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Post-Holocaust Migrations from Poland to America

An Exercise in Microhistory

Abstract

This article seeks to reconstruct the trajectory of a Polish Jewish family, the Cyngels, from their pre-war life up to their migration to America in the early 1950s, encompassing their various experiences of war (survival in Poland and the Soviet Union) and of the aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland and Germany. It seeks to highlight the value of a microhistorical approach towards post-Holocaust migrations, as well as the need for a deeper understanding of the different group identities of Jewish migrants. The article adopts a comparative perspective, examining the experiences of the Cyngel family alongside those of other Jewish survivors from their hometown in Poland. Attentive to the agency of Jewish migrants in responding to the challenges of their post-war situation, the article pursues a history from below of the different displaced persons camps through which the Cyngels passed, complemented by a historiographic analysis drawing above all on camp administrations archives, alongside archival collections located in Poland and those of diverse international institutions. In addition, the article revisits established opinions on different aspects of post-Holocaust Jewish migration, such as the experiences that shaped the trajectories of migrants and the strategies which they adopted in response to the various constraints imposed on them by the International Refugee Organization (IRO).

Froim and Pesa Cyngel raised five children in Lubartów, a small town near Lublin, a typical Polish shtetl, which in 1939 had 8,121 inhabitants, including 3,411 Jews. Abram, the eldest son, was born in 1906, followed by Dawid in 1908, Szlama in 1911 and the twins Laja and Naftal in March 1914. When the Polish authorities registered the population in 1932, the mother Pesa had already passed away. Abram had left home and settled with Ruchla Hochberger – apparently without marrying – with whom he had three children.¹ Dawid, Szlama, Laja, and Naftal still lived with their father Froim on ulica Lubelska 21, the town's main street and the road to Lublin.²

This article follows the trajectory of the Cyngel family during and after the Holocaust, especially that of the three brothers who survived, and examines how the wartime experience of persecution shaped their post-war migration. The documentation available on this particular family is sufficiently rich to allow for a reconstruction of their migration from Poland to America mapped against their pre-war situation and wartime experiences.³ The aim is not to fill in the documentary gaps

1 State Archives in Lublin (APL), 35/43/0/7/45/24-25, 1932 Lubartów 1932 population register, volume 6.

2 APL, 35/43/0/7/42/180-181, Lubartów 1932 population register, volume 4.

3 The documents are held in three sets of archives: archives from Lubartów, the birthplace of the Cyngel family, held in the State Archives in Lublin; persecution and wartime related archives and documents concerning the aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, all held at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (ŻIH); and migration archives generated by international organisations like the International Refugee Organization (IRO) held in the Bad Arolsen Archives, in the International Tracing Service (ITS), and in the French National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine near Paris (AN). I have not yet had the opportunity to consult former Soviet or Amer-

with contextual elements, but rather to study intensively the available documentation in order to consider what light the experiences of these individuals may shed on the general context, or in other words to study how their personal initiatives were frustrated or advanced by the policies of international institutions and how diverse factors relating to the profile of individual migrants, such as their individual experience of war, their life situation, or their group identity, intersected favourably or unfavourably with the imperatives of these institutions. The scope of this article is limited to a consideration of other survivors from Lubartów, allowing for a strict and controlled comparison.⁴

Historiography on post-Holocaust migrations usually relies on personal testimonies alongside the archives of camp administrations and international organisations and consequently offers a 'static' vision of the migrations.⁵ The microhistorical approach adopted here should be seen not as contradictory but complementary to this historiography 'from above', as it allows for a consideration of the entanglement of individual and familial trajectories with more global tensions and constraints. It also enables an exploration of how diverse aspects of each family member's identity and wartime experience took on significance at different stages of their migrant trajectory. We can access this intersecting perspective not by consulting specific testimonies, but rather by following the traces contained in archives relating to a family that otherwise does not stand out from others amidst the mass migration which took place in the wake of war.⁶ By following the trajectory of the Cyngel family, I will consider how their experience changes our understanding of certain crucial aspects of the migration process: the circumstances of departure, directions of movement, pro-

ican immigration archives. Although this article focusses on trajectories within the European continent, in the future the aim is to arrive at a more encompassing study of the phenomenon by mobilising such materials. One peculiarity of the combination of documents used here is that it does not rely on unusual sources or testimonies but on documentation also available for other Lubartówians and for Jewish migrants in general. One of the very first challenges which the researcher faces is that of establishing continuity amidst archival diversity where documents have very different purposes and refer to the same family under different names (I use the spelling "Cyngel" as well as the first name as signed by the members of the family in the documents, but they were also referred to as Cingel, Cingiel, Zyngel, or Zingel – the date and place of birth are usually crucial in confirming identities).

