Post-communist Europe*, in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 45 (2015) 2-3, 153-157.

4 Małgorzata Pakier/Joanna Wawrzyniak (ed.), *Memory and Change in Europe. Eastern Perspectives*, New York/Oxford 2015; Zuzanna Bogumił/Joanna Wawrzyniak/Tim Buchen/Christian Ganzer/Maria Senina, *The Enemy on Display. The Second World War in Eastern European Museums*, New York/Oxford 2015.

5 Maria Todorova/Augusta Dimou/Stefan Troebst (ed.), *Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, Budapest 2014.

6 See Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York 2005; Marek Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, in: *East European Politics & Societies* 30 (2016) 1, 97-119; John-Paul Himka/Joanna Beata Michlic (ed.), *Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, Lincoln 2013.

7 E.g. Jürgen Danyel/Philipp Ther (ed.), *Flucht und Vertreibung in europäischer Perspektive*, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51 (2003) 1. In Hungary, incidentally, the discourse on the Beneš decrees failed to lead to a Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation. See for example Ágnes Tóth, *Migrationen in Ungarn 1945–1948. Vertreibung der Ungarndeutschen, Binnenwanderungen und slowakisch-ungarischer Bevölkerungsaustausch*, Munich 2001; László Szarka (ed.), *A szlovákiai magyarok kényszertelepítésének emlékezete 1945–1948 [The Memory of the Forced Migration of the Hungarians of Slovakia 1945–1948]*, Komárom 2003.

arena of national remembrance. Beside the terror of the Nazis and the Communists, Trianon (the peace treaty of 1920) plays a very important, if not the most important, role in Hungarian memory politics.<sup>8</sup> Despite the persistent anti-Communist propaganda of the governments of the right-wing Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), it seems as if the deliberate reconstruction of the interwar 'Trianon Trauma' almost immediately after 1989/1990 finally obtained such a hegemonic position in Hungarian memory politics with which the Holocaust – despite its death toll of more than 600,000 Hungarian citizens – could not compete.<sup>9</sup> Many Hungarian scholars agree that remembering the Holocaust and Trianon – due to their similarities in self-victimisation, symbolisation, and generalisation of particular historical events, the mythologisation of history, and so forth – are mutually exclusive forms of remembrance. However, from a historical point of view, Trianon and the Holocaust are tightly connected components of the failed politics of nation-building of the twentieth century, since Hungary took part in the Second World War to regain the territories that it has lost in the First World War. Thus, in this context, the chauvinistic and extremely nationalistic interpretation of Hungarian history gained such an overwhelming hegemony in the national discourse that it blocked any development of a reflective, critical memory politics and thus the integration of the interwar 'Trianon Trauma' into a modern, introspective public history.

### Ambiguity and Delays in Remembrance of the Holocaust

The Hungarian memory landscape demonstrates a certain ambiguity and delay compared to other European countries. Concentrating on the memory of the Holocaust, I would like to mention only a few milestones of this ambiguity and delay:

- 1990: The Hungarian state started to consider paying compensation and restitution to the victims of the Nazi persecution very late. Instead of a commitment, however, it was a half-hearted measure. The Jewish restitution law was in fact the last act in the line of restitution laws of the new democratic parliament and it did not cover forced labour, whereas the victims of Stalinism (for example foreign forced labourers in the Soviet Union) were entitled to compensation. Precisely at this point and in this matter, it became evident how much the new Hungarian democracy was not ready or prepared to accept the responsibility of the contemporary Hungarian state for the fate of its citizens during the Second World War – and thus made obvious the thoroughly problematic memory politics of the Hungarian Third Republic of 1989/1990 from its very inception.<sup>10</sup>
- 2000/2001: Hungary became a signatory to the Stockholm Declaration and a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). However, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was not present at the meeting in January 2000 when the participating governments discussed the importance of

8 Eric B. Weaver, *National Narcissism. The Intersection of the Nationalist Cult and Gender in Hungary*, Oxford 2006.

9 See the episode of the Hungarian *Historikerstreit* discussed later in this paper.

10 M. A. [Mink András] A magyar zsidóság kárpótlása [The Restitution of the Hungarian Jews], in: Beszélő 24 (2002) 7; <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/a-magyar-zsidosag-karpotlasi> (17 January 2017); Randolph L. Braham, Hungary. The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust, in Randolph L. Braham/András Kovács (ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Seventy Years Later*, Budapest 2016. See also Zsófi Lefkovich, Tények – Amit a holokauszt-kárpótlással kapcsolatban tudni illik [Facts – What Needs to Be Known About Restitution and the Holocaust], in: TEV (Tet és Védelem/Action and Protection), 22 November 2016, <http://tev.hu/tenyek-amit-a-holokauszt-karpotlással-kapcsolatban-tudni-illik/> (17 January 2017).

Holocaust education and formulated the declaration. Hungary was represented only by the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office István Stumpf who "misled the audience of the Forum", when "he did not mention any of the anti-Jewish laws enacted between 1938 and 1945".<sup>11</sup> As a result of the Stockholm Declaration in 2000, Hungary has since 2001 officially commemorated the Holocaust on 16 April countrywide – the date marks the beginning of the ghettoisation of Jews in 1944. In the same year, but a bit earlier, 25 February was declared to be the Memorial Day for the Victims of the Communist Dictatorships – this date marks the day in 1947 when Secretary-General of the Independent Smallholders' Party Béla Kovács was arrested and deported to the Soviet Union.

- 2002: The House of Terror, a museum on contemporary history, opened its doors for visitors in the centre of Budapest. As is well known from the essays, articles, and contributions of prominent historians worldwide and in Hungary, the Holocaust plays a marginal role in the exhibition while the Communist terror holds a dominant position.<sup>12</sup> Although the House of Terror has been criticised since the moment it was envisaged, its director Mária Schmidt also became a candidate for head of the new Holocaust Museum – the House of Fates – in 2015.
- 2004: The Holocaust Memorial Centre was opened two years later, on a peripheral lot of the country's capital. Unfortunately, it only opened with a temporary exhibition since the permanent one had not been completed on time. Awkward rumours started to circulate about corruption and embezzlement during the implementation of the project, and finally a Government Commissioner had to guarantee that the opening ceremony would take place. Behind the scenes, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary (Mazsihisz) also played a suspicious role in the Advisory Board of the museum. Script, scenario, and concept of the permanent exhibition were also criticised by many Hungarian scholars, the consecutive managements could not operate the museum successfully, and last but not least, the number of visitors have been relatively modest, without any significant increase in the past years. All in all, this cannot be regarded as a success story.<sup>13</sup>
- 2010: Since this year, Hungary has held the *Trianon Remembrance Day* on 4 June – after the days of the victims of Communism and Nazism, this third memorial day commemorating a crucial event of the twentieth century. In contemporary Hungary, this is one of the most important memorial days.<sup>14</sup>

11 Randolph L. Braham, Magyarország és a holokauszt [Hungary and the Holocaust], in: Beszélő 24 (2002) 4, <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/magyarorszag-es-a-holokauszt> (17 January 2017) [All translations from Hungarian are the author's].

12 Tony Judt, From the House of the Dead. On Modern European Memory, in: New York Review of Books, 6 October 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2005/10/06/from-the-house-of-the-dead-on-modern-european-memo/> (17 January 2017), Brigitte Mihok, Das „Haus des Terrors“ in Budapest. Spiegelbild der nationalen Geschichtsdeutung? in: Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung 19 (2010), 363–378; Stefan Troebst, „Was für ein Teppich?“ Postkommunistische Erinnerungskulturen in Ost(mittel)europa. Bestandsaufnahme und Kategorisierungsversuch, in: Volkhard Knigge/Ulrich Mähler (Hg.), Kommunismus im Museum, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2005 (= Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Ettersberg, Volume 6), 31–54; Mark Pittaway, The 'House of Terror' and Hungary's Politics of Memory, in: Austrian Studies Newsletter 15 (2003) 1, 16–17.

13 See more about the Center in Julia Creet, The House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Center: Resentment and Melancholia in Post-89 Hungary, in: European Studies 30 (2013), 29–62.

14 Miroslav Michela/László Vörös et al., Rozpad Uhorska a Trianonská mierová zmluva. K politikám pamäti na Slovensku a v Maďarsku [The Destruction of Hungary and the Trianon Peace Treaty. On Slovakian and Hungarian Memory Politics], Bratislava 2013; Margit Feischmidt, Populárny emlekezetpolitikák és az újnacionalizmus. A Trianon-kultusz társadalmi alapjai [Popular Memory Politics and New Nationalism: The Social Fundamentals of the Trianon Cult], in: Margit Feischmidt (ed.), Nemzet a mindennapokban [The Nation in Everyday Life], Budapest 2014, 51–81. On the Trianon debate, see The "Trianon"-Debate in the Hungarian left-liberal weekly *Élet és Irodalom*, <http://www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.uni-jena.de/index.php?id=414> (17 January 2017).

Until 2010, the Hungarian political elite did not change the main structure of the constitution of 1949. The old-new, provisional constitution of 1990 – a very democratic but also very secular juridical charter of the new Hungarian Republic – did not use the historical or religious symbolism of interwar Hungary. Finally, in 2011, and with a two-third majority in the Parliament, Orbán's time came to legislate a new Basic Law. The process of constitution-making remained hidden from the public from beginning to end. The new Hungarian Constitution was finally adopted on 18 April 2011. One section of the preamble was fiercely criticised by historians and political scientists<sup>15</sup> as well as by the head of Jewish community.<sup>16</sup> It claims that Hungary lost its independence and sovereignty when it was occupied by Nazi Germany in March 1944. This provision implies the Hungarian state's innocence and denies its responsibility for the deportation of Jews in the summer of 1944.

2012: In the summer of 2012, a kind of *Historikerstreit* broke out in Hungary.<sup>17</sup> The main topics of the controversy were the language of and the attitudes toward the historiography of the Holocaust. The Hungarian *Historikerstreit* is closely related to both the revival and exoneration of the Horthy era (1920–1944) in current Hungarian politics and the ambivalent attitudes toward the Holocaust in public memory. The Horthy era was heavily influenced by racist right-wing radicalism, anti-modernism, anti-liberalism, and antisemitism in Hungary. As a political system, it functioned as an autocratic quasi-democracy that not only coquetted with Nazism but subsequently intensively cooperated with the Third Reich in order to revise the Paris treaties. Turning back with restorative nostalgia to the political symbolism of that era meant the revival and reprisal of the above-mentioned mentality and political slogans. This nostalgia also strengthened self-victimisation of the 'nation' and an ambivalent attitude toward the memory of the Hungarian Holocaust.

All of these steps were undertaken by ruling national-conservative governments. The permanent exhibition of Holocaust Documentation Centre was initiated by the social-liberal government in 2004. On the other hand, the social-liberal governments between 2004 and 2010 clearly failed to formulate a well-defined concept on reckoning with the country's troubled past. The position held by MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) and later on by the Fidesz over 25 years was hardly ever criticised or challenged: For example, the House of Terror won the Prize *Museum of the Year* under the aegis of the left-liberal coalition. Only a few exceptions can be mentioned: Between 2002 and 2006, the Hungarian delegation to IHRA was headed by Bálint Magyar, the Minister of Education, who vehemently supported the education of children and young people on the history of the Holocaust, and it was under his term that the new exhibition in the Hungarian pavilion in the Auschwitz Museum was established within six months in 2004.<sup>18</sup> The aggressive nationalism of the con-

15 Gábor Halmai, Hochproblematisch. Ungarns neues Grundgesetz, in: Eurozine, 25 January 2012, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-01-25-halmi-de.html> (17 January 2017).

16 Monika Kovács, Global and Local Holocaust Remembrance, in: Randolph A. Braham/András Kovács (ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Seventy Years Later*, Budapest 2016, 231–250.

17 Éva Kovács, Overcoming History through Trauma. The Hungarian *Historikerstreit*, in: *European Review* 24 (2016) 4, 523–534.

18 See Regina Fritz, Ungarische Holocaust-Ausstellungen im innen- und außenpolitischen Spannungsfeld. Das Holocaust Gedenkzentrum Budapest und der ungarische Pavillon im Staatlichen Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, in: Ekaterina Makhotina/Ekaterina Keding/Włodzimierz Borodziej/Etienne François/Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Krieg im Museum. Präsentationen des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Museen und Gedenkstätten des östlichen Europa* (=Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Volume 131), Göttingen 2015, 203–225.

servative parties went hand-in-hand with the political inertia of the left-liberals, who promoted a well-balanced, critical, self-reflective social memory. With all that combined, a long process of the secession from mainstream (West-)European memory politics was completed by the end of 2010s.

### Annus Miserabilis? – The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014

2014 will probably go down in the Hungarian history of memory politics as *annus miserabilis*.<sup>19</sup> Everything was going well in the beginning. On the one hand, the Hungarian Government created a fund of 1.8 billion Forint (approximately six million Euros) to sponsor civil-society remembrance. 1,073 applications were received for a total of ten times that amount. Let a hundred flowers blossom – the Civil Fund supported 400 applications: Jewish communities, civic associations, private persons, companies, local governments, ecclesiastical institutions, budgetary authorities, educational institutes, and others could realise their programmes in Hungary and abroad.

On the other hand, in 2013, the Fidesz government founded a new institute, a new museum, and decided to erect a new monument, all of which caused public outcry.

The new institute – the Veritas Research Institute – was founded with the explicit goal of “re-evaluating” [sic] the historical research of Hungary’s past 150 years. According to the right-wing director of the Institute Sándor Szakály, the massacre in Kamenets-Podolsk in July 1941, where 23,600 Hungarian Jews were killed in the Ukraine, could not be considered as the first deportation of Jews from Hungary but was merely “a police action against aliens”.<sup>20</sup>

The site of the new museum is an old, abandoned railway station on the edge of Budapest that needs refurbishing. The total costs amounted to approximately 25 million Euros. It is called the House of Fates (Sorsok Háza, the name might be an antithesis to Imre Kertész’s Nobel Prize-winning book *Fateless*). According to the intention of its programme director Mária Schmidt (the director of the House of Terror), this new museum would have been devoted to the children who were murdered in the Holocaust. Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office János Lázár explained it in a slightly embarrassing way: “We chose the ‘children’s Holocaust’ as the theme because we were trying to find a point, which cannot be relativised: no explanation, no answer can be accepted when it comes to the murder of a child.”<sup>21</sup> The museum was planned to open in April 2014, but after two years, its doors remain shut.

19 Similar conclusions were drawn by Ferenc Laczó, Henriett Kovács and Ursula K. Mindler-Steiner; see Ferenc Laczó, Integrating Victims, Externalizing Guilt? Commemorating the Holocaust in Hungary in 2014, <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/hungary/integrating-victims-externalizing-guilt-commemorating-the-holocaust-in-hungary-in-2014/> (17 January 2017); Henriett Kovács/Ursula K. Mindler-Steiner, Hungary and the Distortion of Holocaust History. The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014, in: *Politics in Central Europe* 11 (2015) 2, 49–72.

20 In Hungarian: “idegenrendészeti eljárás”. In the summer of 1941, the Central National Authority for the Inspection of Foreigners instructed that “aliens” be rounded up and handed over to the Eastern Galician German occupation authorities. This action resulted in the deportation of between 13,000 and 18,000 Jews to Galicia and Ukraine, where they were murdered by SS units at Kamenets-Podolsk in August 1941 along with much of the local Jewish population; see George Eisen/Tamás Stark, The 1941 Galician Deportation and the Kamenets-Podolsk Massacre. A Prologue to the Hungarian Holocaust, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27 (2013) 2, 207–241.

21 Gábor Róna, The Orbán Government and the International Jewish Community, in: *Hungarian Spectrum*, 9 November 2014, <https://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/tag/gabor-rona/> (17 January 2017).





House of Fates, Budapest, Photo: Építészfórum, Budapest.<sup>22</sup>

On January 17 2014, the Hungarian government decided to erect a new monument commemorating the German occupation of Hungary. The artist said in his work:

“[T]wo cultures are represented: one, which thinks itself stronger, and which is certainly more aggressive, towers above a more tranquil and softer-lined figure, that of the Archangel Gabriel, who represents Hungary. Gabriel, in cultural and religious tradition, is God’s servant or God’s power personified. [...] On Freedom Square, the Archangel Gabriel sits atop a column, among the clouds. In my composition, he has been laid low. [...] He is depicted as handsome and tranquil. His body is perfect, and there is no fear in his eyes. His face is tranquil, his eyes are closed. The monument explains that his dream will turn into a nightmare. A culture, its wings broken, is being crushed by a greater power: the Third Reich and the symbol that represents it, the Imperial Eagle. The depiction of the eagle is the exact opposite of the Archangel Gabriel’s. The Imperial Eagle is an assemblage of mass produced icons and symbols. It sweeps in flight across the world. Soon it will reach us and engulf Hungary, putting its inhabitants in chains.”<sup>23</sup>

Critics accused the government of attempting to diminish the Horthy regime’s responsibility for the death of nearly one million Hungarians, including two-thirds of its Jewish population, by placing the blame entirely on Nazi Germany. After a heated debate on the ethics and aesthetics of the monument in the newspapers, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary (Mazsihisz) decided in February 2015 to neither participate in the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year, nor to use public funds allotted to various Jewish organisations for this purpose. In a press statement, the new President of Mazsihisz András Heisler said:

“No progress has been made on the part of the government in connection with the Year of the Hungarian Holocaust remembrance. In practice, there

<sup>22</sup> <http://epiteszforum.hu/galeria/sorsok-haza/177951> (17 January 2017).

<sup>23</sup> See the historian Krisztián Ungváry on the German invasion statue controversy in <http://www.politics.hu/20140124/krisztian-ungvary-on-the-german-invasion-statue-controversy/> (17 January 2017).

has been no change to the memorial policies, which have turned in a negative direction over the past years.”<sup>24</sup>

The Federation asked the Prime Minister to stop the inauguration of both the memorial dedicated to the memory of the German invasion and the House of Fates. It also complained that the project’s leader Mária Schmidt was unresponsive to their concerns. The Federation also declared that Sándor Szakály was unsuitable as director of the Veritas Research Institute. The head of the Jewish World Congress, Ronald S. Lauder, wrote a letter stating that his organisation “completely supports the viewpoint of the Hungarian Jewish community with regard to commemorating the Holocaust”.<sup>25</sup> 35 organisations (including 27 Jewish communities) and private persons who won financial support for their commemoration projects via a state tender, rejected the state’s resources and established instead a civil alliance called Memento70, which unfortunately could not find enough donators and sponsors for the realisation of the majority of the programmes until the end of 2014.

All these events took place in February, at the beginning of the Memorial Year: trenches were dug, bellicose noises were heard everywhere. The whole commemoration atmosphere was poisoned by the arrogance of the government. Prime Minister Orbán said the monument was “morally precise and immaculate” and he did not accept the requests of the Mazsihisz, nor did he listen to the critiques of domestic and foreign historians. Regardless of permanent demonstrations against the monument, it was finally unveiled early on a Sunday morning in June.

### On the Battlefield of Memory

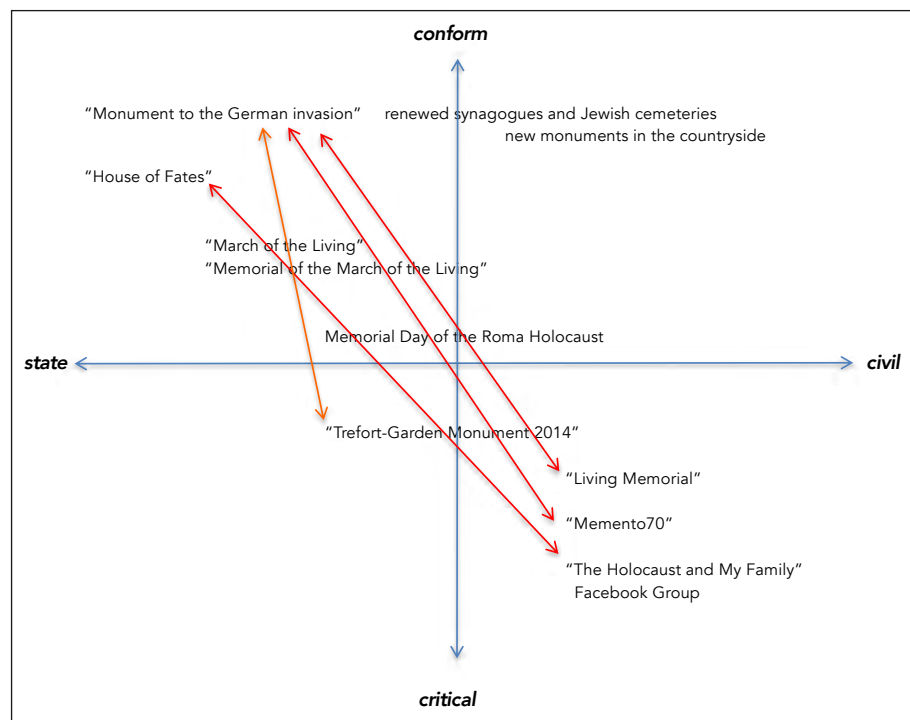
For the final part of this essay, I would like to map the most important commemorations, counter-commemorations, and alternative remembrance events of the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014 in the following coordinate system:

- in the dimension of state initiatives (memorials, commemoration programmes, and museums) versus civic actions (March of the Living, Memorial Day of the Roma Holocaust, virtual performances of commemoration, etc.),
- in the dimension of conforming versus critical or independent representations and performances.

