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S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. DocumentatiON.

ISSN 2408-9192

Issue 2016/1

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S:I.M.O.N. is the semi-annual e-journal of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for
Holocaust Studies (VWI) in English and German.

Funded by:



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Remembering Interactions

Interpreting Survivors' Accounts of Interactions in Nazi-Occupied Poland

Abstract

This paper examines how memory sources are vital to learning about and interpreting children's interactions in Nazi-occupied Poland. In particular, it focuses on the relevance of testimonies and memoirs to understanding hidden Jewish children's contacts with other children while they were living under a false identity. Because these personal memory sources reveal many day-to-day situations not present in other types of documents and sources, they are often the only avenue through which we can learn about how Jewish children interacted with other children they came into contact with while in hiding. Two methods and situations receive particular attention:

1. collecting as many resources as possible for a specific case study on Jewish street children in occupied Warsaw, and
2. interpreting a variety of sources from diverse cases to find patterns of interactions that took place throughout Nazi-occupied Poland.

"I remember my cousin and me playing a strange wartime hide and seek. On her signal 'German' we'd both jump into a big wicker laundry basket, pull the cover over us, and keep silent. When I say 'they're gone' we get out. I was three."¹

"Well, I do remember once in a while going home [kids] yelled after me 'Żyd' [...] teasing the Jewish children [...] but another girl or a boy would come over and say, 'Hey, he is stupid, don't pay attention,' so there were all kinds."²

Such recollections, in spoken or written form, demonstrate the ways in which children's interactions appear throughout historical sources, and how child survivors of the Holocaust remember them. When working towards understanding and accessing information about interactions among children during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw, there is one category of historical sources that provides the most information, and that is personal sources, including diaries, letters, artwork, memoirs, and written and oral testimony/interviews. These sources contain details about everyday life that may not be present in official documents or other archival material. Among those personal sources, memory sources are often the most revealing when it comes to the nature of children's interactions with each other, if only because so many child survivors did not record their experiences during the war. Some recorded

1 Never Forget to Lie, dir. Marian Marzynski, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/never-forget-to-lie/> (14 May 2016).

2 Visual History Archive (VHA), USC Shoah Foundation, Testimony of Tema Herskovits, Interview 22052 (10 November 2015).

their experiences immediately after, while others waited decades to share their stories.³

Memory sources also contain a layer of interpretation – such as hindsight or the acquisition of additional knowledge – which documents of the time may not convey. The number of post-war child survivor testimonies far outnumbers the amount of wartime diaries, letters, and drawings, many of which were lost, destroyed, or never created. Post-war testimonies and memoirs are more widely available. Thus, in a practical sense, they provide the most information about survivors' experiences, though they are limiting in that the experiences of those who did not survive cannot be told unless they are referenced in the account of another surviving witness.⁴

This paper focuses on testimonies and memoirs by those who were children during the war, to analyse how they may be useful in examining interactions among children during the Nazi occupation of Poland, and how these survivors remember their experiences. Contact with other children was an integral part of many children's wartime experiences, including those of hidden Jewish children. In Poland, Jewish children hid under false identities in convents, orphanages, private homes, or out in the open on city streets. These children – and their encounters – were 'hidden' because the children always had to hide, at the very least, their identities, if not their actual physical presence. There are three types of situations for 'hidden encounters' examined in this project, and these provide the context for this paper:

1. hiding under a false identity in convents,
2. hiding in a private home, either completely hidden or posing as a relative, orphan, or employee,
3. hiding 'in the open' as a street child without regular adult supervision.

Whether or not the children that the Jewish child encountered knew their true identity varied from situation to situation. In some hiding situations, children had little or no contact with other children. The level of contact depended on how necessary it was for the child to be completely concealed from the outside world. However, most hidden Jewish children did have at least some contact with other children – Jewish or non-Jewish – during the war.

3 Joanna Michlic has conducted significant research into the importance of these early post-war testimonies. See Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections*, in: *Yad Vashem, Search and Research – Lectures and Papers*, Volume 14, Jerusalem 2008. See also Joanna Michlic, *The Children Accuse (Poland 1946): Between Exclusion from and Inclusion into the Holocaust Canon*, in: Krzysztof Ruchniewicz/Jürgen Zinnecker (eds.), *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung. Polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen*, Weinheim/München 2007, 43–52. See also Boaz Cohen, *The Children's Voice: Post-war Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21 (2007) 1, 73–95. Also important to this project are testimonies housed at the Ghetto Fighters' House Archives in Israel. I was able to access large portions of this collection digitally at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in October 2015. The collection includes interviews conducted by Benjamin Tenenbaum in early post-war Poland. Hundreds of children wrote down short accounts of their wartime experiences. *Ghetto Fighters' House – Beit Lohamei Haghetatot*, Jerusalem, digitised, accessed at the USHMM, Washington, D.C.: October until November 2015. RG-68.112M. For additional early post-war testimonies, see Maria Hochberg-Marianska/Noah Gris/Bill Johnston (eds.), *The Children Accuse*. London 1996. On a trip to Warsaw, I visited the Jewish Historical Institute; their resources include over 7,000 testimonies. The Central Jewish Historical Commission also collected testimonies until 1948; some of these have been published and accessed for this project. Later collections accessed in Warsaw include those written testimonies of the Association of Children of the Holocaust in Poland. They provided me and the VWI with five volumes of testimonies in Polish; two of these collections have been translated into English to date. See Wiktoria Sliwowska (ed.), *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, Vol. 1. Evanston 1998 and Jakub Gutenbaum/Agnieszka Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, Vol. 2. Evanston 2005.

4 See Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven 1991, 21.

The horrors of war and oppression complicated the idea of a 'child'. Most of the children in this study ranged from approximately three to 16 years old as of 1939. Many of them were separated from or had lost parents due to the circumstances of Nazi occupation: violence, hunger, poverty, disease, deportations, and the need to separate the family in order to survive. These children had to take on new wartime responsibilities, such as the role of breadwinner or protector. Children with no steady adult presence in their lives were frequently drawn to and dependent on the company of other children, and sometimes an older child would become a caregiver. The desperate circumstances of occupation prompted the oppressed populations to take extraordinary measures to protect themselves, their families, and friends, often behaving in ways they would not outside of wartime. Children helped each other, stood by when witnessing inhumane practices, denounced each other, collaborated with occupation forces, and made difficult choices that they believed could help their survival.