- 4 By consulting the ITS, I was able to reconstruct the migration trajectory of 37 persons connected to Lubartów born before 1939 and 14 born during or after the war, giving a combined total of 51. The group encompasses persons who were born or who lived in Lubartów. The shtetl does not function here as a mere limit, rather as a common denominator and a starting point. For example, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and USC Shoah Foundation video testimonies reference 26 persons, most of whom spent a short time in the Lubartów Ghetto. Only where necessary did I mention the names of other Lubartowians, opting for the most part to refer to them only via archival references. Although allowed by ITS privacy policy, disclosure did not seem necessary.
- 5 Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope. The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany*, Cambridge 2002; Avinoam J. Patt, Michael Berkowitz (ed.), "We Are Here". *New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, Detroit 2010; Angelika Königseder, Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope. Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, Evanston 2001; Menachem Z. Rosensaft (ed.), *Life Reborn. Jewish Displaced Persons, 1945–1951: Conference Proceedings*, Washington, D.C., January 14–17, 2000, Washington, D.C. 2001; Katarzyna Person, *Dipisi. Żydzi z Polski w obozach DP w amerykańskiej i brytyjskiej strefach okupacyjnych Niemiec, 1945–1948* [Displaced Persons. Jews from Poland in the DP Camps in the American and British Occupation Zones of Germany, 1945–1948], Warsaw, 2019.
- 6 The biographical approach has been critically applied since the beginning of Italian microhistory, but has more recently been harnessed by a growing literature dealing with migrants and transnational history. On the classic approach, see: Giovanni Levi, *Les usages de la biographie* [The Uses of Biography], in: *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 6 (1989), 1325–1336; for a microhistorical approach to migration and transnational history, see among others: Francesca Trivellato, *Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?*, in: *California Italian Studies* 2 (2011) 1; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels. In Search of Leo Africanus*, New York 2006; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien. Travails & Encounters in the Early Modern World*, Waltham 2011. For similar promising articulations of microhistory and Holocaust studies, see: Claire Zalc/Tal Bruttman (ed.), *Microhistories of the Holocaust*, New York/Oxford 2017.

jected and final destinations, as well the legal status of migrants. I will also consider how persecution and migration reorganised the family and how this evolution shaped, collectively and individually, the trajectories of the family members. In sum, my goal is to understand what the family made of their migration and what migration made of them.

From the Holocaust to Migration

In testimonies, migrant trajectories are often recollected in retrospect as taking the form of a more or less straight line towards a final destination, overarching the pauses, opportunities, and coincidences which nevertheless punctuated it. Migration archives depict a different situation, one in which constraints of all kinds encountered by Jewish migrants altered pathways and required shifting responses. Emphasising the agency of migrants does not entail neglecting the weight of the constraints placed on them; on the contrary, paying closer attention to the adjustments and the evolutions of migration trajectories brings into sharper relief what the wider context was capable of imposing on migrants and the extent to which their position within this context may have forced them to redirect their path.⁷

In Migration

The historiography on displaced persons (DPs) tends to present the Central European context of Jewish migrations as a waiting period during which the political, cultural, and religious structures recovered by survivors were reconsolidated. The emphasis is habitually placed on the activities of the Central Committee for Liberated Jews in the American Zone of Occupation, which played a key role in implementing administrative autonomy for the Jewish DPs and the displaced persons camp in Föhrenwald near Munich. Examining the case of the Cyngel family, a different scenario, one in which Jewish DPs were constantly on the move until their final departure abroad, comes into view. The Cyngels passed through four camps before leaving Europe, only ending up in Föhrenwald in 1951. While they did not cross any borders between 1946 and 1951, migration cannot be neatly segmented into two separate journeys, one from Poland to Germany and the other from Germany to America: It rather assumes the form of an ongoing process which took place over the space of five years. Reconstructing this journey across Germany also allows for a reassessment of the geography of the camps in Central Europe.

When they first arrived from Poland, the Cyngels applied for protection from international organisations under the supervision of the United Nations at a DP assembly point near Berlin known as Camp Schlachtensee (also known as Düppel).⁸ In addition to its higher population and superior capacity compared to Föhrenwald (in that it could accommodate more than 6,000 people), Schlachtensee was the easternmost camp in Germany and thus the gateway to the country from Poland. Entering Schlachtensee not only afforded migrants the legal protection of the DP camp system, but also gave them access to its material infrastructure. The vast majority of DPs in Schlachtensee were Jewish: 5,092 Jews and 22 stateless persons had been registered

7 For an overview of different approaches to migrant agency in migration studies, see: Oliver Bakewell, *Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory*, in: *Journal in Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36 (2010) 10, 1689-1708.

8 For statistical surveys of the DP Camps population encountered by the Cyngel family, see the appendix.

a few days before the Cyngels arrived. Schlachtensee was thus very different in character from the other Berlin camp, which was overcrowded and contained a melting pot of nationalities.⁹ Whether one ended up at one or the other camp immediately resulted in a very different migration and accommodation experience. Schlachtensee, for example, offered opportunities that were non-existent at other assembly points. Newly arrived migrants could apply for support not only from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) like every potential DP, but also from the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or Joint).