As I noted earlier, the monument to the German invasion – *Monument Commemorating the Victims of the German Nazi Occupation in Hungary* – was erected but never officially inaugurated by the government, probably because of the permanent protests against it. Hundreds of local programmes (restorations of old synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, and the opening of dozens of new monuments and exhibitions countryside and abroad) were realised by the support of the Civil Fund during the Memorial Year, but only a few of them showed any creativity in respect to active remembrance formats or regarding a cooperation with the local levels. A schizophrenic situation emerged: On the one hand, representatives of the government addressed the memory of the Hungarian Holocaust in the media in a politically correct way and also joined several civil commemoration events such as the *March of the*

24 Zoltán Kovács, Hungarian Jewish Groups to Boycott Government Holocaust Memorial Programs, in: The Budapest Beacon, 9 February 2014, <http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/hungarian-jewish-groups-to-boycott-government-holocaust-memorial-programs/4779> (17 January 2017).

25 Sam Sokol, Jewish Organisations Show Support for Boycott of Hungarian Shoah Commemorations, in: Jerusalem Post, 10 February 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-News/Jewish-organizations-show-support-for-boycott-of-Hungarian-Shoah-commemorations-340977> (17 January 2017).



*Living* or the *Memorial Day of the Roma Holocaust*, but on the other hand, the same government insisted on a biased, a-historical narrative of the Holocaust as well as a representation of a problematic and widely contested national past by laws, monuments, and other non-temporary – meaning lasting – forms of remembrance. Those NGOs and local initiatives which did not reject the support of the Civil Fund realised many events and programmes during 2014: Jewish cemeteries were tidied up and gardened, synagogues were renovated, small memorials were erected, and the history of the local Jewish communities were exhibited in a number of small Hungarian towns.

The civil protest movement of *Memento70* took shape in widespread but not self-evidently successful actions, but the civil alliance could not find enough donors and sponsors for the programmes of its members. However, as a result of the turbulent crisis around the House of Fates, the activities of the protest movement ultimately reached one of its remote goals: Mária Schmidt – at least for the time being – was removed from her position in the House of Fates, and the Holocaust Documentation Centre is supposed to move into the new building. Since 2015, the House of Fates is ready to open and yet remains closed, unaugmented, and empty.

There were other small triumphs against state-controlled memory politics: The alternative *Living Memorial* around the official Monument of the Nazi Invasion of Hungary telling a different story and expressing a counter-narrative was never removed by the police, indeed hardly any action was taken against it. A group of citizens erected their own alternative monument consisting of photographs, personal mementos, shoes, votive candles, flowers, and rocks. Anyone can add to the memorial and it changes from month to month. This monument is modest, but it is also dynamic and a powerful example of how to challenge (and deconstruct) an officially imposed grand narrative of the country's history.<sup>26</sup> The *Living Memorial* turned to

26 Aleida Assmann, Zwei leere Stühle, die sich gegenüberstehen, in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 18 December 2014, <http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/zwei-leere-stuehle-die-sich-gegenueberstehen-1.18446566> (17 January 2017).



Living Memorial on Freedom Square, Budapest, Photo: Facebook Group *Eleven Emlékmű* (Living Memorial).

A couple of professors at the ELTE University coming partly from the same demonstration circle also decided to erect a counter-monument behind the gates of the University. The Trefort-Garden Monument 2014 – called *Names in the Mortar Joint* – combined the enthusiasm of the students and the financial support of the state. Some classes of students did research on the interwar history of the university, and the monument's designers were chosen by an open call. They declared:

“A given community’s responsibility for their past cannot be passed on to monuments. [...] There is a need for a concessive monument. The sign designed by us is huge (nearly 250 metres long), and at the same time almost impossibly small (barely one centimetre high). It expresses the unique and dramatic loss associated with this specific period in the university’s history, but it is not placed into the sight of citizens of today’s university day after day. We would like to raise the interest for recollection not with a direct, visible element, but with a sign, or rather, sign-system, which can remain invisible for the uninterested eye. Instead of allocating one specific place, we intended to create a linear process: the total sign runs through the whole garden, each element of which, however, does have a specific, objective, descriptive content.”<sup>27</sup>

The only fly in the ointment was that the organisers, who loudly criticised the memory politics of the Orbán government, reached a secret agreement with it and accepted the grant of the Civil Fund. Thus, during the opening ceremony, the disreputable Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog made a speech, which was more than painful for the audience.

Last but not least, public indignation mobilised not only domestic and international journalists and historians, political activists, and the new garniture of the Hungarian Jewish institutions, but also broke the barriers of silence (again) among the second generation of Holocaust survivors. Huge memory waves swept through social media: The open Facebook group *The Holocaust and My Family* collects per-

<sup>27</sup> <http://emlekhelyi.btk.elte.hu/trefort-garden-monument-2014/> (17 January 2017).





Monument "Names in the Mortar Joints" in Trefort-Garden, Budapest, Photo: Eszter Laik.<sup>28</sup>

sonal accounts, private memories, pictures, documents, and (re)connects people to their family histories.<sup>29</sup> Many of its members declare that they are writing their story for the first time in their life. By now, the group has 6,000 members; every day a new post comes up, which is then followed by long, emotional discussions. Both Jews and non-Jews take part in the discussions. However, except for a few cases, neither the descendants of the Roma genocide nor the children and grandchildren of perpetrators and bystanders publish their stories in separate posts, although the intention of the group owner targeted a thematically larger audience. The mission statement starts with the following words: "All, all Hungarians: Hungarian Jews, Swabians (German-Hungarians), Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians, Roma, Croats, and all other Hungarians with different origins, including those who arrived with Father Árpád in the Carpathian basin, must have a story on their family from the time of greatest danger."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the testimonies of the Jewish survivors were obviously so touching to the audience that non-Jewish participants of the discussion could not publish their stories. Some of the stories were performed in a theatre in Budapest in the summer of 2014 and a year later a book was published based on the edited Facebook posts.<sup>31</sup>

28 Vgl.: <http://www.irodalmijelen.hu/2014-nov-17-1611/teglak-koze-vesett-nevek> (19 April 2017).

29 See Regina Fritz, Persönliche Holocaust-Erinnerungen auf Facebook. (Private) Gegenerzählungen in Ungarn im Kontext des Holocaust-Gedenkjahres 2014, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 43 (2016) 4, 233-249; „Holocaust und meine Familie“. Facebook als Forum für private (Gegen-)Erinnerungen im Kontext des ungarischen Holocaust-Gedenkjahres 2014. Vortrag am Österreichischen Zeitgeschichtetag 2016, 9-11 June 2016, Graz, [https://www.academia.edu/27577156/Private\\_Holocaust-Erinnerungen\\_auf\\_Facebook\\_Gegenerz%C3%A4hlungen\\_in\\_Ungarn\\_im\\_Kontext\\_des\\_Holocaust-Gedenkjahres\\_2014](https://www.academia.edu/27577156/Private_Holocaust-Erinnerungen_auf_Facebook_Gegenerz%C3%A4hlungen_in_Ungarn_im_Kontext_des_Holocaust-Gedenkjahres_2014) (17 January 2017).

30 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokauszt.csaladom/> (17 January 2017).

31 Katalin Fenyves/Marianne Szalay, *A holokauszt és a családom* [The Holocaust and My Family], Budapest 2015.

### Closing Remarks

Official Hungarian memory politics effect a secession from mainstream European trends, especially in the failure of representing the responsibility of the state and its citizens during the Second World War. It is as though we were living in Austria in the early 1980s but are playing the role of the 'last' and not the 'first victims' of Nazism. Nonetheless, this discourse does not represent one single view of Hungarian history, but a range of diverging approaches, among which – even though unintended – new civil forms of remembrance were born in 2014. After decades of silence, the second generation of survivors could speak and tell the stories of their parents and grandparents publicly, while behind the scenes, further negotiations are being conducted on the future of the House of Fate that have not ended until the completion of this essay.



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Quotation: Éva Kovacs, The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014. Some Remarks,  
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 4 (2017) 1, 109-121.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1\\_Articles\\_Kovacs/Articles\\_Kovacs01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2017-1/2017-1_Articles_Kovacs/Articles_Kovacs01.pdf)

Article

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Timm Ebner

# Al Capone als ‚Aisik Schacher‘?

## Gangs of New York in der NS-Propaganda

### Abstract

When the United States entered the Second World War, Nazi media focussed on the new opponent. While a lot of the patterns which writers used on the US were long established – particularly antisemitic concepts that had since 1939 been used in anti-British propaganda – organised crime for several reasons seem to be a promising topic. Somewhat exceptional is Heinz Halter's book *Der Polyp von New York. Die Geschichte Tammany Halls. Korruption und Verbrechen im demokratischen Amerika* (1942). As source for his book, Halter mainly used Herbert Asbury's *Gangs of New York. An Informal History of the Underworld* (1928), which also served as original book for Martin Scorsese's movie of 2002 with the same title.

Spätestens mit dem Kriegseintritt der USA 1941 schoss sich auch die nationalsozialistische Medienmaschinerie auf den neuen Gegner ein. Während die Publizisten viele ‚altbewährte‘ Topoi auf die Vereinigten Staaten übertrugen – darunter vor allem den Antisemitismus, den die Nationalsozialisten seit 1939 zunächst auf Großbritannien projiziert hatten –, bot sich aus verschiedenen Gründen das organisierte Verbrechen als US-spezifisches Thema an.

Besonders markant ist dabei Heinz Halter (1904–?) Sachbuch *Der Polyp von New York. Die Geschichte Tammany Halls. Korruption und Verbrechen im demokratischen Amerika* (1942). Wichtigste Quelle des Buchs war Herbert Asburys (1889–1963) *The Gangs of New York. An Informal History of the Underworld* aus dem Jahr 1928 – ein journalistisch/historisches Sachbuch über die Geschichte des organisierten Verbrechens bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg, das auch als Vorlage für Martin Scorsese's Film *Gangs of New York* (2002) diente. Halter beschäftigt sich allerdings in erster Linie damit, das organisierte Verbrechen zur ‚jüdischen Verschwörung‘<sup>1</sup> zu stilisieren.

Im Folgenden werde ich den Fokus vor allem auf die Darstellung jener Kriminellen legen, die sich im Windschatten der Prohibition in den USA als gesellschaftliche Größe etabliert hatten. Die NS-Propaganda erklärte diese Gangster, für die prototypisch Al Capone stand, pauschal zu ‚Juden‘ und berief sich dabei auf die in Anlehnung an die italienische Cosa Nostra als ‚Kosher Nostra‘ bezeichnete Gruppe organisierter Verbrecher New Yorks, die aus jüdischen Einwandererfamilien stammten.<sup>2</sup>

1 „Geschoben, bestochen, betrogen und gestohlen hatte das Volk Israel schon immer, so lange es seinen Feldzug zur Eroberung der Neuen Welt führte“; vgl. Heinz Halter, *Der Polyp von New York. Die Geschichte Tammany Halls. Korruption und Verbrechen im demokratischen Amerika*, nach Tatsachen berichtet, Dresden 1942, 145.

2 Der Begriff ‚Kosher Nostra‘ wurde nicht in der NS-Propaganda verwendet, sondern stammt offenbar aus der zeitgenössischen US-amerikanischen Tagespresse.

## Johann v. Leers: Judentum und Gaunertum (1940)

Der Historiker Prof. Johann von Leers (1902–1965) war einer der radikalsten antisemitischen Propagandisten im ‚Dritten Reich‘ und darüber hinaus. Der Vielschreiber veröffentlichte Unmengen von Texten, die meist mit populärwissenschaftlichem oder didaktischem Anspruch auftraten. Nach dem Krieg konvertierte er in US-amerikanischer Gefangenschaft zum Islam. Es gelang ihm, zu fliehen und sich nach Argentinien abzusetzen. 1955, nach dem Sturz des Peronismus, folgte er einer Einladung Mohammed Amin al-Husseinis (1893–1974) nach Ägypten. Dieser war in den 1920er-Jahren Großmufti von Jerusalem gewesen und hatte sich als zentrale Figur des arabischen Antisemitismus etabliert. Seit 1937 hatte er für die Nationalsozialisten gearbeitet, im Krieg wirkte er als SS-Gruppenführer bei der Ausbildung muslimischer Wehrmachts- und SS-Einheiten mit. In den 1950er-Jahren organisierte er die antisemitische Propaganda unter Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) und holte dafür von Leers nach Ägypten.<sup>3</sup>

Von Leers konstruierte in seinen während des Nationalsozialismus veröffentlichten Sachbüchern insbesondere, einen „Zusammenhang zwischen Gauner und Judentum“<sup>4</sup> – das zeigt sich schon an Titeln wie *Die Kriminalität des Judentums* (1936) oder *Die Verbrechernatur der Juden* (1944). Der dünne Band *Judentum und Gaunertum. Eine Wesens- und Lebensgemeinschaft* von 1940 versuchte, anhand von Bibelziten, mittelalterlichen Überlieferungen und (vermeintlichen) hebräischen Einflüssen auf die Soziolekte von Kleinkriminellenmilieus zu belegen, dass „das Judentum“ durch strikte Endogamie als „Gaunerzucht“<sup>5</sup> gewirkt habe – der nationalsozialistischen Utopie der Eugenik wird hier einmal mehr die entsprechende Dystopie gegenübergestellt. Dabei bezieht sich von Leers auf die autoritativen Größen der nationalsozialistischen Lebenswissenschaft, insbesondere den ‚Rassengünther‘ (Hans F. K. Günther) und den ‚Erbbiologen‘ Robert Ritter. Auf das 20. Jahrhundert geht von Leers lediglich auf den letzten zwölf Seiten ein. Diese Vorgehensweise ist durchaus typisch: Um den ‚Rassenunterschied‘ zwischen ‚Juden‘ und ‚Deutschen‘ zu konstruieren, verwendeten NS-Publizisten eine historische Rückblende in die Zeit vor der Assimilation oder eine geokulturelle Fokussierung auf die sogenannten Ostjuden. Die Konstruktion des ‚Rassenunterschieds‘ widersprach dabei fortwährend der Paranoia vor der Unsichtbarkeit eines ‚assimilierten‘ Feindes – ‚sie sind ganz anders, aber man kann sie kaum unterscheiden‘. Es ist dieser grundsätzliche Widerspruch zwischen Unterschied und Ununterscheidbarkeit, der rassistische Konzeptionen so paranoisch und explosiv macht.

Ungewöhnlich ist von Leers Haltung zum „italienische[n] Jude[n] Cesare Lombroso“.<sup>6</sup> Lombroso, der durchaus als Vorgänger der ‚Rassenkunde‘ verstanden werden muss, hatte Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts versucht, einen Zusammenhang zwischen anthropometrischen Kennzeichen (‚Henkelohren‘ beispielsweise) und einer ‚erblichen‘ Anlage zur Kriminalität zu belegen. Von Leers unterstellt ihm, er habe damit Verbrecher entschuldigen wollen, obwohl Lombroso bei „geborene[n] Verbrecher[n]“ für das „Höchstmaß“ des Strafvollzugs plädierte.<sup>7</sup> Was von Leers über den „Jude[n] Siegmund [sic] Freud“ schreibt, ist hingegen typisch für die Polemik der

3 Vgl. Marco Sennholz, Johann von Leers. Ein Propagandist des Nationalsozialismus, Berlin 2013, 260–320.

4 [Johann] v[on] Leers, Die Kriminalität des Judentums, in: Das Judentum in der Rechtswissenschaft, Bd. 3: Judentum und Verbrechen, Berlin 1936, 5–60, hier 10.

5 Johann von Leers, Judentum und Gaunertum, Berlin 1940, 22.

6 Ebd., 52.

7 Cesare Lombroso, Neue Verbrecherstudien, Halle 1907, 207; vgl. ebd., 61 f („Henkelohren“), 122.

Nationalsozialisten gegen die Psychoanalyse. Freud habe sie erfunden, „um die Strafrechtslehre außer Betrieb zu setzen [...]. Eines Tages ermordet ein Mensch seinen Vater – Ödipuskomplex ist ausgebrochen! [...] Mit der Psychoanalyse von Freud konnte jeder jüdische Psychiater jeden Gauner ‚freikriegen‘, wenn die Richter darauf hereinfließen.“<sup>8</sup>

Am Ende einer knappen *Länderrundschau* kommt von Leers auf die Lage in den USA zu sprechen:

„In USA. dagegen ist die Lage beinahe ähnlich wie in Polen: Hier hat sich *das moderne Verbrechen* der Riesenstädte, vor allem von New York und Chikago [sic] in einer Weise *unter Leitung des Judentums* gebildet wie sonst nirgends in der Welt. Die großen ‚Gangsterchefs‘ wie Jack Diamant (Jekhof Diamant), Al Capone (Aisik Schacher), 90 % der Mädchenhändler, die Direktoren, Anwälte und Kundschafter der ‚Rackets‘, der Erpressergesellschaften sind Juden.“<sup>9</sup>

Das Zitat zeugt selbst gemessen an den Standards der NS-Propaganda von einem erstaunlichen Maß an Tatsachenverdrehung und bloßer Fiktion. Mit „Jack Diamant“ spielt von Leers offenbar auf Jack ‚Legs‘ Diamond (1897–1931) an, was wohl allein auf den Klang des Nachnamens zurückzuführen ist. Diamond war sicher nicht die zentrale Figur der organisierten Kriminalität in New York: Als er 1931 erschossen wurde, hatte er in erster Linie den Ruf erworben gehabt, ‚Tontauben der Unterwelt‘ zu sein, weil auf ihn zahlreiche Attentate verübt worden waren. Alphonse ‚Scarface‘ Capone (1899–1947) hingegen war tatsächlich einer der einflussreichsten Vertreter der organisierten Kriminalität in Chicago. Keiner von beiden hatte einen jüdischen Hintergrund – Diamond entstammte einer irischen Familie, Capone kam aus einer italienischen, war in New York aufgewachsen und erst 1919 nach Chicago umgesiedelt. Die ‚jüdischen‘ Namen in den Klammern hat von Leers frei erfunden.<sup>10</sup>

### Heinz Halter: *Der Polyp von New York* (1942)

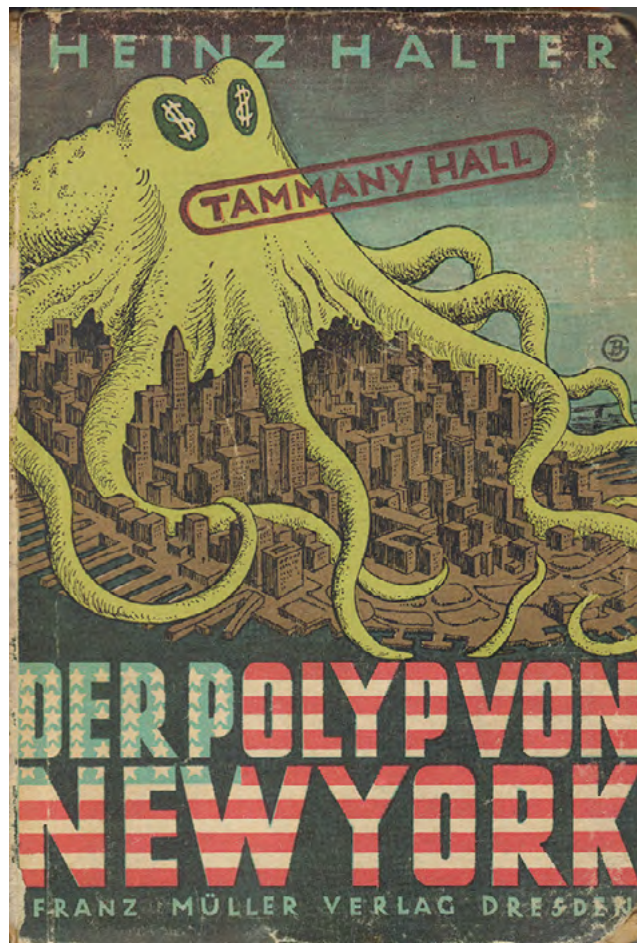
Zumindest etwas mehr Sachkenntnis über die organisierte Kriminalität in den USA findet sich im Sachbuch *Der Polyp von New York. Die Geschichte Tammany Halls. Korruption und Verbrechen im demokratischen Amerika, nach Tatsachen berichtet* aus dem Jahr 1942. Bis 1944 erreichte es sechs Auflagen mit insgesamt über 50.000 Exemplaren und wurde auch ins Serbische übersetzt. Der Autor Heinz Eberhard Johannes Halter (1904–?) arbeitete beim Carl Duncker Verlag in Berlin. Im Fragebogen für die Reichsschrifttumskammer, die NS-Literaturbehörde, gab er an, er habe der „Deutsche[n] Staatspartei vorübergehend 1930“ angehört – diese war im selben Jahr durch das Zusammengehen der liberalen Deutschen Demokratischen Partei mit dem Jungdeutschen Orden entstanden.<sup>11</sup> Letzterer war eine der wichtigsten Organisationen der ‚Konservativen Revolution‘ gewesen, jenem rechtsintellektuellen Netzwerk, welches vor allem aus den Propagandisten des Ersten Weltkriegs hervorgegangen war.