The Nature of Hidden Jewish Children's Interactions with Other Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland

Children created their own spaces of survival, safety, risk, and danger among themselves within the adult-controlled environment of Nazi-occupied Poland, with views and behaviours that both mirrored those of adults and were unique to their experiences as children struggling to survive in times of war. Poland presents a complex case study for hidden children, and rescue in Poland has been explored in different contexts by scholars including Nechama Tec, Eva Fogelman, Nahum Bogner, and Ewa Kurek. While Poland has a long history of antisemitism – primarily religious and nationalistic prior to the Nazi occupation – thousands of Poles also risked their lives to help Jews during the war. It is important to note that rescue and anti-semitism, or at least belief in some anti-Jewish stereotypes, were not always mutually exclusive; there were some rescuers who were antisemitic, or who had at least grown up believing Catholic church-taught myths about Jews. Some Poles also received financial compensation for their aid, and threatened to turn the Jews they harboured over to the Gestapo if payment stopped.⁵

Additionally, as the only country under Nazi occupation where rescuers received the death penalty if caught, the high risk increased the complexity of emotions and motivations associated with rescue. Children were placed in these hiding situations by parents who hoped to save them, or were left to fend for themselves after losing their family to starvation, disease, or deportation. Hiding situations differed depending on the Jewish child's physical appearance, Polish language ability, gender, and socioeconomic status. Children with what was considered a 'good' appearance (such as fair hair and blue eyes) and/or Polish free of a Yiddish accent were more likely to be placed in a convent or private home under a false identity because they could pass as a Catholic Pole. Girls were also more likely to hide in the open or be taken in by a Polish family who knew they were Jewish, because there was no physical proof that they were Jewish; circumcision was a sure sign that a boy was Jewish, as Polish Catholic boys were not circumcised.⁶ Some very young Jewish boys were

5 Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Occupied Poland*, New York 1986. Jan Grabowski, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939–1945*, in: *Yad Vashem, Search and Research – Lectures and Papers*, Volume 13, Jerusalem 2008.

6 Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, 35.

even hidden as girls during the war so that they – and their protectors – would be safer.⁷

In most cases, interactions consisted of either relationships that evolved over time with unpredictable outcomes, or brief chance contacts that shaped a child's wartime experience in some way. This project examines each case of interaction with the awareness that every encounter was influenced by circumstance and the specific children involved. Factors such as age, gender, location, and socioeconomic status and, above all, ethnicity and religion influenced the nature of encounters with other children. Situations varied from child to child and reflected the multiple ways that they coped with the disaster directly affecting – and in many cases, ultimately destroying – their lives. The complexity of each individual situation emerges in testimonies and memoirs.

An encounter between Jewish and non-Jewish children, as well as among Jewish children hiding under a false identity, could either be brief or regular, coincidental or coordinated. For example, an occasional or incidental encounter could include a one-time denunciation threat that was not followed up, a short stay with a non-Jewish family that also had children, or brief contact with a young person who helped the child escape the ghetto. Continuous encounters could include regular, ongoing bullying and blackmail from the same person or group, a long stay with a family or in a convent with other children, or regular cooperation while smuggling and peddling on the streets. These encounters can be interpreted on a spectrum between bullying and friendship. Bullying could range from mere teasing to outright blackmail threats. Factors such as antisemitism, opportunism, fear, and indifference played a role in shaping encounters, just as background, age, Polish-language ability, appearance, gender, and personality did. Children's contacts reveal nuances in Polish-Jewish relations beyond those layers illustrated by adults, and complicate categories such as resister, collaborator, and bystander primarily employed by Holocaust scholars in relation to adults.

Historians writing about children during the Holocaust have argued that play and imagination, including activities such as games, artwork, and writing, were means of coping with, making sense of, and escaping the world around them. In particular, Patricia Heberer-Rice and George Eisen have analysed the role of children's imagination and play both individually and in groups.⁸ It is on these premises of children coming together as a component of coping, and the notion of children's creation of spaces mentioned above, that my interpretation of children's interactions rests. What means of mental and physical escape did children employ independently and among each other? How did individual coping differ from that of a group? How did children deal with fear, including potential fear of another child? In examining children's interactions, this research situates itself across the fields of Polish-Jewish relations, rescue and resistance, and children during the Holocaust in order to better understand children's participation in wartime activities, resistance to oppression, and their significance as shapers of history. Working

7 See for example the testimony of Abraham Foxman, who related that at a gathering for former hidden children, many of them were women, and some of the men shared that they had been hidden as girls: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Testimony of Abraham Foxman, Interview 41475 (9 January 2015). See also the story of Bernhard Kempler, who spent four years as a girl, cited in Jennifer Marlow, *Polish Catholic Maids and Nannies: Female Aid and the Domestic Realm in Nazi-Occupied Poland*, PhD diss., Michigan State University 2014, 212, as well as the story of a boy named 'Curly' who had 'outfoxed' Hitler 'dressed as a girl,' in: Jack Kuper, *Child of the Holocaust: A Jewish Child in Christian Disguise*, London 2006.

8 Patricia Heberer, *Children during the Holocaust*, Maryland 2001. George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows*, Amherst 1988.

towards a nuanced interpretation of children's interactions that addresses each of the questions above requires a look at personal, memory-based sources, including testimonies and memoirs.

Methods: Finding and Examining Children's Interactions Through Memory Sources

There is more than one possible approach to collecting accounts of and interpreting children's interactions:

1. selecting a few case studies as representative or as a significant sample, or
2. collecting and analysing a critical mass of testimony, as in Christopher Browning's *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp*, in which he examined a large number of testimonies to get at a "core memory" of the place and events described in his book.⁹

In some sense, this project uses a mix of both approaches. On one level, it looks at specific examples – such as that of a group of Jewish children selling cigarettes in Three Crosses Square in Warsaw – as representative of the multiple kinds of interactions between children. Yet it also includes a large number of testimonies and memoirs as evidence of the specific instances, patterns, and ideas within the types of experiences of children hidden in private homes, convents, or other locations under a false identity. It looks at as many cases of hidden Jewish children in occupied Poland as possible, and at children they came into contact with.