This choice was neither random or spontaneous nor part of a fixed strategy but rather continuously elaborated along the way. The family registered with the Berlin Jewish Community when they arrived.¹⁰ Although the community seems, according to various JDC reports, to have been lacking in resources, it nevertheless played a key role in channelling newcomers towards mostly Jewish assembly points. Seen from this perspective, navigation in the Jewish DP camp system was a co-construct between migrants, international organisations, and Jewish local and international institutions.

The Berlin Blockade led to the closure of the Schlachtensee camp in July 1948, so the Cyngels were forced to set out for Gabersee in the American Zone of Occupation near Wasserburg, another Jewish DP camp, which itself closed on 30 June 1950. Following the slow decline of the population in its camps, the IRO decided in early 1949 to dismantle some of its infrastructure and to gather DPs in fewer assembly points.¹¹ Yet the Gabersee camp remained at full capacity up until its closure.¹² The relocation of the DPs was not only a response to an administrative imperative, it also served to control the migrants as they were forced to fill out new forms, confirm their status with new authorities, renew their support, and – as we will see later – reconsider their migration plans. This tight control is materialised in the cards which the Cyngels like all other Jewish DPs were given: Covered in stamps, they came affixed with the injunction that bearers were to carry them “at all times”.

After the Gabersee camp closed, the Cyngel family reached the Feldafing camp, the first predominantly Jewish DP camp, opened in May 1945 not far from Munich. While the vast majority of the population was Jewish when the Cyngel family arrived, the situation quickly evolved here. In Feldafing, Jewish DPs had represented 94.8 per cent of the camp’s population in July 1950, but just a year later they were in the minority. The population of the camp itself also decreased: With a capacity of 2,450, only 1,779 DPs were present in October 1951 (compared to 2,617 in July 1950), including only 32 Jews among a very diverse population.¹³ While there were still 1,585 DPs in April 1952, in the space of a couple of months the reorganisation of the DP population had pushed the Jewish DPs towards the exit and to the nearby camp of Föhrenwald. The latter was in fact almost empty when the Cyngels arrived in 1951. Capable of hosting 4,200 DPs, it contained only 1,779 upon their arrival, of whom 1,696 were registered as Jewish.¹⁴

9 ITS, 3.1.1.0, UNRRA Statistical Report, 9 August 1946.

10 Data regarding Jewish DP Cards registered by the Jewish Community in Berlin is available on the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=20702 (18 March 2020).

11 AN, AJ 43 825; ITS, 3.1.1.0, Letter of the International Tracing Service in US Zone and list of closed facilities, 4 August 1949.

12 ITS, 3.1.1.0, Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 23 April 1950.

13 ITS, 3.1.1.0, Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 19 July 1950; Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 19 October 1951. For complete figures, see appendix.

14 ITS, 3.1.1.0, Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 19 October 1951.

The path traced by the Cyngels thus followed the shifting geography of the DP camp system in Germany. As an entry point into Central Europe, Berlin was initially at its heart. Under the pressure, however, of international tensions and the internal reorganisation of the IRO, its centre of gravity then moved decisively towards the American Zone of Occupation.

In Search of a Destination

This constant instability posed ever new challenges for the Cyngel family. At each stage, Dawid and Dora were forced to re-evaluate the possibilities open to them and to envisage a new destination.¹⁵ During the course of their migration, the Cyngels considered three different destinations before finally opting for a fourth.¹⁶ Their shifting plans reflect the tension between their migration plans, pursuing real or imagined opportunities, and pressures from the IRO.

Upon arrival in Germany, Dawid, Dora, and their five-month-old daughter Chawa, as well as the two brothers Naftal and Szlama, all declared their desire to emigrate to Palestine. Later, upon leaving the Berlin area in 1948, their intention was clearly to depart for the United States. They were in turn frustrated in this ambition by the US Congress, which adopted the Displaced Persons Act in June 1948: Until its revision in 1950, the DP Act strongly restricted immigration from the newly formed Eastern Bloc, de facto forbidding East-Central European Jews from entering the USA.¹⁷ The Cyngel family nevertheless continued to entertain the notion of emigrating to the United States for a while, with Palestine in retrospect always having constituted more of a default destination for the family. Most likely, it represented for them, as it did for many survivors, a secondary choice, almost a backup plan: less an illustration of Zionist enthusiasm than a pragmatic response to the demands of international agencies which immediately forced migrants to formulate their own resettlement plans.