<sup>8</sup> Ebd., 53.

<sup>9</sup> Ebd., 63 f.

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime*, Belmont 2007, 61 f., 64 f., 89.

<sup>11</sup> Halter veröffentlichte auch unter den Pseudonymen Christian Klaadt und Friedrich Elarth; vgl. Bundesarchiv (BA) BArch R 9361-V/20986, Fragebogen Reichsschrifttumskammer vom 25. Juli 1942; Schreiben Schwarzhäupter-Verlag an Reichsschrifttumskammer Berlin Charlottenburg vom 5. Februar 1942.



Buchcover Polyp von New York, Dresden 1942.

Im Zentrum von Halters Buch steht die nach ihrem Tagungsort Tammany Hall bezeichnete Society of Saint Tammany – eine Lobbyorganisation der US-amerikanischen Demokratischen Partei –, die „wie ein riesiges Ungeheuer über der größten Stadt der Welt hockt, ihr den Atem abschnürt und das Blut absaugt“.<sup>12</sup> Dass Halter sich auf dieses Thema konzentriert, zeugt von einer gewissen Treffsicherheit – aus der Perspektive der Nationalsozialisten, die um jeden Preis die Demokratie als Herrschaftsmodell delegitimieren wollten: Die Geschichte Tammany Halls bot diesem Ziel einige Gelegenheiten. Im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert hatte sich die Tammany Society zur Parteimaschine entwickelt, die durch allerlei illegale Manöver Wählerstimmen produzierte, Posten verteilte und informelle Netzwerke bildete. Wichtiges Element dieser Umgehung und Vereinnahmung der Öffentlichkeit war Gewalt, einerseits ausgeübt durch die Gangs, andererseits aber auch durch die durchwegs korrupte Polizei, die den politischen Interessen durch Gewalt Nachdruck verlieh, indem sie als Vertreter des ‚Nachtwächterstaats‘ gegen Aufstände der unteren Schichten und Streiks vorging.<sup>13</sup> Umgekehrt instrumentalisierten die organisierte Kriminalität Arbeitsniederlegungen und Rebellionen mitunter als Druckmittel, um politische Gegner auszuschalten oder Schutzgeld zu erpressen. Die Gewerkschaften waren derart stark mit der organisierten Kriminalität verwoben, dass beim Begriff *Union* im US-Englischen bis heute die Konnotation von Verbrechersyndikat mitschwingt.

<sup>12</sup> Halter, Polyp, 215.

<sup>13</sup> Vgl. Abadinsky, Crime, 56-59.

Eine maßgebliche Voraussetzung für das organisierte Verbrechen und seinen festen Platz in der US-amerikanischen Ökonomie bildete der identitätspolitische Klientelismus. Tammany Hall kaufte Wählerstimmen nicht zuletzt von den gerade angekommenen Immigranten, die als Ethnien angesprochen und als solche in die neue Welt integriert wurden. Die für die Neuankömmlinge undurchsichtige und unsichere Situation einer korrupten Welt, in der die Öffentlichkeit mehr als Kulisse erschien, die illegalen Aktivitäten als Vorwand diente, in der politische Programme und Forderungen scheinbar nur dem Verbrechen als Fassade dienten, machte das Kriterium der Ethnie – also einer subkulturellen Gemeinschaftserfahrung – zum letzten Garanten von Verbindlichkeit und Echtheit; diese Authentizität erwies sich freilich meist als trügerisch. Viele Immigranten hatten ihre eigene Subkultur im Gepäck, und es waren gerade jene, die starke ethnische Bindungen mitbrachten, die dann in den USA in der organisierten Kriminalität landeten. Häufig hatten sich die ethnischen Bindungen in den Heimatländern in Folge von kultureller Ausgrenzung herausgebildet – das gilt für die Iren und für die Italiener, die vor allem aus dem *Mezzogiorno*, der agrarisch geprägten Region südlich von Rom, emigrierten; das gilt insbesondere für die Juden, die eine Subkultur mitbrachten, die von Jahrhunderten antisemitischer Verfolgung mitgeprägt war.<sup>14</sup> Halter verkehrte diese Ethnisierung durch Verfolgung und Migration in eine Geschichte ‚rassischer Unterwanderung‘.

### Prohibition und organisierte Kriminalität

Im letzten Kapitel handelt Halter die Zeit zwischen 1920 und 1940 ab – nur darin geht er über den von Asbury untersuchten Zeitraum hinaus. Erst hier geht es um das moderne organisierte Verbrechen, das im Zuge der Prohibition (1919–1933) aufstieg und ‚Gangster‘ vom Schlage Capones hervorbrachte. Halter will jedoch vor allem das Tammany-Hall-Thema zu Ende führen und konzentriert sich deshalb auf eine Person:

„Jimmy Hines, allmächtiger ‚Boss‘ und Leiter von Tammany Hall, [...] [mit] offenen und geheimen Verbindungen zu den ‚Rackets‘, den Gangster- und Verbrechertrusts der New Yorker Unterwelt. Jimmy Hines – der mächtigste Mann der größten Stadt der Welt. [...] Der jeden, aber auch wirklich jeden einzigen Posten in der Verwaltung der Riesenstadt kontrolliert.“<sup>15</sup>

Dass Halter die Rahmenhandlung auf James ‚Jimmy‘ Hines (1876–1957) ausrichtet, passt zur Erzählweise der vorangehenden Kapitel, in denen Halter ebenfalls jeweils auf „de[n] geheimnisvolle[n] Mann im Dunkel“<sup>16</sup> fokussiert hatte, um seine Geschichte als Enthüllung von Rätseln zu entfalten:

„Und dies Rätsel war ganz einfach: Wer steht hinter all diesen Banden? [...] Wer ist der geheimnisvolle Mann im Hintergrund, den man nicht kennt, den man aber mit mathematischer Sicherheit als vorhanden annehmen muß, so wie die Astronomen aus mancherlei Anzeichen die Existenz eines Sternes errechnen, den zu erblicken selbst dem schärfsten Fernrohr noch verwehrt ist?“<sup>17</sup>

Diese paranoische Obsession mit einer angeblich fast naturgesetzlichen Determinierung der Geschichte durch allmächtige Drahtzieher ist das klassische Thema der nationalsozialistischen Propaganda.

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. Abadinsky, *Crime*, 56–60, 121 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Halter, *Polyp*, 199.

<sup>16</sup> Ebd., 207.

<sup>17</sup> Ebd., 204.



Allerdings schildert Halter in seinem Schlusskapitel Hines' Verurteilung 1938, die er als Verurteilung der Tammany Society darstellt, im Schlusssatz: „Auf der Anklagebank [...] dieses Gerichts saß Tammany Hall, der Polyp von New York.“<sup>18</sup> Ein „rundes“ Ende seiner Erzählung schien ihm hier offenbar wichtiger als die ideologische Folgerichtigkeit, denn der Leser muss sich hier fragen, ob es den demokratischen USA hier nicht doch gelungen ist, den ‚Polyp‘ zu Fall zu bringen. Diesen Eindruck schwächt Halter ab, indem er Verbindungen zwischen Hines und Präsident Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) herstellt. Außerdem distanziert er sich von Staatsanwalt Thomas E. Dewey (1902–1971), der den Prozess nur „aus eigensüchtigen Motiven“ geführt habe: „Es wäre falsch, in Staatsanwalt Dewey einen strahlenden Siegfried zu sehen, nur einen selbstlosen Kämpfer um Recht und Ordnung.“<sup>19</sup> Bei aller Distanzierung von seinem ‚Siegfried‘ überwiegt jedoch die Häme gegen Hines:

„Da hat einer den Tiger Hines, der unantastbar und unverwundbar schien, zu Tode gehetzt. Hat dem Biedermann die Maske der Wohlanständigkeit, des geachteten, verdienten Bürgers, von der grinsenden Fratze gerissen.“<sup>20</sup>

Als einzige Identifikationsfiguren bietet das Buch mehrere – bezeichnenderweise nur in randständigen Referenzen erwähnte und namentlich nicht genannte – deutsche Einwanderer sowie an einer Stelle die Konföderierten: „Der Pflanzler des Südens – von überschäumendem, zugleich ritterlich noblem Temperament – hatte vor dem raffenden Krämergeist der ‚Yankees‘ New Yorks oder Philadelphias wenig Respekt.“<sup>21</sup> Dass den Helden eine weitaus unbedeutendere Rolle zukommt als den Drahtziehern, ist ebenso paradox wie typisch für die NS-Propaganda – man kann in diesem Zusammenhang von einer Gegenidentifikation sprechen.

### ‚Der Jude Luciano‘

Im Umfeld von Hines identifiziert Halter nun ein „Konsortium jüdischer Gauner“.<sup>22</sup> Dass Halter sich letztlich doch nicht so gut auskannte mit dem Themenfeld zeigt sich vor allem daran, dass er Arnold ‚the Brain‘ Rothstein (1882–1928) nicht erwähnt. Rothstein, in der HBO-Serie *Boardwalk Empire* (2010–2014) über den Gangster Enouch ‚Nucky‘ Johnson (1883–1968) – in der Serie heißt Johnson ‚Thompson‘ – recht überzeugend dargestellt von Michael Stuhlbarg, war tatsächlich einer der wichtigsten Player der New Yorker Unterwelt. Er entstammte einer jüdischen Familie und gilt bis heute als wichtigster Vertreter der ‚Kosher Nostra‘. Rothstein hätte sich besser als jede andere historische Figur für die Zwecke der NS-Propaganda angeboten.

Rothstein war freilich intelligent genug, die Authentizitätsversprechen der ethnischen ‚Blutsbande‘ nicht für bare Münze zu nehmen – im Unterschied zu manch anderen ‚Bossen‘ wie etwa Giuseppe ‚Joe the Boss‘ Masseria (1886–1931) oder dessen Konkurrent und Nachfolger Salvatore Maranzano (1886–1931), welche die Zusammenarbeit mit nichtitalienischen Gruppen vermieden. Rothstein entstammte der Oberschicht, war vertraut mit deren Etikette und fungierte als Verbindungsglied zwischen High Society, Politik und Mobstern. Gerade diese Vermittlungsposition

<sup>18</sup> Ebd., 215.

<sup>19</sup> Ebd., 202 f.; zu Roosevelt vgl. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Ebd., 214.

<sup>21</sup> Ebd., 87.

<sup>22</sup> Ebd., 209. Das Zitat der Zwischenüberschrift: ebd., 207. Wenn ich oben davon schrieb, dass Halters Buch von ‚mehr Sachkenntnis‘ zeuge, dann galt das freilich nur im Vergleich zu von Leers' Ausführungen.

machte ihn in den 1920er-Jahren zum Paten der organisierten Kriminalität in New York. 1928 wurde Rothstein tödlich verwundet. In der Forschung wird vermutet, dass diese Tat auf Spielschulden zurückging – Rothstein, der leidenschaftlicher Spieler war, hatte sich geweigert, eine Schuld zu begleichen, weil er glaubte, das Kartenspiel sei manipuliert gewesen.<sup>23</sup>

Rothstein unterwies auch Salvatore Luciano, besser bekannt als Charles ‚Lucky‘ Luciano (1897–1962), der nach den Morden an Masseria und Maranzano 1931 der wichtigste Mafiosi in New York war. Dass Halter behauptet, der Sizilianer Luciano sei „trotz des italienischen Namens jüdischer Abkunft“,<sup>24</sup> ist gezielte Falschinformation. Halter nutzt Luciano, um das nationalsozialistische Dauerthema der ‚Degeneration‘ noch in seinem Sachbuch unterzubringen. Das genuine Horrorszenario war für die Nationalsozialisten die kulturelle Entfremdung, welche die ‚deutsche Gemeinschaft‘ (die es in diesem Sinne freilich nie gegeben hat) ‚zersetzte‘. Die wirkmächtigste Chiffre dieser Entfremdungstheorie war die Vorstellung der Degeneration durch ‚Rassenvermischung‘:

„Die Horden der Gangster, Verbrecher, Mörder, Diebe und Erpresser, die Asozialen und Parasiten, die Mischlinge aller Farben und Rassen, die Juden aus den Ghettos der Welt wie aus den Slums amerikanischer Großstädte, alles, was man unter dem Sammelbegriff ‚Abschaum der Menschheit‘ zusammenfassen kann.“<sup>25</sup>

Dementsprechend ist der Hauptvorwurf an „Lucky Luciano, de[n] Boß des New Yorker Bordell-Rackets“, er degeneriere die ‚weiße Rasse‘, indem er ‚jüdischen‘ Freiern ‚weiße‘ Prostituierte zuliefere:

„Grauensvoller noch die Erkenntnis, daß diese dem Laster verfallenen Mädchen fast ausnahmslos rein weißblütig [sic] sind, amerikanische Landmädchen zumeist, die von dem Juden Luciano und seinen Helfern den jüdischen Kunden dieser Häuser zugeführt wurden!“<sup>26</sup>

Diese bizarre Konstruktion erinnert an den schwülstigen Roman *Sünde wider das Blut* (1918) des späteren Gauleiters von Thüringen Artur Dinter (1876–1948) einer der bekanntesten und verbreitetsten antisemitischen Romane im Nationalsozialismus. Tatsächlich wurde Luciano 1936 unter Deweys Anklage wegen seiner (auf der Basis einer sehr prekären Beweislage etablierten) Beteiligung an einem Prostitutionsnetzwerk verurteilt. Die Behauptung jedoch, die Kunden seien vornehmlich ‚jüdisch‘ gewesen, ist einmal mehr freie Fiktion Halters. Luciano wurde zu 30 Jahren Haft verurteilt, jedoch 1946 – als Gegenleistung für seinen indirekten Kriegseinsatz – nach Italien abgeschoben. Er hatte Kontakte hergestellt für die kriegsbedingte Zusammenarbeit zwischen organisiertem Verbrechen und dem Marinenachrichtendienst, der die zahlreichen Verluste bei Angriffen deutscher U-Boote für eine Folge von Spionage hielt. 1943 unterstützte die Mafia die Landung der US-Armee auf Sizilien, um das Ende der Faschisten zu beschleunigen – mitunter wird in der Forschung vermutet, Luciano habe dabei eine vermittelnde Rolle übernommen.<sup>27</sup>

Halter geht noch auf Arthur Flegenheimer (1902–1935) ein, welchen er allerdings selbst nur als „Gangster mittlerer Bedeutung“ einstuft. Der „Bierschmuggler des jüdischen Namens Flegenheimer – sein Kriegsname ‚Dutch-Schultz‘ konnte nicht über seine rassische Herkunft täuschen“ –, sei Deweys „erstes Opfer“ gewesen, ob-

23 Vgl. Abadinsky, *Crime*, 60 f., 72.

24 Halter, *Polyp*, 205.

25 Ebd., 200.

26 Ebd., 205, 207.

27 Vgl. Abadinsky, *Crime*, 73 f.

wohl er „unter den Kugeln der Maschinenpistolen einer Konkurrenzbande“<sup>28</sup> fiel. Schultz stammte aus einer deutsch-jüdischen Familie und war in den USA geboren worden.

Dewey's Strafverfolgung hatte tatsächlich einen – wenn auch indirekten – Einfluss auf Schultz' Ermordung. Seit 1934 hatte die US-Steuerbehörde gegen Schultz prozessiert – man muss wissen, dass Capone 1931 wegen Steuerhinterziehung zu elf Jahren Haft verurteilt worden war, was seine Ära als ‚Boss‘ von Chicago beendet hatte. Der erste Prozess wurde aufgrund von Schultz' Einflussnahme auf die Jury eingestellt. Das zweite Verfahren fand in der Kleinstadt Malone im Bundesstaat New York statt. Schultz besuchte im dortigen Krankenhaus die Kinderabteilung mit viel Blumen und Süßigkeiten im Gepäck und hielt einen Ball ab. Es gelang ihm, die Stadt für sich einzunehmen, und die Jury sprach ihn frei. Nun nahm sich Dewey des Falls Schultz an, womit dieser der Mafia um Luciano zum Problem wurde. Luciano war davon ausgegangen, dass Schultz in Malone verurteilt werden würde, und hatte sich darauf eingestellt, sich seine Marktanteile einzuverleiben. Schultz war kein nüchterner Stratege wie Rothstein oder Luciano, er war schon immer äußerst gewalttätig gewesen und wurde in dieser schwierigen Situation immer unberechenbarer: Er ermordete zwei seiner eigenen Leute und drohte damit, Dewey zu töten – ein Plan, der zuvor auf einem Führungstreffen der organisierten Kriminalität New Yorks aus Angst vor der Repression, die ein solcher Akt ausgelöst hätte, abgelehnt worden war. 1935 stürmten zwei Bewaffnete das Gasthaus in Newark (New Jersey), in dem Schultz sich aufhielt, erschossen seine beiden Bodyguards, stellten ihn auf der Toilette und verwundeten ihn tödlich.<sup>29</sup>

## Schluss

Wenn die NS-Propaganda insgesamt in erster Linie die Strategie der Opfer-Täter-Verkehrung einsetzte,<sup>30</sup> so lässt sich das in gewisser Weise auch in Bezug auf die organisierte Kriminalität in den USA feststellen. Es zeigt sich sogar eine gewisse Vergleichbarkeit zwischen organisierter Kriminalität und Nationalsozialismus darin, wie beide die Selbstdarstellung in der Öffentlichkeit benutzten, um ihre verschwörerischen Absichten umzusetzen. Der Politikwissenschaftler Ernst Fraenkel hat 1941 im US-Exil aufgezeigt, dass das ‚Dritte Reich‘ eigentlich als „Doppelstaat“ zu verstehen sei, zerfallend in einen „Normenstaat“, der den Anschein von Rechtmäßigkeit in der Öffentlichkeit aufrecht erhielt, und einen „Maßnahmestaat“, der im Schatten dieser Öffentlichkeit Politik machte.<sup>31</sup> Auch das organisierte Verbrechen bildet einen Staat im Staate, errichtet sein Netzwerk von Unternehmenszweigen in strenger bürokratischer Hierarchisierung<sup>32</sup> und sichert es durch paramilitärische Gewalt ab. Zugleich war den Bossen sehr bewusst, dass sie öffentliche Personen sind und dass sie Öffentlichkeitspolitik betreiben müssen – das erwähnte Beispiel von Schultz' PR-Kampagne in Malone verdeutlicht das. Es ähnelt außerdem der Form, in der die Nationalsozialisten ihre Politik als ‚direkte‘ Repräsentation, als ‚Volksverkörperung‘

28 Alle Zitate: Halter, Polyp, 204.

29 Vgl. Abadinsky, Crime, 61 ff. Schultz' Niedergang wird (sehr frei) im Film Hoodlum (USA 1997, Regie: Bill Duke) verarbeitet.

30 Vgl. dazu Timm Ebner, Nationalsozialistische Kolonialliteratur. Koloniale und antisemitische Verräterfiguren ‚hinter den Kulissen des Welttheaters‘, Paderborn 2016.

31 Ernst Fraenkel, Der Doppelstaat. Recht und Justiz im ‚Dritten Reich‘, Frankfurt am Main 1984, 70; Erstausgabe: Ernst Fraenkel, The Dual State. A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship, New York 1941.

32 Vgl. Abadinsky, Crime, 60.

inszenierten: Statt politische Forderungen strukturell umzusetzen, verlegten sie sich auf politische Gesten. Auch die Rolle der Gewalt scheint dem organisierten Verbrechen vergleichbar, insofern ihr Einsatz nicht an öffentlich transparente Regeln gebunden war, sondern nach geheim festgelegten Kriterien erfolgte – etwa beim sogenannten Röhm-Putsch. Die Führungsriege der NSDAP sicherte hier das Gewaltmonopol der Partei in einer Weise, die an die Ermordung Schultz' erinnert, welche das Gewaltmonopol der organisierten Kriminalität erhalten sollte.<sup>33</sup>

Allerdings wäre es zu einfach, die Nationalsozialisten als skrupellose Verbrecher abzutun. Zwar war Korruption durchaus gang und gäbe, aber während selbst bei korrupten Geschäften noch der Primat der Ökonomie maßgeblich ist – der auch für streng auf Profit bedachte Unternehmer wie Rothstein oder Luciano das alles entscheidende Kriterium darstellte –, war die Ökonomie für die führenden Nationalsozialisten nur Mittel zum Zweck. Und auch die Korruption im ‚Dritten Reich‘ hatte zwar große Spielräume, jedoch nur dort, wo sie sich als ‚Kampf gegen das Judentum‘ ausgab und sich damit der nationalsozialistischen Utopie unterordnete.