The "core memory" idea can be applied to the case of the cigarette sellers in Warsaw, as it is one particular group in a specific place. When it comes to interactions between children scattered across Nazi-occupied Poland, however, it is the patterns, specific similarities, or marked differences that I am interested in, as there is no "core memory" for these varying individual experiences. My intention is not to uncover a single narrative of children's interactions in Nazi-occupied Poland, but to interpret what the myriad of interactions can tell us about the role that contact with other children played in children's daily lives, particularly those of Jewish children hiding under a false identity. Second, I aim to use these interactions as a way of understanding another level of Polish-Jewish, or Jewish and non-Jewish, relations in Poland by looking at how ideas such as antisemitism manifested themselves on the child's level. Lastly, I try to complicate categories such as collaborator, victim, resister, perpetrator, and bystander by showing how children's situations do not necessarily fit into one clear category, though it is clear that the vast majority of children in Poland – and indeed occupied Europe as a whole – were in some way victims of a war begun by adults, policies created by adults, and actions and situations largely controlled by adults.

With such a large source base – hundreds of Holocaust memoirs and thousands of testimonies – it was necessary to set parameters for selecting which to access. The main parameter for selecting Holocaust memoirs was location: Poland. The goal was to read as many accounts written by child Holocaust survivors as possible. Memoirs accessed for this project also include those by adults who encountered children, and those who may have been children in the 1930s but were young adults during the

⁹ Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp*, New York 2010.

war.¹⁰ Because of the vast number of testimonies, however, (USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive contains over 35,000 Holocaust testimonies, and that is only one of many testimony projects) additional criteria are required in the interest of expedience.¹¹ Most testimonies accessed are for survivors born between 1927 and 1940, with few exceptions, such as that of an older sibling or friend of a younger hidden child. Some testimonies reference interaction only briefly, or suggest it by providing contextual information that indicates that the child had regular contact with other children. For others, contact with other children is a central part of their narrative.¹²

Once obtained, the strategies for examining each testimony or memoir include the following:

1. looking for circumstances, places or situations where interaction may have taken place, such as a school, neighbourhood street, or convent;
2. considering factors that may have influenced interaction in some way, such as age, gender, knowledge of the Polish language or of Catholicism; and
3. finding specific instances of interaction, such as friendship, a chance bullying encounter, or casual play with other children.

Several scholars have used empirical observations of oral history interviews and memoirs in order to develop theories applicable to these memory sources. Henry Greenspan, for instance, looks at multiple testimonies from the same survivor and highlights the nuances present in oral history interviews not visible or audible in a written text. He also points to potential influencers of memory, mentioning the significance of personal connections, background, and experiences outside of the Holocaust in shaping survivors' memory and narrative:

"On one side [...] survivors' voices are rooted in self-images and identifications, both positive and negative [...] carried well before they became 'survivors.' Their self-presentations as a rebel or an ingenue, an unmasker of tradition or its faithful inheritor, derive from relationships and memories of relationships with quite other authorities than their persecutors, and from quite other times. In fact, the whole realm of conflicts and identifications with parents, teachers, and communal tradition comes into play when survivors construct their own role as transmitters of memory. Their voices (like all voices) are an inheritance from other voices; really, from a whole world of voices to which they once belonged."¹³

10 These include Ben-Zion Gold, *The Life of Jews in Poland Before the Holocaust: A Memoir*, Lincoln 2007; Vladka Meed, *Deckname Vladka: Eine Widerstandskämpferin im Warschauer Ghetto*, Hamburg 1999; Helena Szereszewska, *Memoirs from Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945*, London 1997; Adina Blady Szwajger, *I Remember Nothing More*, New York 1991 and Josef Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*, New York 1970, among others.

11 Other testimony collections accessed include the Yale Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, the Association of Jewish Refugees testimonies, and various initiatives by or connected to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). While Yad Vashem testimony sources would be incredibly useful for this project, my own resource limitations prevented travel to Israel for dissertation research. I have accessed digital sources where possible, as well as secondary sources by those historians who have had access to Yad Vashem.

12 Compare, for example, the testimony of Dorothy Greenstein – whose testimony included contexts and suggestions of contact with other children, as well as brief mentions of it – with that of Irving Milchberg, leader of the gang of cigarette sellers in Three Crosses Square, for whom contact with other children was central to his wartime experience: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Testimony of Dorothy Greenstein, Interview 5357 (5 February 2015). For memoirs, consider Nelly Toll, who hid in an apartment and had limited contact with children, and Janina David, who lived among convent girls and with the non-Jewish sons of a rescuer: Nelly Toll, *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood During World War II*, New York 2003; Janina David, *A Square of Sky, A Touch of Earth*, London 1992.

13 Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, St. Paul 2010², 25.

Contact with other people, including children, takes on an additional layer through memory, as it can influence how the survivor tells a particular aspect of their story or answers an interviewer's question. Life experiences and knowledge of history since the end of the war could also influence what survivors say or how they convey information. For example, a survivor may have learned since the end of the war exactly what happened to his or her family and friends, or the specific Nazi policies and practices in his or her hometown. Survivors sometimes mention that they have read memoirs, seen a certain feature or documentary film, or read a historian's book. Each of these variables could influence how they describe certain events and contexts. Descriptions in a testimony fifty years after the fact may contain different perceptions, biases, or knowledge than in the years it happened, but the basic nature of the instances, and memories of thoughts and feelings, appear to remain intact.

According to Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, testimony is not "a mode of *statement of*, but rather [...] a mode of *access to*" a truth.¹⁴ The historical information – major events, policies – conveyed in memory sources is context for the stories most significant to this project: day-to-day experiences, thoughts, emotions, and contacts with others. Feeling afraid, frustrated, sad, embarrassed, excited, happy, content, angry, jealous – these were whole ranges of emotions that a Jewish child in hiding could feel at different times during the war. Those emotions can help convey the nature of encounters regardless of how clearly or detailed a witness tells his or her story. For example, a hidden Jewish child may have envied the family a non-Jewish child had, but that non-Jewish child may have resented the attention his or her parents were giving the child who had moved into their home. Alternatively, children might have developed a sibling-like relationship and felt the sting of separation after the war.¹⁵ These emotions were not exclusive to Poland, but Poland's unique combination of factors complicated their meaning in the broader situation at the time: the death penalty as punishment for hiding Jews, the country with the highest number of known rescuers, and a long history of antisemitism.

Some survivors kept their memories boxed up for years, and only brought them into the open after some impetus or catalyst: advancing age, grandchildren asking questions, a testimony project that gives them a direct opportunity to tell their story, meeting another survivor, or even seeing a film or reading a book on the Holocaust. Occasionally, a family member – such as a daughter or son of a survivor – would reach out to a particular organisation such as the USC Shoah Foundation. Thus, many of these sources came into existence 40, 50, 60 years after the events took place. That distance does not, however, diminish the source's value in revealing information about children's contacts; indeed they are often the only sources that can reveal such information.