The American impasse ultimately compelled the Cyngels to declare their intention to seek entry into Australia in 1950 when they joined the Feldafing camp and registered with the JDC office in Paris.¹⁸ Circumstances drove them into a corner: where previously moving from one camp to another had allowed them to delay their final departure, after Föhrenwald they had run out of options. The final chapter of the resettlement process of the DP population under the supervision of the IRO forced the Cyngels to make a choice between integrating into the local German economy and immediate departure. They reacted by accelerating their migration abroad and applying for resettlement in Canada on 8 November 1951. Cornered, they opted for a secure destination and on 16 November Dawid and his family embarked on their journey to the American continent.¹⁹

¹⁵ The development of their plans is reflected at various stages on their DP cards updated by the international organisations: ITS, 3.1.1.1, AEF DP Registration Record, Cards for David, Naftali, Dora, and Chawa Zingel and Szloma Cingel.

¹⁶ Stating a destination was only the first of many steps in the emigration process. This usually led to the creation of an application file that triggered a review process by the projected destination authorities. Many states dragged their feet in order to prevent mass migration or applications from specific groups. For example, South American countries restricted Jewish emigration in 1947. AN, AJ 43 566 IRO Geneva Headquarters, correspondence regarding migrations policies. For a general perspective, see: Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake. Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford 2012.

¹⁷ Mel Schiff, *President Truman and the Jewish DPs, 1945–46. The Untold Story*, in: *American Jewish History*, 99 (2015) 4, 327–352.

¹⁸ ITS, 3.1.3.1, Index Card AJDC of David and Dora Cingel.

¹⁹ ITS, 3.2.1.1, C3235, Resettlement registration forms for David, Dora, Chawa, and Szlama Cingel.

Seeking International Protection

Migrants were called on continually by international organisations and camps administrations to declare their reasons for leaving behind their previous lives and birthplaces. In telling their stories, they sought to make a case for why they should receive the assistance of international organisations, as the granting of aid was not as automatic as one former camp director of camp seemed to believe when he declared that “an order was issued from above, I think from Washington, that every Jew for the very reason that he is a Jew, is eligible for UNRRA assistance”.²⁰ Despite being received sympathetically by the authorities, Jewish survivors were very much screened and controlled. Initially organised into general and imprecise groups in the immediate aftermath of the war, when the IRO took over from the UNRRA in 1947, migrants were subject to a retrospective screening process which treated them on a familial or individual basis.²¹ One consequence of the application of this process to the Jewish population, alongside others, was made clear in the eligibility manual of the IRO: “A Jewish refugee, as any other, must produce some evidence that he is a bona fide refugee within the mandate of the IRO. [...]he applicant must make it plausible why he does not wish to return.”²²

The shadow cast by extermination soon ceased to lend automatic legitimation to migrants’ claims. The Cyngels’ registration in Berlin on 15 August 1946 appears to indicate that the family had left Poland in haste while an antisemitic climate pervaded Poland. A growing historiography has analysed the difficulties encountered by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust from Poland: to the absence of support from relatives who had not returned and would not return were added the difficulties involved in recovering housing and employment. In addition, survivors faced a hostility marked by countless acts of violence, including the infamous Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946.²³ In Lubartów, where the Cyngels were from, an unidentified group of young men threw a grenade into a small Jewish grocery store in 1945 at a time when Jewish survivors had barely started to go back to work.²⁴ Soon after, the Cyngel family departed from Lubartów towards Szczecin, in territory annexed by Poland from Germany, after the briefest of stays. A group photo taken in Lubartów and dated 6 June 1946 is their last trace left.²⁵ From an early stage, their intention was to leave their hometown and they showed no desire to return, wasting no time in selling their family home. The choice of Szczecin as a first step, like the choice of Schlachtensee near Berlin soon after, was not coincidental, since from as early as 1945 the border

20 Malcom Proudfoot, *European Refugees. A Study of Forced Population Movements*, Evanston 1956, 350.

21 Gerard Daniel Cohen, *Politics of Recognition. Jewish Refugees in Relief Policies and Human Rights Debates, 1945–1950*, in: *Immigrants and Minorities*, 24 (2006) 2, 125–143.

22 AN, AJ 43 185, Procedure for determining which persons are within the mandate of the organization (eligibility determination), 136.

23 Jan T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, New York 2007; David Bankier (ed.), *The Jews Are Coming Back. The Return of the Jews in their Countries of Origin after WWII*, Jerusalem 2005; Martin Dean/Constantin Goschler/Philipp Ther (ed.), *Robbery & Restitution. The Conflict Over Jewish Property in Europe*, New York 2007; David Engel, *Patterns Of Anti-Jewish Violence In Poland, 1944–1946*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998), 43–85; Audrey Kichelewski, *Déshonorés par des actes barbares ... Comprendre la violence antijuive en Pologne au sortir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale [Dishonoured by Barbaric Acts ... Understanding Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland after the Second World War]*, in: *Histoire@Politique* 26 (2015), available online: https://www.histoire-politique.fr/documents/26/dossier/pdf/HP26_Dossier_Audrey_Kichelewski_def.pdf (18 March 2020).