<sup>33</sup> Der Vergleich hinkt etwas, insofern als es bei den Röhm-Morden nicht zuletzt um die Ausschaltung der Konservativen ging; vgl. Peter Longerich, *Geschichte der SA*, München 2003, 211-215.

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Article

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# Doch noch nicht Geschichte

## Die langfristigen Folgen der NS-Verfolgung<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Despite the demise of contemporary witnesses, the 'Third Reich' remains very vivid into the present day. Many of those who had been on the side of the National Socialists wanted to draw a line under this past, yet the enduring legacy of National Socialist persecutions remains tangible through the generations. Now, however, we stand on the brink of an incisive historical turn. I shall first cite some of the reasons why Nazi persecution remained significant for so long after the collapse of the 'Third Reich'. I shall then describe four phases which I believe distinguish the testimonies of the survivors – as also of the perpetrators. I shall also examine the so-called second generation of families of survivors as well as of perpetrators. Finally, I shall briefly discuss to what extent the 'farewell to the contemporary witnesses' nevertheless entails potential for thinking about new representations of the Nazi past and about historical scholarship in general.

Trotz des Ablebens der „Zeitgenossen“ – wie Hans Rothfels diejenigen nannte, die eine Zeitepoche „bewusst“ miterlebten – bleibt das ‚Dritte Reich‘ bis heute sehr lebendig.<sup>2</sup> Zwar wollten viele, die auf der Seite der Nationalsozialisten gestanden hatten, einen Schlussstrich darunter ziehen. Dennoch blieb das, was Ernst Nolte eine „Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will“, nannte, für lange Zeit von großer Bedeutung.<sup>3</sup> Vermutlich wird dies nicht für immer so bleiben. In den letzten Jahren wurde eine andere Stimme laut: Es entstand die Furcht, dass mit dem Verschwinden der Generation der Zeitzeugen, insbesondere der letzten Holocaustüberlebenden, die Vergangenheit zur bloßen Geschichte werden könne und damit zwar weiterhin von wissenschaftlichem, intellektuellem oder politischem Interesse bliebe, aber ihre direkte Relevanz für jüngere Generationen einbüßen würde.

Das fortdauernde Vermächtnis der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgungsmaßnahmen blieb seit 1945 über Generationen hinweg spürbar. Nun aber stehen wir an der Schwelle zu einer einschneidenden historischen Wende. Ich werde zunächst einige Gründe dafür benennen, warum die NS-Verfolgung auch nach dem Kollaps des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ so lange von Bedeutung blieb. Meines Erachtens ist zwischen vier verschiedenen Phasen zu unterscheiden, wenn wir die Zeugnisse von Überlebenden – aber auch diejenigen von Menschen auf der Täterseite – betrachten. Ich werde

1 Eine kürzere Fassung dieses Aufsatzes wurde am 11. Juni 2015 als Simon Wiesenthal Lecture im Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien gehalten. Der Aufsatz wurde schon als Kapitel 6 in meinem Buch *Erfahrung, Erinnerung. Geschichtsschreibung: Neue Perspektiven auf die deutschen Diktaturen*, Göttingen 2016, veröffentlicht. Es bezieht sich auch auf ein größeres Buchprojekt: *Mary Fulbrook, Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi persecution*, Oxford 2017. Ich bin für die Unterstützung durch das britische Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) sehr dankbar.

2 Hans Rothfels, *Zeitgeschichte als Aufgabe*, in: *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 1 (1953) 1, 1-8, hier 2.

3 Ernst Nolte, *Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will. Eine Rede, die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6. Juni 1986; auch abgedruckt in: Rudolf Augstein/Karl Dietrich Bracher/Martin Broszat u. a., „Historikerstreit“, *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, München u. a. 1987, 39-47.



mich außerdem der sogenannten zweiten Generation zuwenden, in Familien von Überlebenden wie auch in Täterfamilien. Abschließend werde ich kurz darauf eingehen, inwiefern der „Abschied von der Zeitgenossenschaft“ (Norbert Frei) dennoch Chancen birgt und dazu anregen kann, neu über die Darstellung der NS-Vergangenheit und über die Geschichtswissenschaft im Allgemeinen nachzudenken.

### **Die sich wandelnde Bedeutung der Zeitzeugengeneration: Zeugnisse von Überlebenden**

Zeitzeugenberichte sind essenziell für unser Verständnis und unseren Zugang zu jedweder Vergangenheit. Insbesondere Ego-Dokumente und Selbstzeugnisse können uns viel über Erfahrungen und Details des Alltagslebens erzählen, die nicht in offiziellen Aufzeichnungen oder Urkunden festgehalten wurden. Besonders wichtig erscheint dies mit Blick auf eines der größten Verbrechen des vergangenen Jahrhunderts: die Verfolgung und Ermordung von Millionen Menschen aufgrund ihrer ‚rassischen‘ Zuordnung, ihrer politischen, moralischen oder religiösen Überzeugungen, ihrer Behinderungen, sexuellen Orientierung oder Verhaltensmuster. Historiker können darüber klagen, dass nicht alle politischen Entscheidungen schriftlich festgehalten, nicht alle Unterlagen aufbewahrt wurden und daher nicht alles in den Akten gefunden werden kann – so etwa im Fall der ‚Endlösung‘, die als Konsequenz aus Hitlers Erfahrungen mit dem ‚Euthanasie‘-Programm geheim gehalten wurde. Zeitzeugenberichte können also manchmal – aber bei weitem nicht immer – Lücken füllen, die im Archiv zu finden sind. Historiker wie Christopher Browning haben gezeigt, dass Zeitzeugenberichte Quellen sind, die uns zahlreiche Informationen liefern können.<sup>4</sup> Doch aus der Perspektive dessen, was ich Beziehungsgeschichte nennen möchte, ist das nicht alles.

Was interessiert uns an dieser NS-Vergangenheit? Es geht nicht nur darum, wie politische Entscheidungen getroffen wurden, wie diese sich auf die Opfer auswirkten und wie Letztere darauf reagierten, sondern es geht auch um die längerfristigen Folgen der NS-Verfolgung. Subjektive Erlebnisse und dauerhafte psychische und soziale Auswirkungen der Mittäterschaft an der Verfolgung bilden wiederum einen ganz anderen Themenkomplex und haben wenig zu tun mit der Geschichte politischer Strategien und Ereignisse zur Zeit der Verfolgung selbst. Literaturwissenschaftler und Psychologen haben analysiert, auf welcher individuell unterschiedlichen Weise Holocaustüberlebende ihre Erinnerungen erzählten und verarbeiteten. Dagegen haben nur wenige Historiker systematisch untersucht, wie spätere Kontexte und Lebenssituationen diese Erzählungen und Verarbeitungsmechanismen beeinflussten. Vieles hing dabei von sozialen und politischen Umständen ab, davon, wie dominante Diskurse innerhalb bestimmter Gemeinschaften die Sagbarkeitsregeln beeinflussten, welche Erfahrungen betont und welche ignoriert oder marginalisiert wurden. Die zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten auch verschiedenen Beziehungen innerhalb von Gemeinschaften, zwischen unterschiedlichen Gemeinschaften oder über solche hinweg wirkten sich in hohem Maße darauf aus, welche Berichte entstanden und wie Menschen die Vergangenheit ‚bewältigten‘ – oder auch nicht. Von besonderem Interesse sind hier jedoch die sich im Verlauf der Nachkriegsjahrzehnte wandelnde Bedeutung der Zeitzeugengeneration und die Frage, warum das Verschwin-

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories. Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, Madison 2003; ders., *Remembering Survival. Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, New York 2010.

den der Zeitzeugen inzwischen von vielen mit Bedauern konstatiert wird. Die öffentliche Rezeption von Zeitzeugenberichten durchlief seit 1945 vier verschiedene Phasen, die ich im Folgenden skizzieren möchte.

Manchmal wird behauptet, dass die Überlebenden zunächst überhaupt nicht über ihre Erfahrungen sprechen wollten. Das mag für einige zutreffen, aber bei weitem nicht für alle. Es gibt viele Zeugnisse aus der Kriegszeit und aus der Zeit danach, die genaue Einblicke insbesondere in jüdische Erfahrungen der NS-Verfolgung geben. Von systematisch gesammelten Berichten des Ringelblum-Archivs in Warschau über Tagebücher von Einzelpersonen – ob von Mitgliedern der Judenräte und Schreibzirkel oder von ganz normalen Leuten – bis hin zu hastig geschriebenen Briefen, die aus Ghettos geschmuggelt oder aus Deportationszügen geworfen wurden. Von frühen Aufzeichnungen des Oral-History-Pioniers David Boder aus DP-Camps über Sammlungen von Zeugnissen Überlebender in der Londoner Wiener Library, im Jüdischen Historischen Institut in Warschau oder im YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York bis hin zu unzähligen anderen Beständen in Bibliotheken und Archiven von Yad Vashem bis zum Washingtoner United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Wir haben Zugang zu einer außerordentlich großen Zahl von Berichten Überlebender, sowohl aus dem Krieg wie aus den frühen Nachkriegsjahren.

Es stimmt also nicht, dass alle Überlebenden während des Krieges und in den ersten Jahren danach geschwiegen hätten. Und diese relativ frühen Zeugnisse sind für Historiker besonders wertvoll. Augenzeugenberichte sind wohl am akkuratesten in der Darstellung dessen, ‚was eigentlich geschehen ist‘, sofern sie zeitnah zu den Ereignissen aufgeschrieben wurden. Bemerkenswert ist, dass Berichte aus den ersten Nachkriegsjahren öfter faktengesättigter – wenn auch ohne breiteren Interpretationsrahmen – erscheinen als spätere Narrative. Ihr erkenntnisleitendes Interesse (wie Habermas es ausdrücken würde) war genau dieses: die Welt wissen zu lassen, was geschehen war, ganz spezifisch und dem eigenen Erleben nach, um die Einzelteile der stattgefundenen Katastrophe zu einem möglichst vollständigen Bild zusammenzusetzen. Vor allem während des Krieges war es ungeheuer wichtig, die Welt über die Geschehnisse zu informieren und um Hilfe zu bitten. Nach dem Krieg wollten Betroffene wissen, wer auf welche Weise überlebt hatte und was mit den anderen geschehen war. Informationen waren ebenso lebenswichtig wie Diskussionen darüber, was man jetzt machen sollte oder könnte. In den ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnten sprachen die meisten Überlebenden jedoch, sofern sie nicht von Institutionen befragt wurden, nur untereinander. Wo auch immer sie sich befanden, stießen sie auf wenig Interesse bei der großen Mehrheit der Bevölkerung, die keine solchen oder ähnlichen Erfahrungen gemacht hatte. Dies begann sich erst allmählich zu ändern.

Spätere Berichte von Überlebenden hatten oft einen anderen Zweck als die ganz frühen, und sie wurden auch in anderen Zusammenhängen erstellt und rezipiert. Die zweite Phase der Zeitzeugenberichte war die der Zeugnisse im engeren juristischen Sinne. In den ersten Kriegsverbrecherprozessen nach 1945 waren Überlebende kaum befragt oder als Zeugen vernommen worden. Dies änderte sich vor allem mit dem Jerusalemer Eichmann-Prozess. In der Ära der großen KZ-Prozesse der 1960er- und 1970er-Jahre bestand der Hauptzweck der Aussagen Überlebender darin, präzise darzustellen, wer wem wann und warum und mit welchen Folgen etwas angetan hatte, sodass die Schuld oder auch Unschuld eines Angeklagten festgestellt werden konnte. Dies hat sich erst in den letzten Jahren verändert, besonders mit dem deutschen Demjanjuk-Prozess von 2009 bis 2011. Für die Anklage hatte in diesem Fall bereits die Tatsache ausgereicht, dass John Demjanjuk dort angestellt gewesen war, wo Massenverbrechen begangen worden waren – in diesem Fall vor allem im Ver-

nichtungslager Sobibor. Wäre der Nachweis einer Tätigkeit in einem Konzentrations- oder Vernichtungslager auch früher schon für eine Anklage hinreichend gewesen, hätten gewiss viel mehr Täter erfolgreich vor Gericht gestellt werden können.

Seit Mitte der 1970er-Jahre begannen sich Zweck und Charakter von Berichten Überlebender erneut zu wandeln. Was die breite Öffentlichkeit und vor allem jüngere Generationen vorrangig interessierte, war nun nicht mehr, was genau geschehen oder wer dafür verantwortlich gewesen war, sondern wie diese Ereignisse erlebt worden waren und welche Auswirkungen sie auf die Biografien der Überlebenden gehabt hatten. Daher nahmen spätere Archivprojekte wie das Fortunoff-Archiv in Yale, das riesige, von Steven Spielberg initiierte USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive und viele andere kleinere Oral-History-Projekte nun ganze Biografien in den Blick: das Vorher und Nachher der Verfolgung, aber auch die aus großer zeitlicher Distanz vorgenommene, retrospektive Interpretation der Ereignisse des Holocaust. Diese Zeugnisse sowie unzählige Memoiren und andere Lebenserinnerungen – teils auch mit Unterstützung von Ghostwritern verfasst, die von der sogenannten Holocaust-Industrie profitierten – haben mehr und mehr Details zum Mosaik der individuellen und alltäglichen Erfahrungen hinzugefügt.

Was Überlebende allerdings tatsächlich erzählen und mit wem sie sprechen wollten oder auch mit welchen Erinnerungen sie leben mussten, passte oft nicht zu den Vorstellungen und Erwartungen des Publikums. Die Überlebenden konnten die schrecklichen Bilder vergangener Erlebnisse nicht immer kontrollieren; was sie erinnern oder unterdrücken konnten (sodass es vielleicht höchstens in Albträumen hochkam), konnten sie im Nachhinein nicht beeinflussen. Aber wie sie diese Vergangenheit erzählten und interpretierten, dies hing vom jeweiligen Kontext ihrer Berichte ab. In den frühen Nachkriegsjahren neigten Überlebende dazu, nur unter ihresgleichen über die Vergangenheit zu sprechen. Besonders die jungen Erwachsenen unter ihnen – und sie bildeten die Mehrheit der Überlebenden – konzentrierten sich darauf, ein neues Leben aufzubauen und ihre Kinder vor den schmerzvollen Erinnerungen an die Verfolgungszeit zu schützen. Erst als sie das mittlere Lebensalter erreichten und ihre Enkel geboren wurden, wurde es für einige Überlebende – wenn auch bei weitem nicht für alle – wichtiger, ihr Wissen an die nachfolgenden Generationen weiterzugeben.

Manche Erinnerungen fanden die Überlebenden allerdings weiterhin zu heikel oder zu schmerzlich, um sie mit anderen zu teilen, von denen sie meinten, dass sie sie womöglich nicht nachvollziehen konnten. So waren etwa die in den Konzentrationslagern eingenommenen unterschiedlichen Rollen oder auch gelebten Beziehungen sehr schwierige Themen. Viele Berichte geben einen Einblick in die komplexen sozialen und moralischen Dynamiken innerhalb der Lager. Ob es sich um das Verhalten von Kapos, Blockältesten oder anderen Häftlingen handelte: Überlebende beschrieben in ihren Berichten unterschiedliche Strategien, mit denen sich Menschen im Lager kleine Vorteile zu verschaffen versuchten – leichtere Arbeit, zusätzliche Nahrungsmittel oder auch Zugang zu medizinischer Behandlung. Schuld- und Schamgefühle spielten bei solchen Berichten oft eine wichtige Rolle. Es ist erstaunlich, dass gerade diejenigen, die am wenigsten Schuld auf sich geladen hatten, oft unter besonders starken Schuldgefühlen litten. Erst seit den 1980er-Jahren, als die Perspektive der Opfer zunehmend in den Fokus des öffentlichen Interesses rückte, wurde es für die Überlebenden in wachsendem Maße möglich, über solche heiklen Themen zu sprechen.

Andere Opfergruppen haben weniger Anerkennung bekommen oder erst später willige Zuhörer gefunden. Allmählich wuchs auch das Interesse an den Erfahrun-

gen von Sinti und Roma. Wieder eine andere Sichtweise auf die Verfolgung boten bald die späten Veröffentlichungen einiger homosexueller Häftlinge, allen voran der beiden Männer Pierre Seel und Heinz Heger, die beschrieben, wie sie im Lager von ihren Mithäftlingen gemieden und diskriminiert worden waren.<sup>5</sup> Ihre Memoiren sind von unschätzbarem Wert, da sie Einblicke in ganz andere Lagererfahrungen geben. Auch vermitteln sie, was es bedeutete, die Verfolgung erlebt und überlebt zu haben und in der Nachkriegszeit erneut stigmatisiert und ausgegrenzt zu werden.

Weniger Beachtung hat die kuriose Tatsache gefunden, dass einige Überlebende auch Erinnerungen hatten, die ihnen zu ‚wertvoll‘ oder zu persönlich erschienen, als dass sie darüber sprechen hätten wollen. Manche hatten eine Diskussion über ihre Lebensgeschichte über Jahrzehnte hinweg vermieden und entschlossen sich erst im hohen Alter, ihre persönlichsten Erinnerungen niederzuschreiben – so etwa der Historiker Otto Dov Kulka. Andere, wie zum Beispiel Imre Kertész oder Primo Levi, drückten ihre Gefühle auf indirekte Weise in belletristischer Form aus.<sup>6</sup>

Dank der gegenwärtigen Flut solcher Erinnerungsberichte sind Zeitzeugen im engeren geschichtswissenschaftlichen Sinne inzwischen nicht mehr so bedeutungsvoll wie sie einst gewesen waren, als es darum ging, empirische Beweise über die Geschehnisse der Vergangenheit zu finden. Und ohnehin bauen Historiker ihre Texte stets auf einer breiteren Quellenbasis auf: auf Akten aus einem bestimmten historischen Kontext, aus Augenzeugenberichten und aus zahlreichen anderen Belegen und Indizien.

Einmal abgesehen vom nachvollziehbaren Bedauern angesichts des Aussterbens jener Zeitzeugengeneration des Holocaust und von der individuellen Trauer, die jeden Todesfall begleitet: Warum empfinden wir das unvermeidliche Ableben der letzten Überlebenden, der letzten Augenzeugen der NS-Verfolgung und des Genozids als einen so großen Verlust? Warum begreifen wir dieses Geschehen als eine Zeitenwende? Dafür lassen sich einige Gründe nennen.

Wir befinden uns nun in einer vierten und letzten Phase, was die Rolle von Überlebenden in der Öffentlichkeit und ihre Tradierung der eigenen Vergangenheit betrifft. Die Bedeutung ihrer Berichte hat sich noch einmal gewandelt: Sie sind in gewisser Weise unanfechtbar geworden. Die wenigen Überlebenden, die noch unter uns weilen, sind sämtlich hochbetagt und oft auch gebrechlich, doch sie sind der letzte lebendige Beweis für das Geschehene. Sie vermitteln Authentizität in Bezug auf die Leiden der Vergangenheit. Sie stellen eine direkte, physische Verbindung zur Vergangenheit dar: Sie waren dabei, sie verkörpern die Auswirkungen und die Bedeutung dieser Vergangenheit. Sie können deren Bilder vor ihrem inneren Auge immer noch sehen und könnten sie im Prinzip direkt an uns weitergeben – so fühlt es sich zumindest für uns an. Wir sind uns der Unbeständigkeit der Erinnerung bewusst und wissen, dass sich Erinnerungen im Laufe eines Lebens verändern: Sie werden transformiert und überlagert von neuen Erkenntnissen und sich verändernden Deutungsrahmen. Dennoch besitzen Zeitzeugenberichte eine fast mystische Aura der Authentizität, wenn sie in der ersten Person erzählt werden. Außerdem sind sie stets mit Gefühlen verbunden, auf die wir wiederum emotional reagieren. In der persönlichen Beziehung zwischen uns und dem Überlebenden erscheint es uns fast so, als seien auch wir irgendwie dabei gewesen. Über seine Erinnerungen kommen

5 Heinz Heger, *Die Männert mit dem rosa Winkel. Der Bericht eines Homosexuellen über seine KZ-Haft 1939–1945*, Hamburg 1972.

6 Otto Dov Kulka, *Landschaften der Metropole des Todes. Auschwitz und die Grenzen der Erinnerung und der Vorstellungskraft*, München 2013; Imre Kertész, *Roman eines Schicksallosen*, Berlin 1996; ders., *Dossier K.*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2006.

wir mit der Vergangenheit in Kontakt und fühlen uns gleichsam als Glied in der Kette der Geschichte und ihrer Weitergabe.