To illustrate how testimonies can reveal the nature of children's interactions, it is useful to examine cases that highlight the different possible approaches to collecting and interpreting these contacts. The first involves examining what comes as close to a critical mass as possible for one particular case, and the second involves searching for patterns of interaction among multiple scattered cases.

14 Shoshana Felman/Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York 1992, 16.

15 Several first-hand accounts describe such tensions, and not solely in occupied Poland. Other hidden children throughout occupied Europe, as well as the children of rescuers, report a variety of relationships among children living in the home. See for instance the documentary film *Secret Lives: Hidden Children and Their Rescuers During World War II*, directed by Aviva Slesin, 2002.

Approaches to Interpreting Interaction: The Case Study

The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square were a group of approximately twenty Jewish boys and girls posing as Polish Catholic street children outside of the Warsaw ghetto. Many of them had been smugglers who had lost most or all of their families to horrific ghetto conditions or deportations to Treblinka. Their story, recounted with the most detail in Joseph Ziemian's memoir *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*, can also be reconstructed through additional testimonies and memoirs. The experience of these Jewish children hiding out in the open, selling cigarettes on the streets of an area of Warsaw swarming with Germans, was by no means typical. The variety of interactions the group members had with other children, however, is mostly representative of the range of possible contacts Jewish children under a false identity could have in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Multiple testimonies and memoirs exist in connection with this group. It is through these sources that we learn about specific members of the group, the role they played, and the factors that could influence interaction. One particular example shows how important multiple sources are. The group's leader, a boy named Ignacy Milchberg and nicknamed 'Bull', gave several testimonies after the war. He speaks matter-of-factly – or even somewhat modestly – about his role in the group, saying, for instance, “for whatever reasons I became their coordinator” or “whenever there was a fight between them [...] I had to step in [...] my word was the last [...] somewhere I gained the respect [...] from everybody”.¹⁶ In other sources, however, it becomes even clearer that he was the group's undisputed leader. According to Joseph Ziemian, an adult who was a member of the Jewish underground, and a memoir about his contact with the cigarette sellers, Bull's “arrival at the Three Crosses Square was the start of a new life for the children. Bull had authority. In their eyes he was grown-up and experienced, and he became their leader”.¹⁷ He was also among those in the group who defended the children against bullies, and had significant contacts within the underground and among non-Jews. These contacts included a Polish Catholic smuggler and rescuer, Jan Kostanski. Information about their connection is only accessible through memory sources, and Kostanski was also able to provide insights into the group and their connections. It was Milchberg, for instance, who was instrumental in securing false papers for Jewish family friends of Kostanski who were going into hiding outside of the ghetto, including Kostanski's future wife.¹⁸ All of these sources suggest a clear “core” element: ‘Bull’ was the leader. He had a significant number of connections outside of the group and served as the main point of contact with adult members of the Jewish underground.

Another instance that receives attention in multiple memoirs and testimonies is the case of Benzion ‘Bulus’ Fiks, the youngest member of the group, who was in danger of denunciation. Regularly in altercations with Polish Catholic street children, and regularly bullied and called ‘Jew’, the group realised that they had to figure out a different situation for Bulus, namely hiding completely in a private home and staying away from Three Crosses Square. Being Jewish on the streets of Nazi-occupied Warsaw always presented an imminent danger. Fear and the threat of denunciation were ever-present, even for the close-knit and highly protective children. Ziemian re-

¹⁶ See two of the testimonies of Irving Milchberg: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), L. Papiercollection, RG-50.029*0024; <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn511633> (25 January 2015); VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Interview 42881 (12 February 2015).

¹⁷ Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*, 64.

¹⁸ Jan Kostanski, *Janek: A Gentile in the Warsaw Ghetto*, Melbourne 1998.

counted an incident where the cigarette sellers became concerned about one member of the group, a young boy named Bolus. Some Polish peddlers were starting to make comments and taunts about him, suggesting that he was Jewish based on his physical appearance. Bolus' complexion and hair were darker, which were among the physical features typically viewed as 'Jewish' at that time, and were dangerous characteristics for someone living in the open and trying to pass as a Christian Pole. Polish boys would demand money for him, and on at least one occasion other members of the group stepped in to defend him. Out of concern for Bolus' safety and their own, the other cigarette sellers decided to locate a hiding place for him, as it was too dangerous for Bolus to continue hiding in the open. "The presence of Bolus", wrote Ziemian, "endangered both the child himself and the bigger boys, because rumours were going round the Square that he was a Jew." Once seeds of suspicion were planted, the group erred on the side of caution. They found a place for him with a Polish woman they had trusted in the past, with some help from the Jewish underground. Once Bolus was in hiding, the group asked Ziemian if they could see their friend. When Ziemian hesitated (he did not want Bolus' hiding place inadvertently revealed to Polish observers) the children expressed dismay and slight mistrust, even though they had become more comfortable with him at that point. Milchberg and Klajman also recount this instance in their sources, and Bolus himself gave testimony after the war, describing his problematic situation.¹⁹ They each presented somewhat varying details, such as the person with whom Bolus was placed or the exact circumstances that led to his being hidden, but – as with viewing Milchberg as leader – the 'core' was the same: Bolus was bullied and in danger, and the group of children came together to figure out how best to protect him.

Because the group remained in contact after the war, they also had the opportunity to influence each other's narratives if they have ever discussed their experiences with each other, and can also contribute to the possibility of reconstructing wartime events through testimony by finding a 'core memory'. This situation is somewhat true of the cigarette sellers and those around them. In their testimonies and in Klajman's memoir, Klajman and Milchberg mention each other when they discuss the post-war period. Both men settled in Canada and presumably saw each other occasionally, as suggested by their remaining in regular contact and by the cigarette sellers' reunions over the years. Additionally, despite living on opposite sides of the world, photographs show that Milchberg and Konstanski were in contact and met at least once in the years after the war.²⁰ For a case study, this overlap in stories can contribute to constructing a more complete narrative. One person might remember an event or conversation, a detail or personal trait that another does not.²¹

19 Accessing testimony for 'Bolus' and some of the other cigarette sellers has proven problematic due to limitations of time, resources, and above all language ability. Several members of the group emigrated to Israel, and their testimonies are therefore in Hebrew, which I unfortunately do not speak. There are, however, ways to access their stories: their testimony notes are available in English through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and voiced-over testimony is available in French through the film *Les petits héros du Ghetto de Varsovie*, directed by Chochana Boukhobza, 2013.