24 *Les Amis de Lubartów, Hurbn Levertov. A matseyve Levertov un Levertover kdoyshim [The Destruction of Lubartów. A Memorial for Lubartów and the Martyrs of Lubartów]*, Paris 1947, 9.

25 *Ibid.*, 108.

city had become a gathering point on the escape route to Germany.²⁶ There is no direct indication in the Cyngel family's files of a prior intention to depart for Szczecin, yet the moment of departure, the liquidation of their property and the road taken, which they later reconstructed primarily in terms of flight from antisemitic violence, indicate a prior maturation process of their migration plans. The more general context of antisemitism seems to have been precipitating factors rather than the fundamental motivation behind their departure.

In five cases amongst the Jews from Lubartów, the absence of surviving relatives was given as the sole reason for departure. Some of the comments made by IRO officials in response were almost brutal, rejecting applicants who had not been specific enough on how persecution had affected their lives or who had been late in leaving the territory. "Genuine refugees", as labelled by the IRO, should have been forcibly displaced during or after the war and never have been resettled in their original place of residence.²⁷ In all the documents completed by the Cyngel family, 'persecution' is presented as the trigger, without any further details given. This cursory explanation, almost never expanded on in the migration files filled out by Jewish survivors, appears to be a formality designed to meet the conditions of "valid objections" against repatriation listed by the IRO: "persecution, fear of persecution and political objections to returning to a given country", as well as "compelling family reasons".²⁸

Other Lubartówians were more specific. Some cited "racial persecution", two more specifically citing pogroms as their reason. Only one file explicitly cited anti-communism, evoking the fear of suffering which the "reign of communists" in Poland would bring with it: a valid reason for the IRO, since "economic objections [...] may be evidence of a well-founded political objection", a reasoning which opened the way for an anti-communist legitimization of refugee status widely used by the Soviet, Baltic, and Ukrainian populations in particular.²⁹ Another cited both forms of persecution: racial and political. Three files cited as the sole reason the desire to emigrate and as such were unlikely to satisfy the IRO, which had issued the warning that: "The mere desire to migrate to Palestine is not considered acceptable as a valid objection", that such migrants would be considered "economic migrants" and therefore excluded from the mandate and protection of the organisation.³⁰

In its manual, the IRO also warned that in cases where claimants arrived with "all plans made, such as passports, visas, travel arrangements and business affairs duly settled, the presumption arises that the individuals are emigrants rather than *bona fide* refugees and displaced persons".³¹ Many applicants were effectively excluded from the mandate of the IRO because they had taken steps to obtain a passport before migrating abroad. The Cyngel family for their part risked falling foul of this stipulation since they had sold their house before leaving. Their example highlights that, while the IRO made a clear distinction between refugees forced to leave and economic migrants freely arranging their departure, the two logics overlapped. The different explanatory factors, economic and political, need not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

26 Achim Wörn, Jews in Szczecin, 1945–50. At the Crossroad between Emigration and Assimilation, in: *Region, Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia* 6 (2017) 1, 55-85.

27 See the different individual decisions regarding eligibility given by the Review Board of the IRO: AN, AJ 43 483.

28 AN, AJ 43 185, Procedure, 137.

29 *Ibid.*, 137; Cohen, In War's Wake; Juliette Denis, Complices de Hitler ou victimes de Staline? Les déplacés baltes en Allemagne de la sortie de guerre à la guerre froide [Hitler's Accomplices or Stalin's Victims? Baltic DPs in Germany from the End of the War to the Cold War], in: *Le Mouvement Social* 3 (2013) 244, 81-98.

30 *Ibid.*

31 AN, AJ 43 185, Procedure, 137.

Family Reconfiguration

Dawid, Head of the Family

The Cyngel family certainly had been caught up in the brutality of war and persecution. Every individual that came out of hiding in Lubartów following liberation in 1944 or that came back from the Soviet Union had lost relatives, was unemployed, and partially dissocialised. The Yad Vashem victim database mentions that the father of the three brothers, Froim, died in 1943.³² So apparently did their elder brother Abram along with his entire family, while their sister Laja was missing. In the immediate aftermath of war and extermination, the Cyngel family reorganised around Dawid for two reasons: marriage and economic viability.