Gedenkstätten haben eine ähnliche Wirkung wie die Berichte Überlebender. Sie befinden sich dort, wo schreckliche Ereignisse stattfanden. Weder können wir die Zeit zurückdrehen noch können Stellwände, Ausstellungsgegenstände oder Denkmäler die Vergangenheit wieder lebendig machen – und das kann auch nicht ihr Zweck sein – aber in gewisser Hinsicht sind die Orte des Verbrechens nicht nur ‚verseuchte‘, mit Blut und Leid getränkte Erde, sondern auch ‚heiliger Boden‘: Boden, der zum Heiligtum erhoben wird und anders ist als der Boden ‚normaler‘ Orte. Jenen Orte, an denen Gewalttaten stattfanden, wird eine besondere Aura zugeschrieben. Ebenso wie die Überlebenden sind diese Orte in der Lage, bestimmte Emotionen wachzurufen; durch sie können wir eine direkte Verbindung zur Vergangenheit herstellen – zu einer Vergangenheit, die allmählich verschwindet.

### **Die sich wandelnde Bedeutung der Zeitzeugengeneration: Berichte von der Täterseite**

Es gibt aber auch eine andere Sichtweise auf das Ableben der Zeitzeugengeneration, die bisher weniger Beachtung gefunden hat. Es geht um das Aussterben derer, die in Verbrechen involviert waren und auf der Verfolgerseite standen. Mitglieder dieser Gruppe waren begierig darauf, einen ‚Schlussstrich‘ unter die Vergangenheit zu ziehen. Nur ein verschwindend kleiner Teil der Täter wurde je vor Gericht gestellt; die überwältigende Mehrheit derjenigen, die in Gewalttaten verstrickt gewesen waren, musste sich nie für ihre Taten verantworten: 99 Prozent der Menschen, die Juden ermordet haben, wurden nie vor Gericht gestellt.

Dieser Mangel an Gerichtsverfahren ist noch eklatanter in Bezug auf kleinere Taten und alltägliche Verhaltensweisen, die die Deportationen und Tötungen erst ermöglichten. Nachbarn, Profiteure, Industrielle, Beamte und eine Vielzahl anderer Akteure profitierten von der Enteignung, Vertreibung und Vernichtung der Mehrheit der europäischen Juden. Sie beteiligten sich an der Denunziation politischer Gegner, ‚Asozialer‘, Homosexueller, sogenannter Rassenschänder und anderer. Sie unterstützten ein System, in dem Millionen von Zivilisten zu Gefängnisstrafen verurteilt wurden, Misshandlung und Tod erlitten.

Diese Komplizen und Unterstützer des NS-Systems zeigten nach dem Krieg wenig Bereitschaft, sich mit ihrer Schuld oder mit den Konsequenzen ihres Handelns auseinanderzusetzen. Es war einfacher und schien ihnen wichtiger, sich auf ihre eigenen Kriegsverluste, ihre Nachkriegsprobleme und Demütigungen zu konzentrieren, anstatt sich mit ihrem Beitrag zur NS-Verfolgung auseinanderzusetzen. Wenn Akteure der Täterseite überhaupt über die Vergangenheit sprachen, dann waren ihre Berichte hochgradig selektiv und meist in legitimatorischer Absicht verfasst. Diese Akteure waren im Allgemeinen weniger willens, einen ehrlichen Bericht über ihre Erfahrungen abzugeben, als diejenigen, die unter der Verfolgung gelitten hatten. Oft waren Täterberichte – auch wenn sie als ehrliche Abrechnung oder wahrheitsgemäße Memoiren präsentiert wurden – vor allem dazu gedacht, die Wahrheit zu verschleiern, die Interessen der Täter zu wahren oder letztere zu entlasten.

In Anbetracht der vermeintlichen Gefahr, sich öffentlicher Kritik oder der Missbilligung von Angehörigen, Freunden oder Kollegen auszusetzen, gelang es Menschen aus Tätergemeinschaften zumeist, sich als unschuldig oder unwissend darzustellen. Die NS-Verbrechen zu relativieren oder das eigene Zutun zu rechtfertigen, wenn die



Fakten schon nicht abgestritten werden konnten, dies waren gängige Strategien von Millionen von Menschen, die im Nationalsozialismus in kleinere Taten der Unmenschlichkeit verstrickt gewesen waren. Tabus der Nachkriegszeit, politische und soziale Empfindlichkeiten und Selbstbezüglichungen trugen dazu bei, die NS-Zeit in eine äußerst unbequeme Vergangenheit zu verwandeln. Verdrängung, Umdeutung und Distanzierung waren weit verbreitete Handlungsmuster, wenn es darum ging, möglichst ungestört mit jener unbequemen Vergangenheit leben zu können.

Versuche, sich moralisch und geografisch von den Akteuren und Orten der NS-Verbrechen zu distanzieren, finden sich häufig in Berichten derjenigen, die ihr eigenes Unwissen und ihre Unschuld beteuerten. Ein interessantes Beispiel hierfür bieten die unveröffentlichten Memoiren einer ehemaligen Lehrerin aus Oświęcim/Auschwitz, die auch die Kinder des Lagerkommandanten Rudolf Höss unterrichtet hatte.<sup>7</sup> Marianne B. lebte und arbeitete vor den Toren des größten Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslagers im nationalsozialistisch besetzten Europa; sie hatte Kontakte zu anderen Lehrerinnen, deren Ehemänner im Lager arbeiteten, und war mit Mitgliedern der Lager-SS befreundet. Gleichwohl behauptete sie, nicht gewusst zu haben, was hinter den gut bewachten Stacheldrahtzäunen vor sich ging. Es gibt viele unterschiedliche Strategien, derer sich Menschen wie Marianne B. bedienten, um ihre Unschuld und ihr Unwissen zu belegen. Aber egal, ob sie sich nah oder fern der Zentren nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen befanden: Sie definieren diese Orte stets als Sphären, die außerhalb ihrer Reichweite und ihrer Zuständigkeit lagen.

Es ist wenig überraschend, dass gerade in der aktivsten und wichtigsten Phase des Erwachsenenlebens dieser Menschen so oft die Forderung nach einem Schlussstrich unter die Vergangenheit gestellt wurde. Ebenso wenig erstaunlich ist, dass die Anerkennung bestimmter Opfergruppen so spät erfolgte: Homosexuelle, Sinti und Roma und geistig oder körperlich Behinderte wurden in den europäischen Gesellschaften der Nachkriegszeit weiterhin stigmatisiert und diskriminiert. Nur durch intensive juristische und politische Kämpfe konnte etwa die Anerkennung von Menschen erstritten werden, die wegen ihrer sexuellen Orientierung verfolgt worden waren, konnten Entschädigungszahlungen auch für Zwangsarbeiter oder Ghettobewohner erwirkt werden – Pyrrhussiege, von denen ein halbes Jahrhundert nach Kriegsende nur noch wenige Überlebende profitieren konnten. Auch dauerte es bis zur Pensionierung der in die ‚Euthanasie‘-Programme verwickelten Ärzte und Klinikdirektoren, bis die Memorialisierung an jenen Orten beginnen konnte, an denen tausende geistig und körperlich Behinderte ermordet worden waren. Für die Gedenkstättenarbeit war dies von großer Bedeutung: Es war viel leichter, Erinnerungsorte zu schaffen, die sich auf die Opfer konzentrierten, und dabei den Täterkreis sehr eng zu definieren – auf die Funktionseliten von SS und Gestapo –, als sich mit der Beteiligung von Millionen anderer Menschen auseinanderzusetzen, die das mörderische System am Laufen gehalten hatten. Während der gesamten Lebenszeit dieser Erfahrungsgemeinschaften blieb die während der NS-Zeit entstandene Kluft zwischen Opfern und Tätern bestehen.

Was also angesichts des Ablebens der Zeitzeugengeneration wirklich von Bedeutung ist, ist nicht der oft beklagte Verlust von direkten Überlebendenaussagen, sondern das weitgehende und bald endgültige Verschwinden und Verstummen derjenigen, die ihre eigene Rolle im nationalsozialistischen Verfolgungs- und Vernichtungsapparat jahrzehntelang geleugnet, verschleiert oder relativiert haben. Nachwachsende Generationen haben dafür gesorgt, dass sich der Umgang mit der

<sup>7</sup> Näheres in Fulbrook, Reckonings.



NS-Vergangenheit mit zunehmendem Abstand zu den Ereignissen veränderte – auch wenn sie die Ereignisse selbst nicht miterlebt hatten. Vor allem die zweite Generation, die der Kinder von Überlebenden und Tätern, wurde stark von dieser Vergangenheit geprägt.

### Jenseits der Zeitzeugengeneration: Verbindungen und Identifikationen

Für die Mitglieder jener zweiten Generation war es nicht einfach, sich mit dieser Vergangenheit auf persönlicher Ebene auseinanderzusetzen. Erst seit den späten 1980er-Jahren begreifen sich auch die Täterkinder als eine Gruppe von Menschen, die mit gleichen Problemen zu kämpfen haben – eine Entwicklung, die in gewisser Weise einer Phase der Neubewertung von Opferschaft und Identitätspolitik entsprang. Manche Täterkinder betrachteten sich nun selbst als die ‚echten Opfer‘ der Nachkriegszeit, da sie aufgrund der Vergangenheit ihrer Eltern geächtet worden seien und unter der Last einer ererbten Schuld zu leiden gehabt hätten.

Viele Kinder ehemaliger Nationalsozialisten mussten sich, wenn sie sich der Missetaten ihrer Eltern erst einmal in vollem Ausmaß bewusst geworden waren, auch mit kaum lösbaren emotionalen Konflikten innerhalb der Familie auseinandersetzen. Einerseits wollten sie ihre Eltern weiterhin lieben und respektieren, andererseits aber zurückweisen, wofür ihre Eltern gestanden und was sie getan hatten. Dies war eine fast unerträgliche Situation. Entweder sagten sie sich von ihren nationalsozialistischen Eltern los, weil sie ihnen nicht mehr trauen konnten, oder sie verteidigten deren Handeln und machten sich damit mitschuldig am Verschweigen der Wahrheit oder am Aufrechterhalten einer Lüge. Oder aber sie mussten ihre Entdeckung mit ihrer Zuneigung für die Eltern zu vereinbaren versuchen. Nie ausgesprochene Beteiligungen an nationalsozialistischen Unrechtstaten konnten Familien zerbrechen lassen, wenn Söhne oder Töchter darauf beharrten, die dunklen Geheimnisse – die ‚Leichen im Keller‘ – ans Licht zu bringen, und dabei auf den Widerstand anderer stießen, die den Familienfrieden höher schätzten als eine offene Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit. Dies war der Fall in der Familie von Hanns Ludin, Hitlers Gesandtem in der Slowakei. Als sein Sohn Malte 2004 den Dokumentarfilm *2 oder 3 Dinge, die ich von ihm weiß* in die Kinos brachte und darin unter anderem die Beteiligung seines Vaters an den Deportationen der slowakischen Juden, aber auch die innerfamiliären Konflikte nach 1945 thematisierte, reagierten zwei seiner Schwestern empört. Solche Reaktionen finden sich nicht selten bei Täterkindern, bis hin zu Extremfällen, in denen entweder jegliches Fehlverhalten der Eltern abgestritten und ihre Weltanschauung geteilt wird – wie etwa im Fall von Heinrich Himmlers Tochter Gudrun. Am anderen Ende des Spektrums finden wir Kinder, die mit ihren Eltern brechen, sich mittels ihrer eigenen Sterilisierung gegen eine Fortsetzung der Familie entscheiden oder gar Selbstmord begehen, wie dies Hanns Ludins älteste Tochter Erika 1997 tat. Wozu sich Täterkinder im Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit ihrer Eltern auch entschieden: Die Quadratur des Kreises konnte ihnen nicht gelingen.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Gudrun Himmler, in: Stephan Lebert/Norbert Lebert (Hg.), *My Father's Keeper. The Children of the Nazi Leaders – An Intimate History of Damage and Denial*, Boston 2001 (übersetzt von Julian Evans), 154-196 [Originalausgabe: Stephan Lebert/Norbert Lebert (Hg.), *Denn Du trägst meinen Namen. Das schwere Erbe der prominenten Nazi-Kinder*, München 2000]; vgl. auch Peter Sichrovsky, *Schuldig geboren. Kinder aus Nazi-familien*, Köln 1987; Dörte von Westernhagen, *Die Kinder der Täter. Das Dritte Reich und die Generation danach*, München 1987.

Wie Täterkinder das Verhalten der Eltern im Nationalsozialismus wahrnahmen und wie sie später damit umgingen, hing von vielen verschiedenen Faktoren ab – davon, ob das Kind schon während des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ oder erst danach geboren wurde, ob es den Tod oder die Exekution eines Elternteils noch miterlebte beziehungsweise eigene Erinnerungen daran hatte oder nicht. Wo und unter welchen Umständen es aufwuchs und wie es von der Verstrickung des Elternteils in die NS-Verbrechen erfuhr, spielte wiederum eine Rolle in der Bewertung jener Vergangenheit. Einigen Täterkindern gelang es, die entstandenen Konflikte mit der Zeit zu verarbeiten oder zu lösen, ohne dabei die Vergangenheit der Eltern dulden oder gar leugnen zu müssen. Bei vielen von ihnen lässt sich die Tendenz beobachten, die Taten der Eltern durch das Ergreifen von Pflegeberufen oder anderen wohlthätigen Berufen kompensieren zu wollen. Viele neigten auch zu einer starken Identifikation mit den Opfern der NS-Verfolgung, was oft mit einem dezidierten Interesse am Judentum oder auch mit engen Freundschaften zu Juden verbunden war.

In der dritten Generation, bei den Enkelkindern der Täter, veränderten sich die emotionalen Sensibilitäten, und eine größere Distanz war möglich, obgleich manche Spannungen und Konflikte generationsübergreifend tradiert wurden und erhalten blieben. Auch hier bietet die Familie Ludin ein gutes Beispiel: Hanns Ludins Enkelin Alexandra Senfft musste sich nicht nur mit dem Erbe ihres Großvaters, sondern auch mit dem Selbstmord ihrer Mutter Erika auseinandersetzen.<sup>9</sup> Auch sie beschäftigt sich unentwegt mit Fragen der Versöhnung mit Verfolgten und Überlebenden der NS-Verbrechen. Katrin Himmler, eine Großnichte Heinrich Himmlers, bietet ebenfalls ein bemerkenswertes Beispiel einer Angehörigen der dritten Generation, die sich mit der Vergangenheit ihres Verwandten offen auseinandersetzte und sie für sich bewältigte – nicht zuletzt durch ihre Freundschaft zu einem Juden, der später ihr Ehemann wurde.<sup>10</sup>

Einige Nachfahren von NS-Tätern – wie die zuvor genannten – haben über ihre Erfahrungen geschrieben, ihre Familiengeschichten erforscht oder im Rahmen von historischen oder sozialpsychologischen Forschungsprojekten Interviews gegeben. Aber nicht alle waren sich der Taten ihrer Eltern vollends bewusst. In vielen Fällen kennen wir die Wahrheit hinter den Familiengeschichten nicht – einer der frustrierendsten Aspekte bei der Lektüre faszinierender Interviews wie jener, die von Dan Bar-On, Gabriele Rosenthal, Harald Welzer und anderen Forschern und Forscherinnen geführt wurden.<sup>11</sup> Aber wenn wir uns verstärkt der Tätergeschichte zuwenden wollen, stellen sich nicht nur empirische, sondern auch ethische Fragen. Historiker, die in Archiven Interviewtranskripte lesen oder Videoaufzeichnungen ansehen, darunter auch Interviews mit Angehörigen einstiger Täter, können aufgrund ihres Kontextwissens oft besser einschätzen, in welche Verbrechen die jeweiligen Eltern verwickelt gewesen sein könnten.

Ich las einmal das Transkript eines Interviews mit dem Sohn eines Försters und SS-Mitglieds.<sup>12</sup> Der Sohn spekulierte darin nur vage, dass sein Vater von den in der Nähe begangenen Gewalttaten etwas gesehen oder gehört haben könnte. Da der Vater ihm gegenüber einmal von Massengräbern gesprochen hatte, musste er aus

<sup>9</sup> Alexandra Senfft, *Schweigen tut weh. Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte*, Berlin 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Katrin Himmler, *Die Brüder Himmler. Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence. Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*, Cambridge, MA 1989; Gabriele Rosenthal (Hg.), *The Holocaust in Three Generations. Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime*, London 1998; Harald Welzer/Sabine Moller/Karoline Tschuggnall, *Opa war kein Nazi. Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*, Frankfurt am Main 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Näheres in Fulbrook, *Reckonings*.

Sicht des Sohnes dabei entweder Auschwitz im Westen oder Katyń im Osten gemeint haben. Er war beunruhigt über das potenzielle Wissen des Vaters – nicht aber über dessen mögliche Schuld. Der Vater war gestorben, als der Sohn noch ein Heranwachsender war; spätnachts war er mit seinem Auto gegen einen Baum gefahren, nachdem er eine begehrte Schießstrophäe gewonnen hatte. Gelegenheit, dem Vater Fragen zu stellen, gab es nun nicht mehr. Der Sohn spürte ein gewisses Unbehagen: das Gefühl, es müsse mehr hinter diesen fragmentarischen Erinnerungen stecken als das idealisierte Bild des Vaters, das ihm die Mutter vermittelt hatte. Für mich war es indes relativ leicht, mehr über die Hintergründe jenes SS-Übungslagers herauszufinden, in dem der Vater stationiert gewesen war – vor allem durch die Gerichtsakten eines Prozesses, in dem einer seiner Kollegen auf der Anklagebank gesessen hatte. Dies erlaubte es mir, mir eine klarere Vorstellung von den Verbrechen zu machen, in die der Vater des Interviewten vermutlich involviert gewesen war.

Ein anderes Beispiel ist eine für mich persönlich ganz schwierig gewesene Begebenheit. Als Kind und junge Erwachsene kannte ich – ohne dies damals zu ahnen – einen ehemaligen Nationalsozialisten, den Mann einer engen Freundin meiner Mutter. Im ‚Dritten Reich‘ hatte er als Landrat von Będzin amtiert, etwa vierzig Kilometer von Auschwitz entfernt. Er war an der Ausgrenzung der fast 25.000 dort lebenden Juden beteiligt gewesen und hatte an der Einrichtung des Ghettos mitgewirkt. Nach dem Krieg lebte er als Beamter in Westdeutschland, redete aber nie darüber, welche Rolle er bei der Stigmatisierung und der Ghettoisierung der Juden von Będzin gespielt hatte. Als ich dies alles nach seinem Tod herausfand, war ich so empört, dass ich unbedingt mehr darüber wissen wollte. Die Frau dieses Mannes hatte fast jeden zweiten Tag Briefe nach Hause geschrieben, in denen sie alles schilderte, was in Będzin geschah. Einer ihrer Söhne stellte mir sämtliche Briefe zur Verfügung und sprach mit mir über das, was er wusste. Ich verglich die Briefe wie auch Archivalien und Zeitzeugenberichte mit den Memoiren des Landrats, in denen er alles Belastende ausgeblendet hatte. Darin klang es so, als sei er fast nie in Będzin gewesen und immer dann ‚verschwunden‘, wenn dort etwas Schlimmes passierte.

Daraufhin stellte sich für mich eine ethische Frage. Zunächst dachte ich, dies sei so typisch für viele ehemalige Nationalsozialisten, dass es auch dokumentiert werden müsse. Aber ich fragte mich auch, ob ich das seinen Kindern antun konnte, die dachten, er sei ein anständiger Mensch gewesen. Hatte ich das Recht, das Bild des Vaters zu zerstören? Aber wenn ich es nicht täte, würde ich mich an der Verdrängung beteiligen. Am Ende habe ich dieses Buch doch geschrieben und auch veröffentlicht.<sup>13</sup> Und der Sohn des Landrats und ich stellten gemeinsam fest: Ich sehe das Glas halb leer, er sieht es halb voll. Wir sind uns aber darüber einig, dass sich gewiss nicht alles ganz so zugetragen hatte, wie von seinem Vater erzählt.

Für mich war diese Begebenheit sehr aufschlussreich. Sie zeigte mir nicht nur, wie die Tätergeneration versucht hatte, die Geschichte zu verschleiern, sondern auch, dass man kein Antisemit gewesen sein musste, um sich an der Ausgrenzung und Ermordung der Juden mitschuldig zu machen. Man musste nur ‚mobilisierbar‘ gewesen sein. Karrierebewusste Beamte wie dieser Landrat waren zentrale Figuren, wenn es darum ging, die Vorbedingungen für den Holocaust zu schaffen. Ohne sie wäre es für Gestapo und SS unmöglich gewesen, die Juden so schnell und effektiv zu deportieren. Dieser Mann war wichtiger als die meisten Mitläufer es gewesen waren: Er war ein Funktionär im Staatsapparat. Später dachte er, er sei ‚anständig geblieben‘, weil er selbst schließlich keinen Menschen ermordet hatte. Dennoch trug er Mit-

<sup>13</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Eine kleine Stadt bei Auschwitz. Gewöhnliche Nazis und der Holocaust*, Essen 2015.

schuld an der Ermordung der Juden von Będzin. Auch viele andere Menschen konnten auf ähnliche Weise als Rädchen im Getriebe der Vernichtung gewirkt haben, ohne je antisemitisch gewesen zu sein und ohne sich jemals schuldig gefühlt zu haben. Es war kein mörderischer Antisemitismus, der sie bewegt hatte, sondern vielleicht nur alltäglicher Rassismus. Solche individuellen Geschichten sind zwar nur die Spitze des Eisbergs, aber sie geben Einblicke in ein Problem enormen Ausmaßes, mit dem die Generationen der Nachkommen aus Täterfamilien konfrontiert waren.