20 See VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Testimony of Janek Kostanski and and Irving Milchberg, Interview 42881, (12 February 2015).

21 Another case, for example, is that of four sisters who survived the war and ultimately moved to the same area in the United States very likely discussed their experiences with each other, and there is overlap in testimony content and even emphasis on certain instances, such as one sister going to a camp in her sister's place; see VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Testimonies of the Mandelbaum sisters, including Reva Kibort, Interview 10862-5 (16 February 2015) and Eda Strauss, Interview 10369 (5 March 2015).

Because children also make observations about other children's interactions, not just their own, it is possible to learn about those children who did not leave testimony behind, including those who did not survive. It is through Jack Klajman's testimony and memoir, for example, that we learn about a cigarette seller known as 'Zbyszek', who Ziemian also mentions. His real name was Izaak Grynberg, and he died in 1945. There is therefore little documentation available about him specifically. We learn, however, that Zbyszek was one of the main defenders of the group against bullies, in part due to his large stature and 'Polish' looks (in his case, blond hair).²² Testimony and memoir enable us to not only learn about the hidden Jewish children who did not survive, but also incorporate their stories into the obtained information about children's contacts with each other.

Approaches to Interpreting Interaction: Finding Patterns Among Multiple, Diverse Accounts in Testimonies and Memoirs

When looking at hidden Jewish children's encounters throughout Nazi-occupied Poland, there are hundreds of possible accounts to listen to or read. From these myriad accounts, it is possible to try to uncover patterns of interaction. In the following, I compare accounts described in one survivor's memoir and the testimony of another. Both survivors spent much of the war in convents, and were preteen girls from middle-class Jewish families. The first account comes from Janina David's memoir, *A Touch of Earth*. The second is from a testimony given by survivor Silvia Wein Richman. Both recall instances of protecting another child they either knew to be or suspected was Jewish.

Janina David's detailed recollections in her memoir *A Touch of Earth/A Square of Sky* are written in the artistic style of a novel: dialogue, description, a sequential narrative. Writing down memories, as opposed to speaking them aloud in an interview, gives the survivor the opportunity to organise details, sequences of events, and even approximate dialogue in a way they might not be able to do spontaneously. Memoirs are a medium through which survivors can convey thoughts and emotions in more detail, though we cannot hear strain in the voice or choking up, see tears or excitement, hear anger or sadness or laughter. Despite that limitation, they are an incredibly important piece of the puzzle when it comes to hidden Jewish children's interactions. David writes about an encounter with a younger girl who she suspected was Jewish, and how David protected her in a potentially dangerous situation:

"In the corner, her back to the wall, head lowered, stood a copper-haired child. Around her a group pressed in a tight ring. 'What's your name? What did they call you? Ryfka? Sara? Faya?' My insides knotted with anger. The children were of all ages, from the youngest, to the few backward ten-year-olds who still played with the toddlers. It must have been one of them who started the persecution. Why had they not asked me? 'Her name is Franka,' I said, pushing them roughly aside. I took the child's hand and pulled her out of her corner. 'Come on, I'll show you around. And if any of you ever ask her what her name is or was I shall personally beat you black and blue' I promised, before slamming the door."²³

²² Jack Klajman, *Out of the Ghetto*, London 2000.

²³ David, *A Square of Sky*, 87 f.

David's awareness of possible dangers for the girl she called Franka illustrates both concern for the child's well-being and a cautious navigation of her relationship with the Christian girls in the convent. Through her age and by establishing herself as an authority, she was able to protect herself and extend that protection to a younger child, something the nuns may not have been able to provide, being outside the girls' social hierarchy.

Evidence of Jewish children protecting each other also surfaces in Richman's testimony. Richman encountered a younger child in the convent where she was in hiding: "She was about three or so. And she somehow or another – I don't know, she came up to me and said she was Jewish, and I told her, 'Do not talk about that. Be quiet. It's not your place to talk.' Didn't tell her that I was, but I told her to be quiet." Later, the two girls ended up in a monastery together, where they were the only children – and likely the only girls – among an order of strict monks.²⁴ Perhaps the same feelings that propelled the child to approach Richman in the first place were reflected in her willingness to listen to Richman's authoritative command. Richman prevented the girl from repeating anything about her true identity. Whether the child would have also listened to an adult out of fear, whether she might have rebelled, or whether she would have even approached an adult in the first place to say that she was Jewish, cannot be known, but the fact remains that Richman was able to protect this child by warning her.

By the point in the memoir where David defends Franka, readers are well aware of David's perceptions of her own personality as a child, and her actions involving Franka in the convent are therefore consistent with the person with whom readers have become familiar: a natural leader who has become savvy about the convent children's hierarchy. Richman's account of her protection of a little girl in a convent is less detailed than David's, and we do not know as much about Richman as we do about David, but the ideas and feelings of creating a safe space – an older child being a line of defence for a younger one – are there.

Both David's and Richman's accounts reveal similar information: an older Jewish girl protected a younger Jewish girl from possible denunciation. Both situations are also mainly accessible through personal sources such as diaries, letters, interviews, and memoirs. Through them, we learn about children's awareness of dangers (especially in older children), children's hierarchies in convents, and how some convent children perceived Jews, among other possible interpretations. That both Richman and David were able to recall such instances also speaks to the level of significance these stories may hold in their memories. It shows that, despite the vast differences between a drawn-out memoir with extensive description and a more spontaneous oral history interview punctuated with questions, similar patterns of stories and behaviours can emerge.

That pattern is not exclusive to convents: older children protecting younger children, particularly younger hidden Jewish children, is a common thread in many hiding situations, whether in a convent, private home, or on city streets. The experiences of the Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square also fit this pattern, as with the case of Bolus discussed above. That protection, as many memory sources have shown, included keeping children safe from other children's teasing, bullying, harassment, potential denunciation, and even violence. Such situations demonstrate the significance of the factors that come into play in shaping children's interactions, such as antisemitism, peer pressure, age, and personality, among others.

²⁴ Silvia Wein Richman testimony, University of South Florida collection, pages 9, 10 of transcript.