Most pre-existing couples were split up by the war and the need to hide; in Lubartów, only one couple remained hidden together.³³ Of the 29 Jewish survivors recorded in Lubartów in the immediate aftermath of the war, only five had hidden in the town itself.³⁴ The rest, like Dawid, his future wife Dora, and his brother Szlama, survived scattered in the surrounding countryside. Previously, they had stayed in the open ghetto until its liquidation on 11 October 1942 was followed by the deportation of those who had remained, ultimately to Bełżec and Sobibor. It is clear that the first deportation of approximately 850 Jews in April 1942 precipitated escape attempts.³⁵ From wartime documentation we further learn that all future survivors had begun to go underground even before this time: All subsequent survivors started to fade from both Jewish and non-Jewish documents as early as August 1940. Such unregistered individuals stood a better chance of hiding when the ghetto was liquidated.³⁶ Parents, like the older brother Abram, relied massively on aid granted by the Jewish Council and were therefore registered and easily identified by occupation authorities.³⁷ Dawid Cyngel, like other survivors in Lubartów, had an intermediary function: helped but not dependent, young but autonomous, fit for labour and thus useful to the occupation authorities, but not closely involved with the ghetto administrations.

Dora and Dawid came out of hiding at different moments, the latter registering back in Lubartów on 1 August 1944 with his brother, the former registering on 8 April 1945.³⁸ They reunited in 1945 and married soon thereafter. What the 1932 population register highlights is that Dawid not only married another survivor, but also his neighbour's cousin. The survivors soon mobilised what remained of their wider social network to restructure their lives in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe.

By contrast, Dawid's brother Szlama, who came out of hiding at the same time, stayed single. This difference was of great importance to international organisations,

32 This determination of the place of death is problematic, as the vast majority of the Jewish population of Lubartów died in April and October 1942 in Belzec. The Yad Vashem form for Froim (as well as 47 others) cites Majdanek in Lublin as the place of death. However, it was filled in by a distant relative who apparently did not survive the Holocaust in Lubartów and was probably not fully aware of the details of his family's fate.

33 ITS, 3.2.1.1, W2496.

34 The survivors were recorded in the Lubartów memorial book, by local Jewish committees, and by the Central Committee for Polish Jews: Les Amis de Lubartów, Hurbn Levertov, 47; ŻIH, 303/V/425, 427 and 428, Registration cards.

35 The history of the Lubartów Ghetto is described in the memorial book by several survivors: Les Amis de Lubartów, Hurbn Levertov, 7-12, 34-35. For a general perspective on the Holocaust in the Lublin District, see: David Silberklang, *Gates of Tears. The Holocaust in the Lublin District*, Jerusalem, 2013.

36 See in particular the different lists and documents produced by the Jewish Committee in Lubartów: ŻIH, 210/454.

37 ŻIH, 210/454, AJDC Lubartów.

38 APL, 35/43/0/7/49/72-74, Lubartów wartime population register.

as the Cyngels soon discovered upon their arrival in Germany. Families were more highly valued by United Nations agencies and more promptly treated as 'genuine' refugees, whereas single persons were more likely to be viewed as economic migrants.³⁹ This assumption allowed married couple to access international support more easily. The abundance of weddings, praised in DP camps and still today in historiography, can be viewed as a 'miracle', a triumph of love over death,⁴⁰ but also as a pragmatic adaptation to the expectations of international agencies and a means of facilitating migration. Women were evidently more aware of this reality: While four men from Lubartów migrated alone, no woman tried to do so, which is not to say that for the latter other considerations, such as increased security, did not play a role as a motivating or demotivating factor.

The whole family reorganised around the married couple supported by the UNRRA, the JDC, and other institutions. As members of the entourage centred on Dawid and Dora, the two brothers Szlama and Naftal were also granted support and protection. The migrating group was also dependent on Dawid because he was the only one working in Germany. A saddler before the war, Dawid managed to practice his trade within and around the DP camps, thereby converting his pre-war competences into skills valuable during the migration period. Szlama, on the other hand, relied on his brother for the receipt of aid, particularly given the extra income Dawid provided. As an agricultural worker, Szlama was unable to find work in Germany. He tried to 'emancipate' himself from his brother in 1948, when the family was pushed out of Berlin, and applied for separate support, which would have allowed him to hasten his departure. His application was denied, however, and the IRO kept him in dependence on his brother.⁴¹ While Szlama was eager to leave Germany sooner than the rest of the family, difficulties in accessing international aid shaped his trajectory, pace, and the range of possibilities open to him for departing abroad. A strong contrast thus emerges between the stability enjoyed by Dawid as a result of the international support which he was afforded and the economic activity in which he was able to engage, and Szlama's situation exemplified by his desperate attempts to emigrate. His forced dependency on his brother's entitlement largely defined his trajectory, and only when Dawid and his family had left Germany in November 1951 did Szlama manage to immigrate on 28 December to the United States.

Naftal in the Land of the Soviets

The younger brother, Naftal, appears only very summarily in the migration archives. His name is barely mentioned without any additional detail. The documentation from the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP), however, allows us to fill in the blanks. His personal information card only mentions that he spent the war in the Soviet Union without specifying why he was separated from his family and when.⁴² According to various estimates, repatriated Jews like Naftal made up two thirds of the entire Jewish DP population and 85 per cent of the Polish Jews among the DPs.⁴³ Of the 3.3 million Jews that populated Poland before the war, more than 200,000

39 AN, AJ 43 146, Materials from the Review Board, "Instructions for completing the application form for assistance from PCIRO", 25 June 1947.