Als Kind eines Überlebenden in einem vom Holocaust überschatteten Haushalt aufzuwachsen, war mit ganz anderen Problemen verbunden.<sup>14</sup> Einige dieser Probleme haben ganz unmittelbar mit der NS-Verfolgung zu tun, andere mit dem späteren Lebenskontext der Überlebenden. Elterliche Verfolgungserfahrungen wirkten sich unweigerlich auf das Familienleben nach dem Krieg aus. Überlebende waren fast immer auf brutale und tragische Weise von ihrer Heimat und von ihren Nächsten getrennt worden; sie hatten meist alle nahen Familienangehörigen verloren, ebenso wie ihr weiteres soziales Umfeld aus Freunden, Verwandten und Gemeinschaften. Manche hatten extreme und schreckliche Dinge erlebt und durch die andauernde Verfolgung schwere und langfristige körperliche wie psychische Schäden davongetragen. Unabhängig davon, ob sie das Konzentrationslager überlebt hatten oder lange Phasen des Untertauchens, der Flucht oder des Lebens in ständiger Angst mit falschen Papieren oder ob es ihnen gelungen war, schon vor dem Krieg auszuwandern, die allermeisten Überlebenden musste sich nun mit neuen Problemen auseinandersetzen, die das Niederlassen in einem fremden Land mit sich brachte. Viele kehrten, wenn überhaupt, nur kurz in ihre frühere Heimat zurück und emigrierten früher oder später in andere Länder, wo sie eine neue Sprache und neue Fähigkeiten erlernen und sich an neue, für sie oft ganz fremde Lebensumstände anpassen mussten. Zu den traumatischen Erfahrungen von Verfolgung, Entbehrung und Verlust kamen dadurch noch neue, aus der Migrationserfahrung erwachsende Probleme hinzu.

Aufgrund der Erfahrungen ihrer Eltern mussten Mitglieder der zweiten Generation in Überlebendenfamilien oft deren Rolle einnehmen; viele spürten auch das Bedürfnis, das Leiden ihren Eltern wiedergutzumachen. Gleichzeitig erschienen ihnen ihre eigenen Probleme im Vergleich zu den extremen Erfahrungen der Eltern nahezu bedeutungslos. Genau wie in Täterfamilien gab es viele individuell unterschiedliche Arten des Umgangs der Kinder mit der Vergangenheit ihrer Eltern: Einige entschieden sich dafür, diese Vergangenheit weitestgehend zu ignorieren; für andere wurden die elterlichen Geschichten zu einem wichtigen Bestandteil ihrer eigenen Identität, zu einer Art ‚Postmemory‘ oder gar zur Lebensaufgabe.<sup>15</sup>

Signifikante Unterschiede gibt es mit Blick darauf, ob sich Mitglieder der zweiten Generation ihrer kollektiven Identität bewusst waren. Wohl die Mehrzahl der Kinder von Überlebenden machte weiter, ohne extensiv über die Verfolgungsgeschichte ihrer Eltern nachzudenken. In der Tat konnte die Entscheidung, die elterliche Vergangenheit auszublenden, eine Überlebensstrategie dieser Kinder sein: Sie waren fest entschlossen, ihr Leben so unbelastet wie möglich von der unerträglichen Vergangenheit ihrer Eltern zu leben. Aber sie konnten der NS-Vergangenheit nicht vollends entfliehen, waren sie doch unweigerlich und untrennbar mit ihr verbunden – unabhängig davon ob ihre Eltern über ihre Erlebnisse gesprochen hatten oder nicht,

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. z. B. Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust. The Second Generation*, London 1991; Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust. Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, London 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, New York 2012.

und ob sie selbst versucht hatten, Verbindungen zur elterlichen Vergangenheit und Herkunft aufrechtzuerhalten oder nicht. Auch die Kinder waren vom Erbe der NS-Verfolgung geprägt und gezeichnet.

Während diese familiären Dynamiken relativ gut untersucht sind, ist die Bedeutung ihres größeren historischen Kontexts bisher kaum systematisch erforscht worden, ebenso wenig wie die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Minderheitsgemeinschaften und Aufnahmegesellschaften. So war es zum Beispiel etwas völlig anderes, ob man in einer jüdischen Überlebendenfamilie aufwuchs oder in einer Familie von Sinti oder Roma; es war anders, in Ostdeutschland aufzuwachsen, als in Österreich oder in Westdeutschland. In relativer Isolation als Jude in einem dieser Täterländer heranzuwachsen, bedeutete etwas anderes, als in emigrierten Überlebendenfamilien groß zu werden – sei es in Nordlondon, in Brooklyn oder in Israel. Andere Gruppen von NS-Verfolgten hatten derweil kaum oder gar keine direkten intergenerationellen Familienverbindungen. Opfer der ‚Euthanasie‘-Programme und Zwangssterilisierte (vor allem dann, wenn sie auch vorher keine Kinder bekommen hatten) oder auch Homosexuelle hatten generell weniger oder überhaupt keine Kinder. Innerhalb dieser Gemeinschaften war die zweite Generation meist nicht biologisch mit der ersten Generation verbunden, sondern bestand aus Menschen, die sich aufgrund ihrer Eigenschaften oder ihrer Lebensweise stark mit der verfolgten Generation identifizierten oder mit deren Weltanschauung sympathisierten.

Kinder jüdischer Überlebender bildeten eine gut abgrenzbare generationelle Gruppe; viele von ihnen waren gleich während des jüdischen Babybooms der frühen Nachkriegsjahre geboren worden. Im Laufe der 1970er-Jahre, als sie zu Erwachsenen heranwuchsen, wurde ihnen bewusst, dass sie bestimmte Erfahrungen mit einer größeren Gruppe teilten. Eine Schlüsselrolle spielten dabei einige besonders aktive Angehörige dieser zweiten Generation: Sie artikulierten das Gefühl, einer *imagined community* anzugehören, deren Mitglieder denselben Hintergrund und eine besondere Verbindung mit der Vergangenheit hatten, die in gesellschaftlichen Umständen lebten, die die Etablierung spezieller Selbsthilfegruppen und Zusammenschlüsse erleichterte und förderte. Seit den späten 1980er-Jahren trat ein neues Phänomen hinzu: das Interesse, Kontakte zwischen Täterkindern und Opferkindern herzustellen. Obwohl nur wenige Menschen sich dieser Herausforderung stellten, so machten sie doch einen bemerkenswerten Schritt in Richtung einer wechselseitigen Verständigung unter Mitgliedern dieser beiden zweiten Generationen, auch wenn diese Annäherungsversuche nicht als Versöhnung verstanden werden können.

Die dritte Generation – bestehend aus den Enkelkindern von Überlebenden oder von Tätern – hat, allgemein betrachtet, eine größere Distanz zur Vergangenheit ihrer Großeltern; ihr Interesse an dieser Vergangenheit ist unterschiedlich stark ausgeprägt. Und für die vierte Generation schließlich, deren Mitglieder ihre während des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ lebenden Vorfahren selbst meist gar nicht mehr kennenlernen konnten, sind diese Themen noch weniger emotional belastet. Das bietet sowohl Herausforderungen als auch Chancen.

## Schlussfolgerungen

Hitlers Herrschaft über Deutschland und über große Teile Europas hat Millionen von Menschen das Leben gekostet. Für diejenigen, die diese Zeit durch- und überlebten, hatte die NS-Verfolgung dauerhafte, lang über das Ende des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ hinausreichende Nachwirkungen. Die Art und Weise, in der Menschen an den Ver-

folungsmaßnahmen teilnahmen oder von ihnen betroffen waren, prägte und veränderte ihr Leben und das ihrer Kinder. Auch nachfolgende Generationen lebten unter dem langen Schatten jener schrecklichen Vergangenheit – keine, die leicht übergangen oder einfach zur Geschichte werden konnte.

Auch der Bedeutungswandel der NS-Vergangenheit ist zu beachten. Die Art und Weise, in der sie von verschiedenen Gemeinschaften und Generationen interpretiert und neu durchdacht wurde, hat ebenfalls eine Geschichte. In den ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnten verharrten die Erfahrungsgemeinschaften – Verfolger wie Verfolgte – in einer Situation der Konfrontation und Separierung. Auseinandersetzungen zwischen ihnen waren manchmal unvermeidlich, ob im Gerichtssaal oder bei Streitigkeiten über Reparationen und Wiedergutmachungsleistungen. Im Laufe der Zeit übernahmen Mitglieder neuer Generationen – ob sie persönlich vom Vermächtnis des Nationalsozialismus betroffen waren oder nicht – aktivere Rollen in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit und begannen Berichte auszugraben und Erzählungen zu fordern, die bis dahin teilweise unterdrückt und verwehrt worden waren. Sowohl für die Kinder der Täter als auch für die Kinder der Opfer erwies sich das Erforschen der elterlichen Vergangenheit als ein schwieriges und verstörendes Projekt. Kulturelle und soziale Veränderungen trugen dazu bei, dass im Laufe der Zeit Stimmen und Geschichten hörbar wurden, die zuvor an den Rand gedrängt worden waren. Arten des Umgangs mit der NS-Vergangenheit wurden selbst zu einem wichtigen Bestandteil der Nachkriegsgeschichte und beeinflussten die Haltungen der Menschen, ihre Verhaltensweisen und die Herausbildung späterer Generationen. In einer zunehmend globalisierten Welt und mit dem Ableben der älteren Mitglieder der ersten Generation begann sich die Bedeutung des Nationalsozialismus zu verändern. In vielerlei Hinsicht und nicht nur für diejenigen, die diese Zeit durchlebten, bleibt sie eine Vergangenheit, von der wir alle mehr oder weniger betroffen sind.

Nun beschäftigt uns die Frage, wie wir zukünftigen Generationen die Bedeutung dieser Vergangenheit vermitteln können. Dabei werden die Prioritäten unterschiedlich gesetzt. Die Bedeutung der Weitergabe innerhalb und zwischen Familien mag in der Zukunft kleiner werden. Aber der vergiftete und dennoch heilige Boden der Gedenkstätten bleibt uns erhalten – stets im Wandel begriffen und doch mit einer Aura der Authentizität ausgestattet, die auch charakteristisch für die unmittelbaren Berichte der Überlebenden war. Die Bedeutung dieses Bodens ist zu einem festen Bestandteil europäischer Bildungs- und Erinnerungspraktiken geworden. Mit dem Ableben der Zeitzeugengenerationen – auch jenen aus Tätergemeinschaften – haben wir nun die Möglichkeit, neue und vielleicht bessere Darstellungsweisen der verschiedenartigen Formen von Komplizenschaft und Verantwortung zu entwickeln. Ohne sie würden die ‚Lehren der Vergangenheit‘ entweder in einem Meer der Trauer untergehen oder einfach nicht mehr verstanden werden. Auch wenn die Antworten darauf unterschiedlich ausfallen mögen: Entscheidend ist – und dies gilt für alle Epochen der Geschichte –, dass die Erforschung der Geschichte fort dauert und kreativ bleibt, dass die Vergangenheit weiterhin lebendig und anschaulich gemacht wird, auch nachdem wir einmal nicht mehr sein werden.



Mary Fulbrook  
Historikerin, University College London  
[m.fulbrook@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.fulbrook@ucl.ac.uk)

Zitierweise: Mary Fulbrook, Doch noch nicht Geschichte. Die langfristigen Folgen der NS-Verfolgung,  
in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 4 (2017) 1, 132-145.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/SWL\\_Reader/2017-1/2017-1\\_SWL\\_Fulbrook/SWL-Reader\\_Fulbrook.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/SWL_Reader/2017-1/2017-1_SWL_Fulbrook/SWL-Reader_Fulbrook.pdf)

SWL-Reader

Lektorat: Verena Pawlowsky

Racheli Kreisberg

# My Grandfather Simon Wiesenthal

## A Family Story to be Never Yet Told

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### Abstract

After his liberation from Mauthausen, Simon Wiesenthal, my late grandfather, was reunited with his wife Cyla Muller. They realised all too soon that all 89 of their relatives had been murdered. This is the notion we grew up with: “we have no family”. Over the years, I made multiple attempts to ask my grandparents about their family, but my notes remained almost empty. Upon the passing of Simon Wiesenthal, I renewed my efforts to explore our family roots and analysed personal letters and tombstones, as well as communicating with people sharing the name Wiesenthal and, most importantly, genealogy pals. This lecture focusses on the discovery of Simon Wiesenthal’s ancestors and their families. This search led to the establishment of a huge and robust family tree now shared with the public in various data-bases, and a story to tell to all those who are interested in the man who dedicated his life to bringing Nazi criminals and their collaborators to justice.

---

I spent time in Vienna since I was a child and until the age of 38, until the passing of my late dear grandfather Simon Wiesenthal. I enjoyed quality time in this city with my late grandparents, Cyla and Simon, and became familiar with its cultural sites, among them the Jewish Museum of Vienna.

In 2010, I met Dr. Spera for the first time here in Vienna at the joint Austrian-Israeli inauguration of a stamp carrying Simon Wiesenthal’s picture and his famous saying: “Justice, not vengeance”.

Since the passing of my grandfather, I have been personally in touch with both Béla Rásky from the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute and with Danielle Spera from the Jewish Museum, trying to come up with ideas to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Simon Wiesenthal’s passing.

We thought that it would be a great idea if I were to share with you my painstaking discovery of Simon Wiesenthal’s genealogy, including the 89 family members murdered in the Shoah. Please bear in mind two things, one personal and emotional and the second more pragmatic:

From a personal perspective, we grew up with the clear notion that we have no family.

In genealogy, no family means ‘no one to ask’, ‘no personal letters’, ‘no graves to visit’, nothing.

## Part I: 1908–1945

### My Grandfather Simon Wiesenthal. A Family Story to be Told



13 Years Later



February 1992, Los Angeles.

February 2005, Vienna.

On the first slide, you can see a picture of me with Simon Wiesenthal at the inauguration of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles on the left and a picture taken thirteen years later at my grandparents' residence in the nineteenth district in Vienna, seven months before his death, on the right.

### Birth in Buczacz, Galicia

Date: Born on 31 December 1908

Place: Buczacz, Galicia

Parents: Asher Hensel and Rosa Rapp

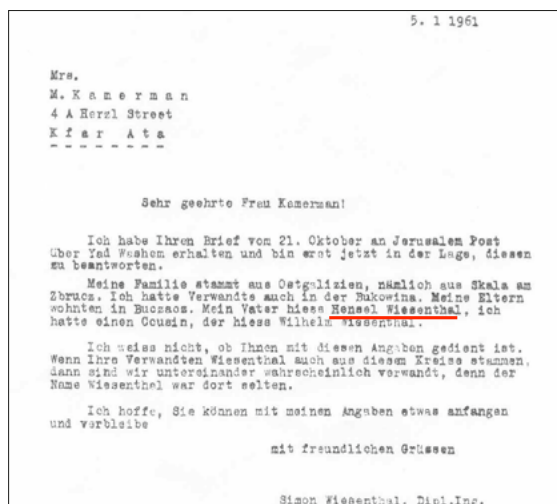
Asher Hensel Wiesenthal

Rosa Rapp

Simon

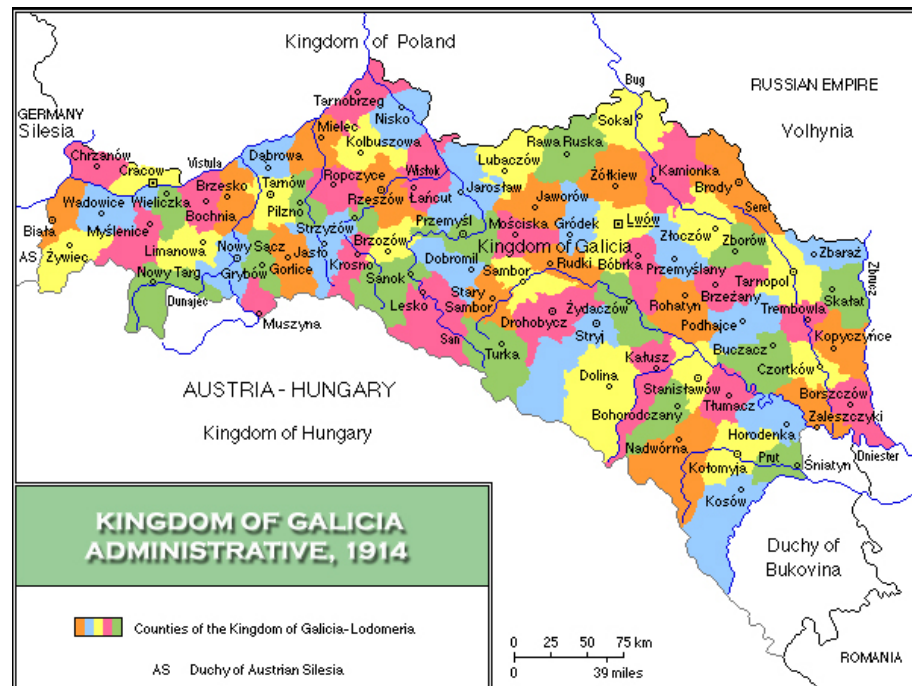
Simon Wiesenthal was born on 31 December 1908 in Buczacz, formerly Galicia, nowadays in the Ukraine, to Asher Hensel Wiesenthal and Rosa Rapp.

### Simon Wiesenthal from Buczacz



In January 1961, 55 years ago, Simon Wiesenthal wrote a letter, one of many that he wrote in his life, to Mr. Kamerman from Kfar Ata, north of Haifa in Israel, stating that his parents lived in Buczacz and that his father was named Hensel.

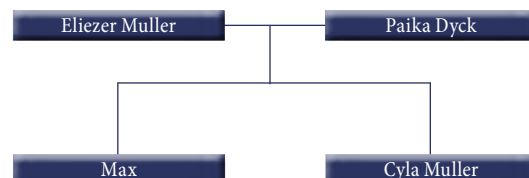
## Galicia, 1914



Galicia, officially the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, was in 1914 a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was bordered by the Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Empire: The town of Buczacz was located in the east of this territory, south-east of today's Lviv, the former capital of Galicia, at the time also known as Lwów in Polish and Lemberg in German.

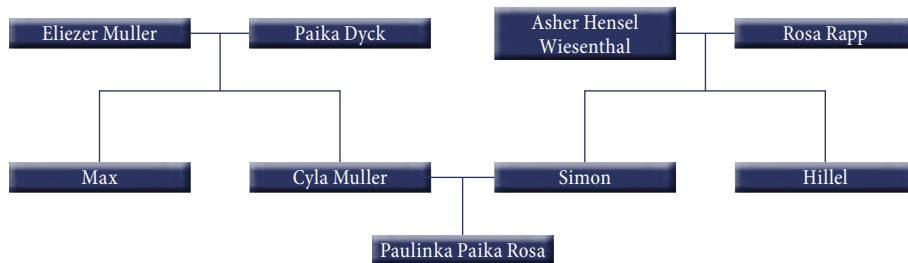
## Marriage 1936

In 1936, the 27-year-old Simon married Cyla Muller from Buczacz, born 1908  
 Simon and Cyla lived in Lemberg.



Lviv/Lemberg is the city where Simon lived with his wife Cyla Muller, also a Buczaczer, born in the same year.

## Unification with Cyla, 1945



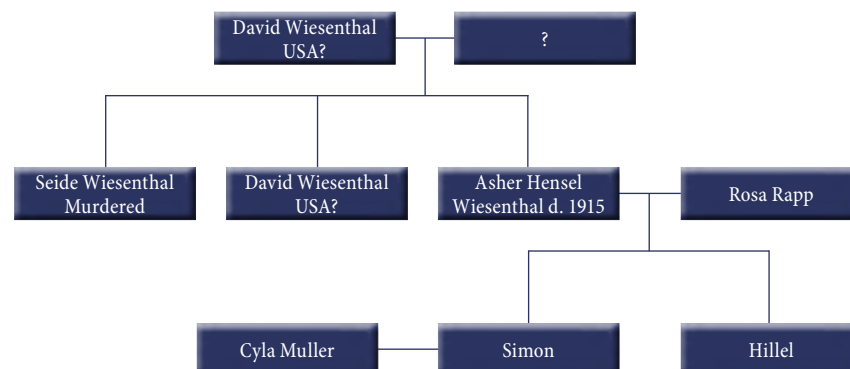
Simon and Cyla were re-united in 1945 and, a few months later, my mother Paulinka Rosa Paika was born. My mother was named after her two grandmothers, Rosa Rapp and Paika Dyck, who were both murdered in the Shoah. In my mother's naming, two of the 89 family members were commemorated.