Challenges with Using Memory Sources to Learn About Child Encounters

The first and most obvious challenge to using these sources is the fallibility of memory. However, dates and specific events – potentially the most likely information to fall victim to inaccuracy – are less important for this project than the relationships, thoughts, and emotions that emerge in the stories told in memory sources. That said, each source should of course be approached with the awareness of factors that may have influenced that memory since the end of the war. Another problematic aspect of this memory-source-based approach is finding sources outside of these that can potentially reveal circumstances of interactions among children. Whether a diary or letter from the time or a memoir or testimony after the fact, the main body of evidence for children's encounters comes from first-hand accounts. In order to obtain a fuller picture and place these encounters within the broader history of occupied Poland, additional sources would be helpful.

What sorts of other sources exist that can at least provide contextual information, frameworks, openings, or constraints of interaction? Outside of personal sources, documents that provide more than context for interaction are limited. Sources that can be used to corroborate information, however, are not. For example, a map of wartime Warsaw marking locations of activity (such as smuggling) mentioned in memory sources and in official documents can show where children may or may not have crossed paths with each other. Another possibility is using information on the decrees and laws that shaped and limited interactions and circumstances, both for context and to corroborate the progression of interactions or shifts in them, for instance if contact among particular children decreased after the 1941 law declaring that anyone caught helping a Jew in any way would be sentenced to death.

Other rich sources for context and circumstances include the Oneg Shabbat Archives, created in real time by witnesses living in the Warsaw ghetto, including historian Emmanuel Ringelblum. Also known as the Ringelblum Archive, it contains a large number of first-hand observations: personal sources, but not necessarily memory sources. CENTOS, the Jewish organisation responsible for the care of orphans, and underground documents from organisations such as the ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organisation) or Żegota (the Council for Aid to Jews) are also useful. The International Tracing Service (ITS) is another valuable addition to the source base that can provide broader information about both children's circumstances and specific information about certain children. These documents often do not reveal much about interactions themselves, but can provide insight into characteristics of the child that may have shaped their interactions. At least one child among the cigarette sellers, for example, provided a different birth year to make himself appear a few years younger. That adjustment made him more eligible for emigration with a group of children travelling to North America. The month and day in his birthdate, however, remained the same, which made it easier to confirm that it was in fact the same child. The year change was also corroborated in his USC Shoah Foundation testimony.²⁵ It is important to remember that these were children who had gotten used to changing their identity for the purpose of survival and in order to give themselves the best possible chance, a level of awareness and savvy that in some cases continued beyond the end of the war. Because of this, searching the ITS using a hidden Jewish child's false Polish Catholic name rather than his or her real name has also proven useful and revealing.

25 USHMM, ITS Digital Archive, Sub-collection 6.3.2.1: Case files of child tracing branch. See also the VHA, USC Shoah Foundation testimony of Irving Milchberg.

When possible, a way to make the most of the memory sources available includes taking multiple testimonies from the same survivor, an idea that Henry Greenspan promoted. In some cases, both a testimony and a memoir exist for the same person, as is the case with cigarette seller Jack Klajman, author of *Out of the Ghetto*, and Krystyna Chiger, a survivor from Lviv who wrote the memoir *The Girl in the Green Sweater*; both survivors also gave testimony for the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive.²⁶ Occasionally, there is both an *immediate* post-war testimony and a significantly later testimony, which allows us to see both the perspective of the child and the perspective of the adult looking back on his or her life during the war.²⁷ Multiple sources from one person can also lead the survivor to repeat a particular narrative. During an interview, some even prefer to read aloud from something they have written.²⁸

In addition to what survivors remember, *how* they remember it is also significant. Oral history interviews and memoirs are likewise problematic in that respect. Biases that existed during the war or developed afterwards can influence what they say. That bias, however, can tell us much about children's perceptions of each other, while acknowledging that some of those perceptions may in fact be those of an adult *reflecting* on childhood.

Witnesses are also frequently aware of some of their memory's limitations, and tell stories to the best of their ability to recall what they observed, thought and felt. Survivor testimonies are sprinkled with interjections and caveats such as "I don't remember precisely/exactly", "I don't remember x, but I remember y", "As far as I can remember/recall", or "I was too young to remember",²⁹ but these also lend the sources a layer of honesty, a sort of disclaimer acknowledging memory's fallibility.

Taking an interview's format into account is also necessary when considering how contacts among children are contextualised or recounted. The USC Shoah Foundation's interviews for the Visual History Archive generally have a specific structure that aims at a particular chronological narrative. Sometimes the most informative testimonies and most skilful interviews, however, involve just enough guidance or direction by an interviewer to make it possible to follow and obtain information, but also enough space for the survivor to shape his or her own narrative. A survey prior to the interview influences the choice of questions during the testimony, and may also provide the survivor with an idea of the types of questions to anticipate, giving him or her a chance to organise their thoughts prior to the interview. Some survivors will take charge themselves, depending perhaps on personality, mood at the time, or degree of rapport with the interviewer. A survivor may say, "Let me go back to that point first", or "I want to finish this part of the story". An interviewer might ask, "Could we go back to x point?", or "Could you talk more about your experiences in x location?".³⁰ Sometimes an interviewer will prompt them with a question such as, "Did you have any non-Jewish/Polish friends" or "Were you aware

26 Chiger's family is also central to the film *In Darkness*, directed by Agnieszka Holland, 2011.

27 See Joanna B. Michlic: The Raw Memory of War. Early Postwar Testimonies of Children in Dom Dziecka in Otwock, in: Yad Vashem Studies 37 (2009) 1, 11-52.

28 Langer, Holocaust Testimonies, 17-18.

29 See for example the following testimonies: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Frieda Aaron, Interview 804 (20 November 2014); VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Barbara Bregman Marlow, Interview 25912 (13 February 2015); VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Irving Milchberg, Interview 42881 (12 February 2015).

30 See the USC Shoah Foundation testimonies of Sol Adler and Jack Klajman, among others, for examples of a survivor directing the course of an interview, or rejecting an interviewer's question in favour of continuing their own line of thought: VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Sol Adler, Interview 47556 (16 December 2014); VHA, USC Shoah Foundation, Jack Klajman, Interview 41715 (2 April 2015).

of/did you experience antisemitism?”. While such questions are certainly helpful to this project, they could lead the survivor in a particular direction of incorporating divisions through the use of certain terms, or framing a narrative through looking at antisemitism, which they may or may not have included otherwise.