40 Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies. Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, Princeton 2009.

41 ITS, 3.2.1.1, Z5111, CM/1 and CM/2 Forms for Szlama Zyngel.

42 ŻIH, 303/5/425, Card for Naftal Cyngiel n°29490.

43 Laura Jokusch/Tamar Lewinsky, *Paradise Lost? Postwar Memory of Polish Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 24 (Winter 2010) 3, 373-399; Mark Edele/Sheila Fitzpatrick/Atina Grossmann (ed.), *Shelter from the Holocaust. Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, Detroit 2017.

found refuge in the Soviet Union during the war, while according to recent estimations probably less than 50,000 actually survived in Poland.⁴⁴ According to the Lubartów memorial book and the CKŻP registration cards, around 200 Jews came back from the East, although some of them were children (a ratio of one survivor in Poland to five survivors in the Soviet Union).⁴⁵ Early migration to Palestine, chaotic flight to Belarus or Romania, and departure to Shanghai for a whole family were other salutary destinations. Like many others, Naftal was repatriated to Lublin in 1945.⁴⁶ While they may have been reunited in Szczecin, Naftal and his brothers were registered together for the first time in Berlin. A publication of the CKŻP, finalised in August 1945 and released in 1946, lists 58,000 survivors among which we find the names of Dawid and Szlama who, it is clear, had reunited in Lubartów before the war was over.⁴⁷

Only a minority of Jews had survived the ordeals of wartime Poland relative to the number of Polish Jews who spent the war in the Soviet Union. The former experience, however, formed the paradigm for legitimation during post-war migration. The IRO only recognised persecution or fear of persecution as a legitimate reason to emigrate and clung to a model of 'ideal' departure, which was hasty and under threat. Survival in the Soviet Union – encompassing flight, organised evacuation, and deportation by Soviet authorities, culminating in organised repatriation from 1945 onwards – did not meet this expectation. Laura Jokusch and Tamar Lewinsky rightfully argue that early narratives of wartime experiences were heavily dependent on the active role in DP camps of the members of the Central Committees of Liberated Jews in the British and American Zones in Germany. In the great majority of cases, they had been liberated from German concentration camps and had suffered directly under Nazi persecution.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the Central Historical Commission shaped a canon of legitimate Holocaust experiences – encompassing camps, ghettos, periods of hiding, and belonging to partisan units – that shifted attention away from Soviet exile. Not only were wartime experiences in Soviet Union overshadowed by the Holocaust as a cultural trauma, itself apprehended exclusively as an internal Jewish memorial process,⁴⁹ Soviet returnees had to contend with the fact that international institutions mostly recognised the Holocaust as a genuine form of persecution and largely disregarded other experiences. Contrary to Szlama, Naftal seems never to have tried to 'emancipate' himself from his elder brother Dawid, relying on him for the receipt of aid and the protection which he could provide. In addition, Naftal

44 For an overview of this issue and some of the different perspectives on it, see: Jan Grabowski, *Pourquoi si peu de Juifs ont survécu, pourquoi nous devons chiffrer le nombre de victimes? [Why Did So Few Jews Survive and Why Do We Have to Put a Figure on the Number of Victims?]*, in: Audrey Kichelewski/Judith Lyon-Caen/Jean-Charles Szurek/Annette Wiewiorka (ed.), *Les Polonais et la Shoah. Une nouvelle école historique [The Poles and the Shoah. A New Historical School]*, Paris 2019, 69-84. This was notably based on: Barbara Egelking/Jan Grabowski (ed.), *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski [It Is Still Night. The Fate of Jews in Selected Powiats in Occupied Poland]*, Warsaw 2018.

45 *Les Amis de Lubartów*, Hurbn Levertov, 47-48.

46 ŻIH, 303/5/595/C159, Lublin Jewish Committee repatriation list. By whom exactly Naftal was repatriated is not clear, although the fact that it was to Lublin limits the possibilities to either Soviet authorities or pro-Soviet Polish authorities.

47 Jewish Agency for Palestine Search Bureau for Missing Relatives (ed.), *Register of Jewish Survivors. List of Jews in Poland (58,000 Names)*, Jerusalem 1946.