Who were Simon and Cyla's 89 family members who were murdered during the Shoah?

## Part II: 1999–2005

In 1999, when visiting Vienna with my mother, I came equipped with ninety Pages of Testimony (POT) from Yad Vashem and hoped to return there with the completed files. Unfortunately, and surprisingly, we only managed to complete a little over a dozen. Even at the age of ninety, my grandfather still had a phenomenal memory, yet there was still only very little information.

### Simon mapping his family in 1999



Simon had a brother, Hillel, who died as a child. His father died when Simon was seven years old. Simon stated that an uncle Seide was murdered in the Shoah and that an uncle or maybe a grandfather named David had emigrated to the United States.

### Simon Wiesenthal (1908–2005)

## Simon Wiesenthal (1908–2005)

”

**The only value of nearly five decades of my work is a warning to the murderers of tomorrow, that they will never rest"** (From an interview with The Jerusalem Post International Edition, February 5, 1994)

Six years later, on 20 September 2005, Simon Wiesenthal died at his residence in Vienna, leaving behind a legacy for people to study and follow.



## Statement from US President George W. Bush, 2005



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
September 20, 2005

"Laura and I are saddened by the death of Simon Wiesenthal, a tireless and passionate advocate who devoted his life in tracking down Nazi killers and promoting freedom. Simon Wiesenthal lost 89 relatives in the Shoah, yet he survived the death camps himself. He gathered intelligence to be used in war crimes trials and also passed on important information that led to the conviction of Adolf Eichmann. Throughout his long career, he relentlessly pursued those responsible for some of the most horrific crimes against humanity the world has ever known. Simon Wiesenthal fought for justice, and history will always remember him."

The eulogy of the former president of the United States, George W. Bush, mentioned Simon Wiesenthal's work and the fact that he had lost 89 family members but survived himself.

## Brief 25. März 1963

25. März 1963

Frau  
Anne Weisenthal  
421 Clairemont Rd.  
Villanova, Penn.  
USA.

Sehr geehrte Frau Weisenthal!

Vielleicht ist es auch eine Verwandtschaft mit Euch, ich wäre glücklich darüber, denn, nachdem man uns während des Krieges alle ausgemordet hat haben wir niemanden.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Simon Wiesenthal, Dipl.Ing.

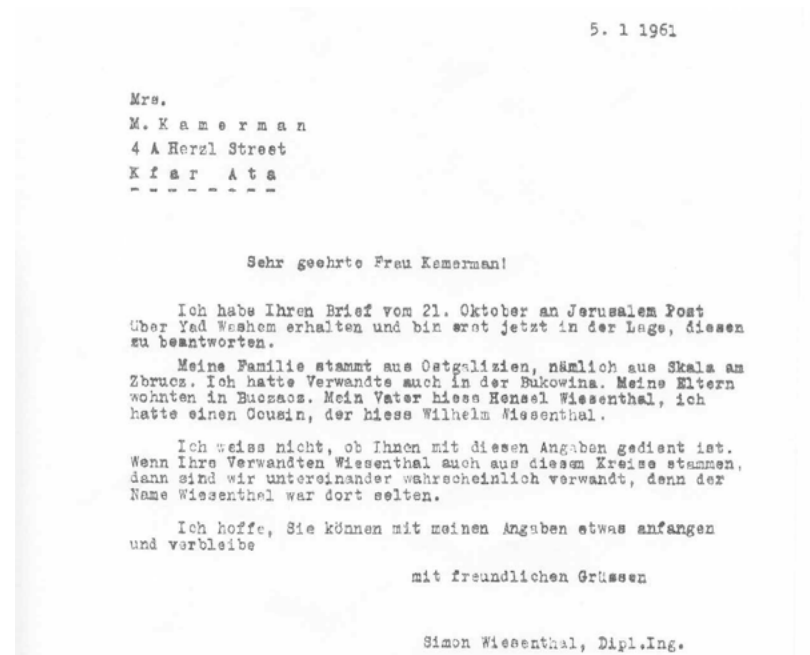
"... all our family members have been murdered and we are left with no one ..." (Simon Wiesenthal to Anne Weisenthal, 25 March 1963).

Simon Wiesenthal stated this again in a personal letter to Anne Wiesenthal in 1963, a letter that was brought to my attention when the historian Tom Segev explored my grandfather's archive in Vienna while writing his biography. All I asked for were the personal letters my grandfather exchanged to persons he called his "cousins" and to people carrying the same last name.

### Part III: Simon's Uncles

With such sparse information, even a very simple research on ancestors and predecessors is a difficult task, but we have some hints to start a genealogical research.

#### Asher Hensel Wiesenthal from Skala, Galicia, Father of Simon Wiesenthal



We already saw this letter. The information I will add now is that the Wiesenthals were originally from Skala Podolska, a neighbouring town to Buczac. This will be important in a few slides.

#### Search for Seide Wiesenthal

#### The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names

The Database includes data regarding Jews who were victims of persecution during the Holocaust period: those who were murdered as well as many others

Search/Home » Advanced Search » Query Results

Refine Search

Please note: There may be more than one record for the same victim, originating from one or more sources.

Results 1 - 12 of 12

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Residence	Source	Fate based on this source
Wiesenthal, Shlomo Solomon	1913	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Rivka Regina		Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Zaide	1872	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Alter	1923	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Zachariah	1870	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Feibush Feivisz	1880	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Ethel	1922	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Herszl Hershel		Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Zakharlahu	1872	Skala, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Tzvi Eliahu	1886	Skala Podolska, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Gershon	1870	Jagielnica, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered
Wiesenthal, Meir	1888	Skala Podolska, Poland	Page of Testimony	Murdered

Results 1 - 12 of 12

Search Yad Vashem Database

**YAD VASHEM**  
Gedenkstätte für den  
Holocaust und das Heldentum  
P.O.B. 3477, Jerusalem, Israel

**דף-נד**  
**GEDENKBLATT**

**יד ושם**  
ירושלים, הר הזיכרון  
ת.ד. 3477

**DAS GESETZ ZUM ANDENKEN AN DIE MÁRTYRER UND HELDEN,**  
5713 - 1953 legt in Artikel Nr. 2 fest:  
Es ist die Aufgabe von Yad Vashem, dokumentarisches Material in Israel über all die Juden zu sammeln, die ihr Leben hingaben, die gegen den Nazifeind und dessen Helfer kämpften und rebellierten, und ihren Namen und Andenken zu verewigen, wie auch das der Gemeinden, Organisationen und Institutionen, die wegen ihrer Angehörigkeit zum jüdischen Volk vernichtet wurden.  
(Gesetzbuch Nr. 132, 28.8.53)

חוק זכרון השואה והגיבורה -  
תשי"ג 3581  
קובץ חוקים מס' 2  
תפקידו של יד ושם הוא לאסוף את  
הזיכרון של כל אלה שמתו  
הואם היהודים, נאמנים וחסידיו את  
נאמנים, ולחבר וסדרו באופן חסותי  
הזיכרון, ולחבר שם חסותי להם,  
לקהילות, לארגונים ולמוסדות  
שנחרבו בגלל השתייכותם לעם  
היהודי. (ספר החוקים מס' 132,  
28.8.53)

פרטי הנסיפה: נא לרשום את שמו של כל ניספה על דף נפרד ולכתוב באותיות דפוס ובגודל  
ANGABEN ZUM OFFER: BITTE FÜLLEN SIE FÜR JEDES OFFER EIN EIGENES GEDENKBLATT AUS. IN DRUCKBUCHS TABEN

תמונת הניספה (דרכון) נא לרשום את שמו של הניספה על חזר השני של התמונה  Photographie des Opfers. Bitte auf der Rückseite den Namen des Opfers vermerken	Familienname: <u>WIESENTHAL</u>		1. שם משפחה מספר:
	Vorname: <u>ZEIDE</u>		2. שם פרטי
	Früherer Name: (bei Frauen Mädchenname) /		3. שם משפחה קודם: (אישית, לפני נישואים)
	4. מצב משפחתי: Familienstatus:	5. מין: Geschlecht:	6. תאריך לידה/גיל משוער: Geburtsdatum/ungef. Alter: <u>1872</u>
Geburtsort und Land: <u>SKALA, POLEN</u>		7. מקום לידה (וארץ)	
Mutter - Vorname: des Opfers - Mädchenname:		8. אם - שם פרטי הניספה - שם מתבית:	
Vater - Vorname: des Opfers		9. אב - שם פרטי הניספה	
Ehegatte/-in - Vorname: des Opfers - Mädchenname: <u>CHAJA SKALA</u>		10. בן-זוג - שם פרטי של הניספה - שם מתבית:	
Ständiger Wohnort und Land: <u>SKALA, BUCCACZ</u>		11. מקום מגורים קבוע וארץ:	
Wohnort und Land während des Krieges: <u>SKALA, BUCCACZ</u>		12. מקום מגורים בזמן המלחמה וארץ:	
Todesdatum und -jahr: <u>1942</u>	14. תאריך/שנת המוות:	Beruf des Opfers: <u>BÄCKER BESITZ</u>	13. מקצוע הניספה:
Todesumstände: <u>erschossen</u>		16. נסיבות המוות:	15. מקום המוות: <u>BUCCACZ</u>
Berichtet von: _____ Ich der/die Unterzeichnete: <u>S. WIESENTHAL</u> wohnhaft in (vollständige Adresse): <u>POSTADRESSASSE 5, 1190 WIEN</u> Bezeichnung zum Opfer (Familie/andere): <u>ONKEL</u>			

**יד ושם**  
ירושלים, הר הזיכרון  
ת.ד. 3477

**דף-נד**  
לרשום פרטי השואה והגיבורה

**יד ושם**  
ירושלים, הר הזיכרון  
ת.ד. 3477

אנא, מלא/י עד כמה שידוע לך

מס' המסמך: <u>57184/3</u>	שם משפחה: <u>Wiesenthal</u>	שם פרטי: <u>Zeide</u>
מס' המסמך: <u>57184/3</u>	שם משפחה: <u>Wiesenthal</u>	שם פרטי: <u>Zeide</u>

The search for Zeide Wiesenthal in the Yad Vashem database reveals the POT record we entered in 1999 as well as another POT for the same person.

## Search for David Wiesenthal

Brooklyn Jan. 14 1946

Werther Herr Simon Wiesenthal.

Men hat mir gelast wien das ihr sucht Asriel Wiesenthal David Wiesenthal und Gerschon Wiesenthal. Ich bin David Wiesenthal ich wolt welen wissen wer ihr sent wer euer Father is gewesen wi er hat geheisen,

Schreibt mir alles genau wer euer ganze familie ist, schreibt mir auch ob ihr weist wegen andere mitglieder fon der familie, und wie sei gefinen sich.

Antwortet mir so schnell wi moglich and ob ihr sent fon unser familie welen mir tuhn alles moglich euch zu helfen.

Aber lost unz wissen sofort,

Schreibt auch ob ihr weist etwas fon Skala wer es ist dort geblieben und wie sei gefinen sich.

Gerschon und Asriel Wiesenthal senen schon beide tot ich bin der einziger geblieben.

Schreibt mir auch wer es ist der Hersch Wiesenthal fon Skala wie auch der Maurice Rapp fon Buczac.

Mit beste gruse erwartendig schnellen antwort.

David Wiesenthal  
 134 E. 35th Str.  
 Brooklyn N.Y.  
 U.S.A.

A letter to Simon.

14 January 1946

"... we learned that you are looking for David, Gershom and Asriel are dead ... tell me about Morris Rapp from Skala."

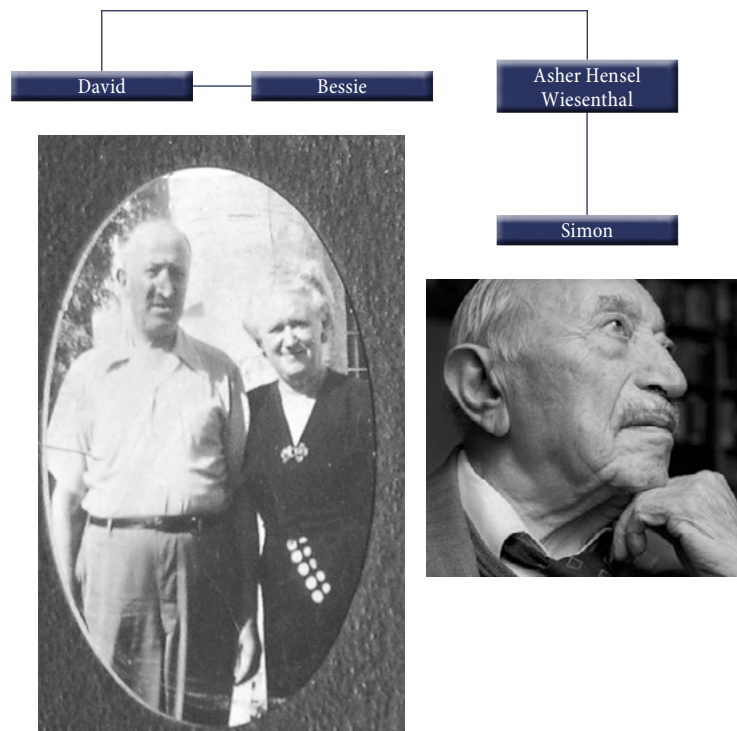
David Wiesenthal  
 134, N. 35th Street  
 Brooklyn, NY  
 USA

42	(M) 4942	Wiesenthal David	Info		F W 31 M
43	433	Wiesenthal Gerschon	Info		M W 10 S
44		Wiesenthal Asriel	Info		M W 7 S
45		Wiesenthal Hersch	Info		F W 40 S
46		Wiesenthal Maurice	Info		F W 12 S
47	(M) 4942	Shagan Jacob	Info	R	M W 37 M
48					

Census matches address of letter.

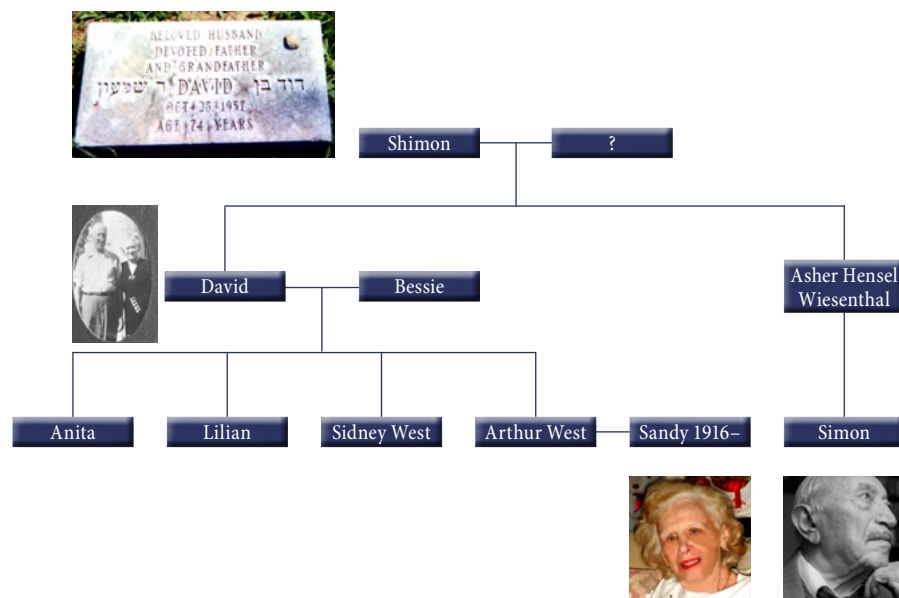
Immediately after the war, on 14 January 1946, seventy years ago, Simon Wiesenthal communicated with David Wiesenthal from Brooklyn, New York, whom I mentioned earlier. David wrote that Simon Wiesenthal was looking for David, Gershom and Asriel. He stated that he was the David that Simon Wiesenthal was looking for, and that Gershom and Asriel were both dead. He asked Simon Wiesenthal to tell him more about Morris Rapp, who was from Simon Wiesenthal's maternal side related to his mother Rosa Rapp.

### David and Simon Wiesenthal (Skala)



David Wiesenthal is Simon Wiesenthal's uncle. The picture demonstrates that they shared a lot of similarities. Over the years, Simon Wiesenthal was in close contact with David and his family in the United States. A few years ago, I met David's daughter-in-law, Sandy West, in Florida.

### Uncle David Wiesenthal



From David's epitaph we learned that his father was named Shimon and thus Simon Wiesenthal, born in 1908, and was named after his late grandfather Shimon who passed away in 1906.



## 1967 Wiesenthal New York Gathering

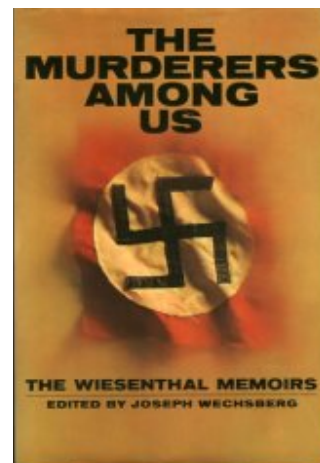
Gathering at the house of Arthur and Sandy West.  
Helene collected names and took pictures.



Front row (left to right): Samuel Wiesenthal (my great-uncle), Simon Wiesenthal, Jacob Wiesenthal (my grandfather; brother of Samuel). Back row (left to right): Benjamin (Boruch Kalman) and Edward Wiesenthal (sons of Samuel). Photograph taken at Wiesenthal family party in honor of Simon Wiesenthal (New York, 1967).



Front row (left to right): Ida Wiesenthal (wife of Jacob; my grandmother), Andrea Wiesenthal (granddaughter of Samuel; your grandpa; me (39 years ago!)), Ethel Wiesenthal Schwartz (my mother). Back: Melvin Schwartz (my dad); Jeanette Wiesenthal (wife of Edward); Rose Wiesenthal (wife of Benjamin); Jacob Wiesenthal (my grandpa, directly behind yours). (New York, 1967).



Sandy used to host family gatherings in her house in New Jersey. My genealogy friend Helene Kenvin-Schwartz took the pictures.

There was an extraordinary similarity between Simon and Helen's grandfather and grand-uncle. So far, however, we have not managed to prove the family relationship between these three men.



## Search for Gershom Wiesenthal

### A letter to Simon

Brooklyn Jan. 14 1946  
 Werther Herr Simon Wiesenthal.  
 Men hat mir gelast wisen das ihr sucht Asriel Wiesenthal David  
 Wiesenthal und Gerschon Wiesenthal. Ich bin David Wiesenthal  
 ich wolt welen wissen wer ihr sent wer euer Father is gewesen  
 wi er hat geheisen,  
 Schreibt mir alles genau wer euer ganze familie ist, schreibt mir  
 auch ob ihr weist wegen andere mitglieder fon der familie, und wie  
 sei gefinen sich.  
 Antwortet mir so schnell wi moglich and ob ihr sent fon unser familie  
 welen mir tuhn alles moglich euch zu helfen.  
 Aber lost unz wissen sofort,  
 Schreibt auch ob ihr weist etwas fon Skala wer es ist dort geblieben  
 und wie sei gefinen sich.  
 Gerschon und Asriel Wiesenthal senen schon beide tot ich bin der  
 einziger geblieben.  
 Schreibt mir auch wer es ist der Hersch Wiesenthal fon Skala  
 wie auch der Maurice Rapp fon Buczacz.  
 Mit beste gruse erwartendig schnellen antwort.  
 David Wiesenthal  
 134 E. 35th. Str.  
 Brooklyn N.Y.  
 U.S.A.

14 January 1946

"... we learned that you are looking for David, Gershom and Asriel. I am David. Gershom and Asriel are dead ... tell me about Morris Rapp from Skala."

David Wiesenthal  
 134, N. 35th Street  
 Brooklyn, NY  
 USA

## Gershom Wiesenthal (Skala)

Tombstone of Gershom ben Shimon at Skala plot at Mount Hebron Cemetery, New York.



Both Gershom and Asriel are buried at the Skala Podolska Wiesenthal family plot at the Mount Hebron Cemetery in New York.