Despite the above problems and challenges inherent in using memory sources, they are the most revealing when looking for information about children’s interactions during the Nazi occupation of Poland. They are sources through which it is possible to reconstruct a “core memory” surrounding a particular group of children, and through which it is possible to find patterns of behaviour and patterns of situations for hidden Jewish children in hiding throughout occupied Poland.

Still another insurmountable issue lies at the heart of problems present in memory sources – in fact, probably in any source pertaining to the Holocaust. Eva Romano wrote that her memoir “conveys neither the depth of fear and horror I experienced in the years 1939–1942 nor the desolation and loneliness I felt after the final separation from my parents in 1942”.³¹ Despite learning about children’s emotions, relationships, and survival strategies from these sources, it is important to remember that they provide only a glimpse into the nature of their past.

³¹ Romano, preface.

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Quotation: Suzanne Swartz, Remembering Interactions, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention.
Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 5-19.

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ART_Swartz01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Swartz/ART_Swartz01.pdf)

Article

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Sowing the Seeds of Hate

The Antisemitism of the Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period

Abstract

The present article is focused on the antisemitic mindset of several prominent Orthodox clergymen and theologians associated with the Romanian Iron Guard and the radicalisation of Orthodox nationalism under the impact of fascism. During a wave of right-wing ideological radicalisation, Orthodox clergymen and theologians shifted from understanding the Jew according to the patristic theology and canon law to a more confessional, exclusivist trend of theology. It also discusses the Romanian Orthodox Church's position towards the development of an antisemitic theology and the implementation of this theology during the Holocaust by the Orthodox priests affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Exarchate in Transnistria.

The present contribution focuses on the entanglements between antisemitism and Orthodox theology in interwar Romania. More specifically, I focus on the way in which the Jewish minority was perceived through the theological lens of the Orthodox Church under the impact of its clergy's radicalisation. The advent of different fascist parties (the most important being the National Christian Defence League and the Iron Guard) in the Romanian public arena with their highly antisemitic and racist ideologies deeply penetrated and influenced the theological discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The present essay addresses several key issues to grasp the infiltration of antisemitic and racist ideas into the conceptual framework of the Romanian Orthodox theology. In order to carefully position this heretical development in the Church's doctrine I mapped the transformation that occurred after 1918 in the attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the Jewish minority. The increase in percentage of the Jewish minority in the Romanian state in the aftermath of the territorial gains following the First World War could be construed as the determinant cause of the change from a relatively mild patristic attitude towards Judaism to a more radical theology of hate. Paradoxically, this East European theological trend of endorsing the exclusion and marginalisation of the Jewish population occurred at the same time as the Russian émigrés in Paris ecumenically opened the sealed gates of the Orthodox doctrine for the values of the neo-patristic approach, preaching the unifying values of *sobornost* and Christian tolerance for all religious or ethnic groups.¹

¹ The word *sobornost* meant in the 19th century Russian Slavophile philosophy both the fact that any decision in the Orthodox Church was taken by a synod of bishops (*sobor*) but also it was a synonym for the Greek word *katholon*, describing the universal, the ability to reassume in Christ's love all aspects of humanity. For further details, see William Leatherbarrow, *Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I*, in: William Leatherbarrow/Derek Offord, *A History of Russian Thought*, Cambridge 2010, 110; G. M. Hamburg/Randall A. Poole, *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930. Faith, Reason and the Defense of Human Dignity*, Cambridge 2013², 46–48. For an Orthodox Christian understanding of the term, see Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, New York 1963, 8–18.

Departing from the initial patristic tenet of “deicide”, which was attributed exclusively to the Jewish Orthodox theology from the early 1920s to the early 1940s, harboured the belief that even the Jews would eventually be reassumed in God’s infinite love and that God’s universality should function as an Orthodox blueprint for a continuous search for peaceful coexistence with other religions.²

Painfully aware of the Orthodox Church’s millennial patristic tradition emphasising the peaceful separation from the Jews, the interwar Orthodox theologians endorsed a vilification of their Jewish neighbours based on antisemitic prejudices (the Jew as the intestine economic exploiter, as the moral corrupter of the masses, etc.). From Late Antiquity to the dawn of modernity, the exchange between Christians and Jews had involved seminal theological discussions regarding the biblical exegesis and unrestricted and mutually beneficial economic contacts.³ Despite antisemitic innuendos and the millennial prescriptions of the Orthodox canon law prohibiting intermarriage and the sharing of liturgical spaces in Romanian territories from the late Byzantine to the late 19th century, the Jewish-Christian relations were devoid of pogroms.⁴

Another branch of research discusses the lines of argument in historiographical approaches to the present topic. By assuming uncritically the Byzantine political theology of symphony between the Church and the State, scholars in the field of Romanian antisemitism studies like Leon Volovici, Carol Iancu, Vladimir Solonari, Marius Turda, or Jean Ancel claim that only the secular realm, through its intellectuals, developed an anti-Jewish mindset.⁵ By disregarding the antisemitic position of the Orthodox Church, which has always been expected to follow that of the state or intellectual elite, they fail to grasp the Orthodox Church’s own millennial tradition of antisemitism and its interwar development.⁶

I argue that the Romanian Orthodox Church has developed its own form of antisemitism and that the radicalisation of the theological environment can be linked to a specific educational milieu: Orthodox theologians associated with antisemitic views maintained close ties with Austria and/or Germany, the breeding ground of

2 Andrew Louth, *The Neo-patristic Revival and Its Protagonists*, in: Mary B. Cunningham/Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, Cambridge 2008, 188–202; Aidan Nichols, *Theology in Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist*, in: Nikolai Afanas’ev (1893–1966), Cambridge 2008, 83–93; Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, Downers Grove 2013, 92–95.

3 Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity*, in: *Late Antiquity. Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*, Cambridge 2007, 245–277; Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, *Adam Alone in Paradise. A Jewish-Christian Exegesis and Its Implication for the History of Asceticism*, in: Emmanouela Grypeou/Hilary Spurling (eds.), *The Exegetical Encounter Between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, Leiden 2009, 31–43; Guy H. Stroumsa, *The Making of Abrahamic Religions in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2015, 161–197.

4 Yossy Soffer, *The View of Byzantine Jews in Islamic and Eastern Christian Sources*, in: Robert Bonfil/Oded Irshai/Guy G. Stroumsa/Rina Talgam (eds.), *Jews in Byzantium. Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, Leiden 2012, 845–871; Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew. Antisemitic stereotypes in Romania and other Central-East European Cultures*, Lincoln 2009, 378–440.