48 Jokusch/Lewinsky, *Paradise Lost?*, 383.

49 Markus Nesselrodt nevertheless emphasised how their experiences in the Soviet Union, far from having been totally hidden, circulated within the displaced Jewish population through accounts, testimonies, newspapers, and literature, especially in Yiddish. The overwhelming emphasis on the Holocaust appears to be something of a public projection, indeed a matter above all for public commemorations: Markus Nesselrodt, "I Bled Like You Brother, Although I Was a Thousand Miles Away." *Postwar Yiddish Sources on the Experiences of Polish Jews in Soviet Exile during World War II*, in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 46 (2016) 1, 47-67.

was forced to keep a low profile to guarantee his situation. From this perspective, the participation of Jewish DPs repatriated from the Soviet Union in the public commemoration of the Holocaust and in the foregrounding of the climate of anti-Jewish persecution in Poland in the immediate post-war years as emblematic for the experience of all Jews, can be taken as something of a plea addressed to international organisations or as a public declaration of their status as persecutees.

Therefore, the lack of information about Naftal in the migration documents is information in itself. His trajectory, and indeed his very reasons for migrating, are not even made clear. A simple annotation mentions that he finally left for the United States before anyone else in the family, on 27 February 1951. Naftal remained discreet and seems never to have integrated into the migration plans of his brothers. His experience was briefly outlined in CKŻP documentation, although he succeeded subsequently in concealing it from international organisations once in Germany.⁵⁰ Even following reunification with his brothers in Berlin in 1946, Naftal's post-war situation was irremediably affected, and his trajectory thereby decisively inflected, by his wartime experience in the Soviet Union.

The Cyngel family trajectory, far from presenting a uniform or continuous narrative, brings to light a series of factors and characteristics which diversely shaped the trajectories and the character which survival took during the period of post-war migration. In focussing on the perimeter of the *shtetl*, not strictly as a demarcation or limit, but as a vantage point which opens onto a diverse group made up of those who lived there for a period harbouring an abundance of connections and relationships, we gain a deeper appreciation for what was at stake in the question of survival and what factors were at play in shaping the course of further migrations, beyond the horizon of the decisions made, and moral choices faced, by individuals.⁵¹ To further consolidate the findings of this article, we would need to go beyond the small group of Lubartówian Jews to which the research presented here was purposively limited. Any attempt to do so, however, would have to be wary of the pitfalls of taking a monolithic approach that would lose sight of the complex group constituted by the survivors of a region of Poland such as Lubartów, however small, and of the diversity of forms (whether deportation, hiding, or flight to the Soviet Union) which their survival took.

While migrant agency is usually correlated with movement, if not escape, in the Cyngels' situation, agency took the form of staying under international protection, resisting the pressure to emigrate, and delaying their final departure in anticipation of a better destination. The scope for agency in this case was indeed very limited as the interactions between migrating groups on the one hand and the international institutions and the global context on the other played an overbearing role in shaping the trajectory which led them through Germany and beyond. Even within their family, opportunities were not evenly distributed. The agency of the three brothers during the post-war migration process was dependent on their wartime experience.

50 As a result, during his time as a DP Naftal was never recognised as an immigrant who had spent several years in a communist country – an experience that might have prevented him from entering the USA. It would be interesting to elucidate how he was screened by US authorities when entering America and whether he continued to conceal his recent past or not.

51 As Evgeny Finkel, for example, tends to do. See: Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews. Choice and Survival during the Holocaust*, Princeton 2017.

While Dawid possessed the means to resist the pressure of international institutions, his siblings were obliged to tie their fortunes to the evolution of his situation. Structural factors and institutional pressure both constrained and provided the ground for the initiatives of this family as they formulated and pursued their shifting and fracturing objectives.⁵²

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⁵² I am grateful to Börries Kuzmany for his remarks, questions, and corrections on the occasion of the presentation of a first version of this article at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI), as I am to the anonymous reviewers and to Tim Corbett for their suggestions on improving the text. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the VWI for supporting this research.

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Different places crossed by the Cyngel family during their transit in Germany:

Place	Date	Capacity	Total	Jews	Stateless	Poles	Czecho.	Lithua.	Latvians	Esto.	Jugo.	Russians	Soviets	Ukr.	Others
Berlin Un Center	09/08/1946	900	1061	9	66	25		64	293	79	8	217			300
Schlachtensee Duppel	09/08/1946	6042	5114	5092	22										
Schlachtensee Duppel	02/01/1948	3500	3269	3269											
Gabersee	22/11/1948	1630	1449	1448											
Gabersee	23/04/1950	1630	1395	1385		5							5		
Feldafing	19/07/1950	2450	2617	2482	24	21	27	5	8	4	10		4	25	7
Feldafing	24/04/1951	2450	1598	1585		4	2							5	2
Feldafing	19/10/1951	2450	1779	32	72	861	67	69	78	86	34		32	406	42
Förhenwald	19/10/1951	4200	1705	1696		3	1		2		3				

Sources: Arolsen Archives, ITS, 3.1.1.0

UNRRA Statistical Report, 09/08/1946

Summary of D.P. Population – PC IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 02/01/1948

Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 22/11/1948

Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 23/04/1950

Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 19/07/1950.

Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 24/04/1951

Summary of D.P. Population – IRO Assembly Centers United States Zone, 19/10/1951