## Asriel Wiesenthal (Skala)

First Name	Last Name	Date of Death (Month / Year)
<input type="text"/>	wiesenthal	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
Block	Reference	Society
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	skalar
<input type="button" value="Search"/>		

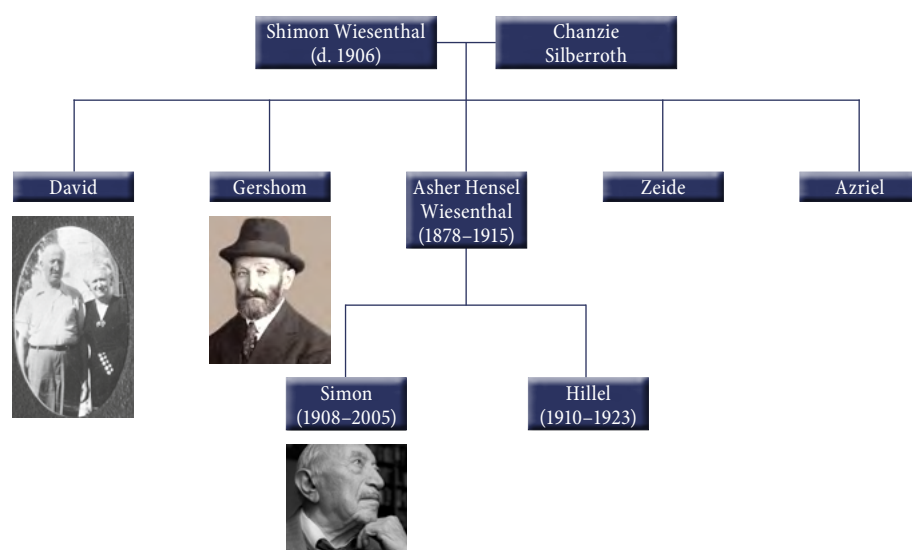
**Search Results - Found 16 matches.**

Last Name, First Name	Location	Society	Date of Death
WIESENTHAL, HORTENSE	9-22-1-PP6-4	SKALAR UV	7/16/1987
WIESENTHAL, DAVID	9-22-1-PP15-10	SKALAR UV	10/25/1957
WIESENTHAL, MILDRED	9-22-1-2-26	SKALAR UV	11/27/1951
WIESENTHAL, NATHAN	9-22-1-2-27	SKALAR UV	10/11/1951
WIESENTHAL, GUSSIE	9-22-1-1-2	SKALAR UV	7/6/1936
WIESENTHAL, ISRAEL	9-22-1-PP6-10	SKALAR UV	6/22/1933
WIESENTHAL, STELLA	9-22-1-5-29	SKALAR UV	9/8/1955
WIESENTHAL, BESSIE	9-22-1-PP15-9	SKALAR UV	10/8/1955
WIESENTHAL, HYMAN	9-22-1-4-21	SKALAR UV	8/26/1932
WIESENTHAL, MAX	9-22-1-5-20	SKALAR UV	2/7/1945
WIESENTHAL, GERSHON	9-22-1-5-14	SKALAR UV	12/10/1939
WIESENTHAL, ANNIE	9-22-1-PP6-9	SKALAR UV	9/15/1950
WIESENTHAL, JOSEPH	9-22-1-5-30	SKALAR UV	3/14/1947
WIESENTHAL, HUDIA	9-22-1-5-13	SKALAR UV	1/13/1933
WIESENTHAL, CLARA	9-22-1-2-3	SKALAR UV	3/5/1931
WIESENTHAL, FRANK	9-22-1-4-7	SKALAR UV	11/11/1919



Skala plot at Mount Hebron Cemetery, New York. [www.mounthebroncemetery.com](http://www.mounthebroncemetery.com)

## Family of Simon Wiesenthal

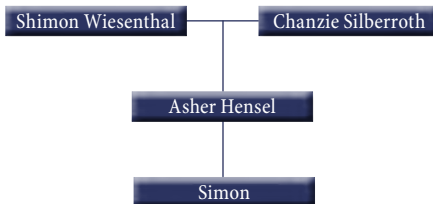


To sum up thus far, Simon, son of Asher, had four uncles (David, Gershom, Azriel and Zeide), only one of whom was still alive in 1946. He was the grandson of Shimon and Chanzie Wiesenthal.

## Part IV: Simon's Grandparents and Great-Uncles

### Marriage record of Shimon and Chanzie

Surname	Givenname	Year	Type	Akt	Page	Event	Signature	Age	Sex
WIESENTHAL	Simon	1858	M		1		28	1841	M
SILBEROTH	Chanze	1858	M		1		28	1841	F



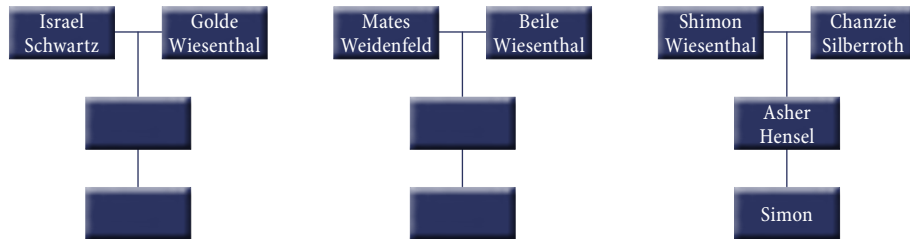
The marriage record of Shimon and Chanzie Wiesenthal reveals that they lived in Skala in house number 27. But the house had other tenants, too.

This is a typical marriage record recording the house numbers of the bride and the groom.

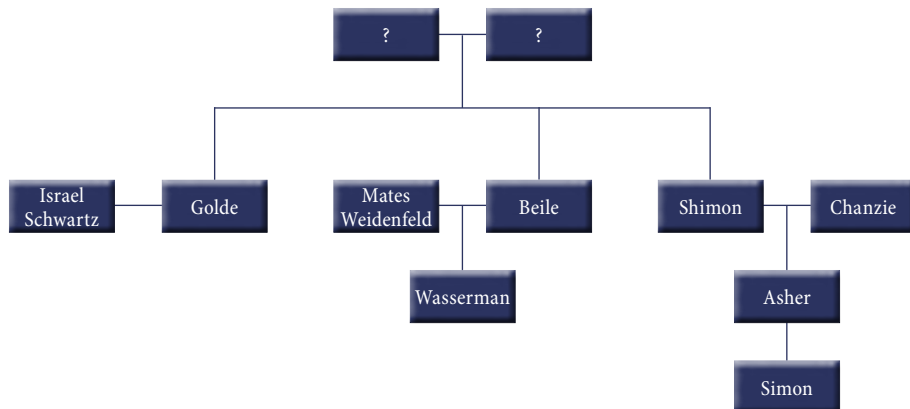
29	448	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	28	1841	M
85	27	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
10	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
22	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
3	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
26	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
7	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
15	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
20	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
29	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
25	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
14	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
26	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
28	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
49	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
11	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
22	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
19	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
25	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F
23	378	Chanze Silberroth	1858	1	Shimon Wiesenthal	1858	1	28	1841	F

### Who else lived in house 27?

Golde and Beile Wiesenthal also lived in house number 27. Golde married Israel Schwartz; Beile married Mates Weidenfeld.



### How did I detect Mates Weidenfeld & Beile Wiesenthal



Kudrynce bei Mielnica. So weit ich mich erinnern kann, war noch ein Cousin Weidenfeld in Trembowla und Wassermann in Skala. in Buczacz selbst lebte ausser mir noch ein Bruder meines Vaters. Beide Wiesenthals der Inhaber einer Bäckerei war. Ich war bis zum Jahre 1944 in Polen.

“As far as I can remember, there was another cousin Weidenfeld from Trembowla and Wasserman from Skala.”

(Simon Wiesenthal to Herman Wiesenthal, Ramat Gan, 1954)

I know so from personal letters. Simon wrote to Herman Wiesenthal about his cousin Weidenfeld from Skala.

The search for Weidenfeld was easy. Many Weidenfelds were murdered in the Shoah and their records can be found in the Yad Vashem database. On the left is a picture of Shlomo Weidenfeld near the grave of his mother, Beile Wiesenthal, the great-aunt of Simon Wiesenthal.



Shlomo Weidenfeld near grave of his mother Beile Wiesenthal.

Application of Moses Leiser Wasserman.

### How did I detect Schwartz?

ABRAHAM J. SCHWARTZ  
85-80 SOMERSET STREET  
JAMAICA, N. Y. 11432  
AETEL 1-0620

EINGELANGT  
20. Mai 1965  
Erl. ....

5/14/65

Dear Cousin:

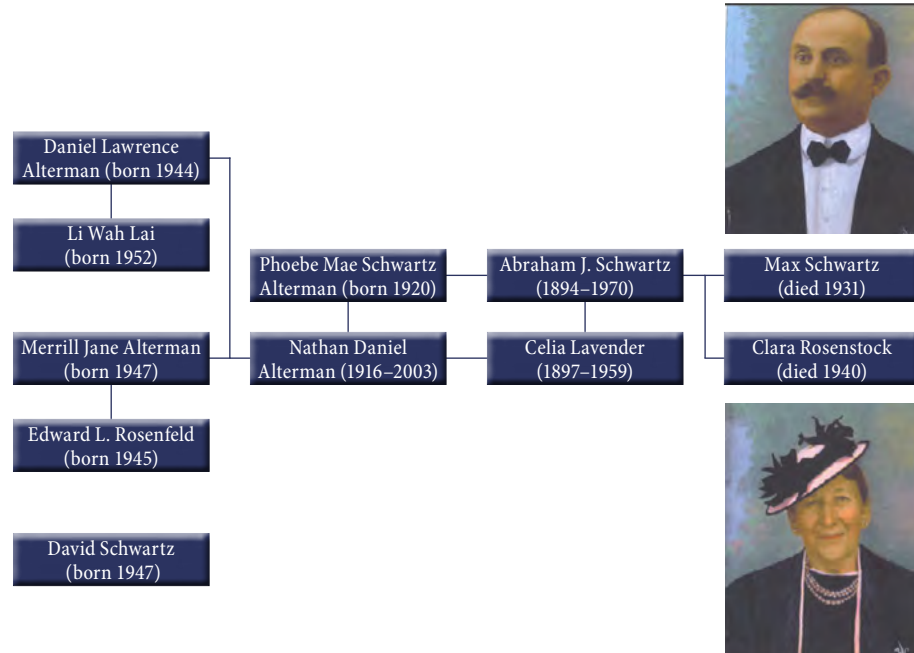
I have kept in touch with some of the Wiesenthals - I think Israel Wiesenthal's sons - Jack Wiesenthal who lives in Boston - and I am writing to him today- and Max Wiesenthal - whom I am told moved to Texas. I know I will get some interesting information from Jack Wiesenthal, and when I hear from him, will certainly convey the information to you.

Abraham J. Schwartz wrote a letter to his cousin Simon Wiesenthal in which he stated that he kept in contact with some of the Wiesenthals.



### From A.J. Schwartz to Alterman

Was Max Schwartz the son of Golde Wiesenthal and Israel Schwartz?



A family tree of Abraham Schwartz shows that Max Schwarz was his grandfather.

### Max Meshulam bar Israel Schwart

When Merry and Danny went to the cemetery, they found Max Meshulam's tombstone on which it states that he is the son of Israel Schwartz.



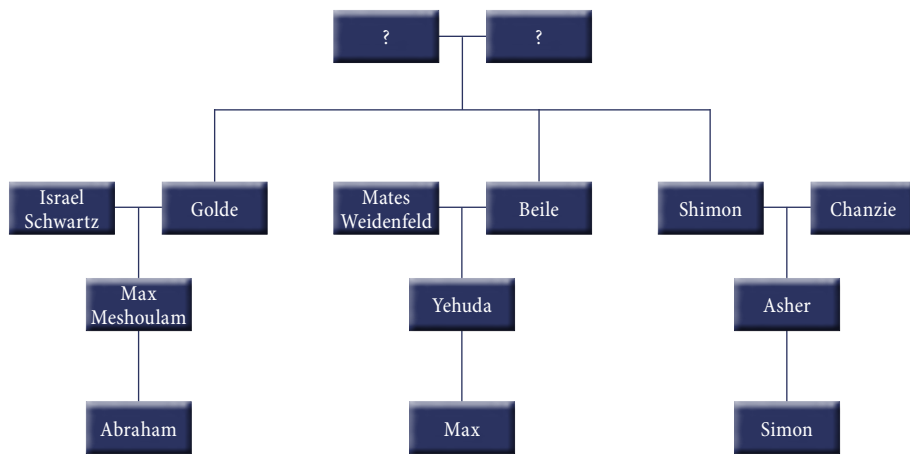
## Mount Lebanon Cemetery

*Glendale - Queens County - New York*  
*A Place to Remember and Be Remembered*





Simon Wiesenthal and his second cousins



Abraham Schwartz and Simon Wiesenthal were thus second cousins, related through their grandparents Golde and Shimon Wiesenthal, and so were Simon and Max Mermelstein, the grandson of Mates Weidenfeld.

They survived and they kept in touch!

## Part V: Simon's Murdered Family

1942

- Birth of Jeffrey Allen Frant<sup>195</sup> on 29 March, in New York, New York County, New York, USA.
- Death of Chaim Wiesenthal<sup>498</sup>.
- Death of Regine Ebner [Wiesenthal]<sup>496</sup> in Buczac, Poland.
- Death of Yehudit Ida Geller<sup>624</sup> in Chelmo, Poland.
- Death of Henryk Ebner<sup>497</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Birth of David Weidenfeld<sup>402</sup>.
- Death of Wilhelm Ebner<sup>531</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Death of Artur Ebner<sup>532</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Death of Yehuda Weidenfeld<sup>623</sup> on 30 June.
- Death of Zaide Wiesenthal<sup>593</sup> in Buchach, Ukraine.
- Birth of Etta Schwartzbach<sup>433</sup>.
- Death of Malke Wiesenthal [Brounstein]<sup>650</sup> on 11 July.
- Death of Rosa Rapp<sup>601</sup> on 23 August, in Belzec camp.
- Birth of Carol (Chaye Rachel) Zauderer<sup>440</sup> on 23 September, in Brooklyn, Kings, New York.
- Birth of Phyllis Pessia Lea Zauderer<sup>437</sup> on 23 September, in Brooklyn, Kings, New York.

1943

- Death of Shyfra Weidenfeld [Stock]<sup>627</sup> on 5 February, in Borschiv Ghetto.
- Death of Solomon (Shlomo) Weidenfeld<sup>626</sup> on 5 June, in Borschiv Ghetto.
- Death of Matel Mathilda Weidenfeld<sup>583</sup> on 6 June, in Ghetto of Borschow, 15 km form SKala.
- Death of Hinde Weidenfeld<sup>582</sup> on 6 June, in Ghetto of Borschow, 15 km form SKala.
- Death of Fidusia Weidenfeld<sup>581</sup> on 6 June, in Ghetto of Borschow, 15 km form SKala.
- Death of Dvora Doba Weidenfeld [Pilatkowcer]<sup>532</sup> in June, in Ghetto of Borschow, 15 km form SKala.
- Death of Baruch Moshe Weidenfeld<sup>531</sup> in June, in Ghetto of Borschow, 15 km form SKala.
- Death of Ciriel Wasserman [Weidenfeld]<sup>620</sup>.
- Death of Leisor Eliezer Wasserman<sup>558</sup>.
- Death of Nusia Wasserman<sup>455</sup> in Skala-Podil's'ka, Ukraine.
- Death of Regina Wasserman [Klinger]<sup>559</sup> in Skala Podolska.
- Death of Max Wasserman<sup>434</sup> in Skala-Podil's'ka, Ukraine.
- Death of Mechel Wasserman<sup>509</sup> in Skala-Podil's'ka, Ukraine.
- Death of Pesia Wasserman [Yusem]<sup>561</sup> in Skala-Podil's'ka, Ukraine.
- Birth of Leslie Unknown<sup>545</sup> on 2 August, in New York.
- Birth of Stephen Carl Klass<sup>503</sup> on 13 December, in Brooklyn, Kings, New York.
- Death of Rachel Weidenfeld [Kliegler]<sup>619</sup> in about June, in Skala, Galicia.
- Death of Etta Schwartzbach<sup>432</sup> in about June.
- Death of Yeghriel Schwartzbach<sup>557</sup> in about June.
- Death of Max Schwartzbach<sup>431</sup> in about June.
- Death of Rebecca Ryvtzia Schwartzbach [Weidenfeld]<sup>550</sup> in about June.
- Death of Shyke Oziash Yehoshua Weidenfeld<sup>507</sup> in about 1943, in German POW camp in Chelm, Poland.

1944

- Birth of Betty Weidenfeld [Jane]<sup>224</sup> on 23 March.
- Birth of Daniel Lawrence Alterman<sup>201</sup>.
- Birth of Jeffrey Weidenfeld<sup>240</sup>.

1945

- Birth of Edward Ed L. Rosenfeld<sup>204</sup>.
- Birth of Howard Rothberg<sup>219</sup> on 28 July.
- Death of Fanny Goltzman<sup>544</sup> in October.

1939

- Birth of Gerard Jitzhak Kreisberg<sup>17</sup> on 9 August, in Rotterdam, Holland.
- Death of Sigmund (Sigismund Schlomo) Freud<sup>117</sup> on 23 September, in London, UK.

1940

- Death of Berish Dov Kanner<sup>100</sup> on 15 February, in Buchenwald, Germany.

1942

- Death of Freida Kanner [Stern]<sup>99</sup> on 9 June.
- Death of Paika Muller [Dyck]<sup>12</sup> in Buchach, Ukraine.
- Death of Linka Silberschlag [Dyck]<sup>40</sup> in Belzec, Poland.
- Death of Israel Moses Dyck<sup>44</sup>.
- Death of Aba Stern<sup>105</sup> in Buchach, Ukraine.
- Death of Meir Chaim Stern<sup>101</sup>.
- Death of Feibish Dyck<sup>36</sup> in Belzec, Poland.
- Death of Amali Malcia Weiss [Dyck]<sup>38</sup> in Belzec, Poland.
- Death of Sara Yetti Hirshhorn [Stern]<sup>107</sup> in about 1942.

1943

- Death of Israel Hirshhorn<sup>108</sup>.

1944

- Death of Zofia Stern [Segal]<sup>106</sup> in Monasterzyska, Poland.

1939

- Death of Eisig Halpern<sup>76</sup> in Soviet prison.
- Birth of Gerard Jitzhak Kreisberg<sup>42</sup> on 9 August, in Rotterdam, Holland.

1940

- Census of Moses Maurice Rapp<sup>71</sup> in Selwyn Ave, Bronx, New York, USA.
- Census of Anna Rapp<sup>72</sup> in Selwyn Ave, Bronx, New York, USA.

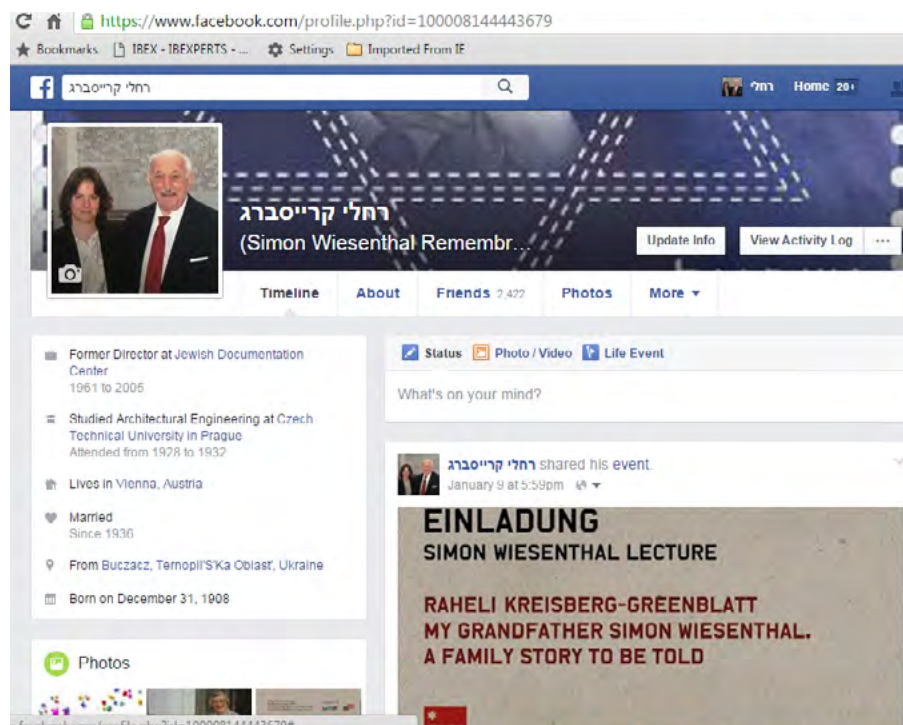
1942

- Death of Rosa Horowitz<sup>51</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Death of Abraham Horowitz<sup>52</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Death of Mendel Horowitz<sup>50</sup> in Belzec camp.
- Death of Sosia Horowitz [Rapp]<sup>49</sup> on 23 August, in Belzec camp.
- Death of Rosa Rapp<sup>74</sup> on 23 August, in Belzec camp.

**42 Murdered!**

The information I have shared with you is accessible through the family tree I created with the use of the MyHeritage software. I currently have 42 records of murdered family members stemming from both families: Wiesenthal and Muller.

## Part VI: Simon Wiesenthal Remembrance Wall



<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008144443679>

Raheli Kreisberg  
Biologist  
[racheli@ibexperts.com](mailto:racheli@ibexperts.com)

Quotation: Raheli Kreisberg, My Grandfather Simon Wiesenthal. A Family Story to be Told,  
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation 3 (2017) 1, 146-166.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/CTT/2017-1/2017-1\\_CTT\\_Kreisberg/CTT\\_Kreisberg01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/CTT/2017-1/2017-1_CTT_Kreisberg/CTT_Kreisberg01.pdf)

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