5 Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*, Baltimore 2010, 62–80; Vladimir Solonari, *Patterns of Violence. The Local Population and Mass Murder of Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina July–August 1943*, in: Michael David-Fox/Peter Holquist/Alexander M. Martin (eds.), *The Holocaust in the East. Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses*, Pittsburgh 2014, 51–82; Marius Turda, *Rasă, eugenie și naționalism în România anilor ‘40 ai secolului al XX-lea [Race, Eugenics and Nationalism in Romania in the 1940s]*, in: Wolfgang Benz/Brigitte Mihok (eds.), *Holocaustul la periferie. Persecutarea și nimicirea evreilor în România și Transnistria în 1940–1944 [Holocaust in the Periphery. The Persecution and Annihilation of the Jews in Romania and Transnistria 1940–1944]*, Chișinău 2010, 258–262; Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania. The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944*, Chicago 2000; Jean Ancel, *The Image of the Jew in the View of the Romanian Antisemitic Movements: Continuity and Change*, in: *Shevut* 16 (1993), 47–51; William I. Brunstein, *Roots of Hate. Antisemitism*, in: *Europe before the Holocaust*, Cambridge 2004, 68–69.

6 For the Romanian Orthodox Church’s antisemitic tradition see Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, Lincoln 2012, 56–60.

their post-1918 antisemitic radicalisation and import of theological categories that changed their views based on the patristic tradition. The theological training in Austro-Hungarian institutions especially for theologians from Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia extolled views that were more radically anti-Jewish than those of theologians educated in the Romanian Old Kingdom.⁷

The transformation took place when the theological attitude towards the Jewish religion and ethnic minority was amalgamated with a changed Christological perspective. Although they did not explicitly deny the Jewishness of Jesus or the relevance of the Old Testament for the corpus of the Scriptures, the Romanian Orthodox theologians claimed that the characteristics of the person of Jesus Christ were universal and beyond human categories of understanding and could not be expressed by ethnical, spatial or temporal concepts, nor in terms of religious denomination. By deliberately stressing the importance of His divinity over His humanity, theologians such as Nichifor Crainic, George Racoveanu, and Fr. Liviu Stan achieved a form of theological relativism, whereby Jesus' human nature dissolved in His divinity. In order to express the antisemitic character of Orthodox theology, the logic of redemption and salvation was changed: salvation became a totalitarian concept that privileged Christians and damned all other religions, a virtue that closely associated theology with the values of religious fundamentalism.⁸

And last but not least, one of the important scholarly questions with regard to the antisemitic position of Orthodox theologians, laymen and clergy is whether this was a theological excursus or the discourse of Orthodox laymen who used various religious tropes to justify and legitimise their engagement in a radical political project. They used an eclectic, abstract theology whose ultimate aim was not Christian salvation of the individual but the creation of a racist, extremist political discourse meant to carve out a place for the nation in the beyond.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In order to ground my research hypotheses, I use Brian Porter-Szücs' theoretical underpinnings when discussing the Catholic case in Poland to expand the views on the Orthodox Church and its relationship with the state as part of a 19th century redesign. In his book on the status of Poland's Catholicism in the 20th century, Porter-Szücs emphasised that there is a close relationship between the nation represented as an "ethnoreligious community" and a "religious discourse" which can be embraced both by the representatives of the Church and by lay intellectu-

- 7 Bruce Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution. A History of Austrian Antisemitism*, Chapel Hill 1992, 89-101; Wolfgang Maderthaner/Lisa Silverman, *Wiener Kreise: Jewishness, Politics and Culture in Interwar Vienna*, in: Deborah Holmes/Lisa Silverman (eds.), *Interwar Vienna. Culture between Tradition and Modernity*, New York 2009, 59-80; Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians. Jews and Culture between the World Wars*, Oxford 2012; Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna. The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918-1938*, Ithaca 2014, 15-46, 74-105. For Hungary, see Attila Pók, *The Politics of Hatred: Scapegoating in Interwar Hungary*, in: Paul Weindling/Marius Turda (eds.), *Blood and Homeland. Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, Budapest 2007, 375-388. As an example, for the newly acquired province of Bukovina, see Ion Nistor, *Bukovina sub dominațiunea românească. La 20 de ani dela Unire [Bukovina under Romanian Rule. Twenty Years from Unification]*, Cernăuți 1938, 49-51; Dragoș Vitencu, *Când dai nas lui Ivan ... Mic tratat despre ucrainomanie [When You Indulge Ivan ... Small Treaty on Ukrainomania]*, Cernăuți, 1934, 6, 65-78; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 60-78; Radu Florian Bruja, *Extrema dreaptă în Bucovina [The Extreme Right in Bukovina]*, Târgoviște 2012, 46-47; Victoria Camelia Cotos, *Populația Bucovinei în perioada interbelică [Bukovina's Population in the Interwar Period]*, Iași 2009, 155-174.
- 8 Peter Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism. Global, Local and Personal*, London 2008, 211-242.

als.⁹ Romanian intellectuals (theologians included) envisioned shaping the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) on the basis of religious denomination – a common trend in all Eastern European states during the interwar period. By associating ethnicity with the dominant religious denomination of the time, the national community presented itself as an exclusivist circle, i.e. one that marginalised ethnic and religious minorities. In the Romanian case, the 1930 debate between the orthodoxist philosopher Nae Ionescu and the Roman-Catholic intellectual Iosif Frolo stand out as perfect examples of this identification between the nation and the dominant Christian denomination.¹⁰

Another conceptual underpinning that I use to explain the paradoxical association of contradictory discourses such as the Christian love-hate for Jews is Roger Griffin's concept of modernity as a "mazeway resynthesis".¹¹ Faced with the increasingly liberal values of the Western civilisation, the mechanisation of industry, the alienation of the individual when confronted with the atomised world of the big city, the increasing secularisation of the European mind, a feeling of "malaise" and "decadence", and the increasing fear of social anomie, the traditional communities tried to resist by taking refuge in a remote, traditional existence. Taking up Roger Griffin's interpretation, I argue that under the pressure of modernisation, the exacerbation of progress as a societal myth, the highlight placed by the modern state on a secularised worldview disenchanted of any metaphysical sense, traditional intellectuals forged a "mazeway resynthesis" based on Orthodoxy in order to build a new "sacred canopy"¹² to defend the religious cultural *nomos* against the dangers of secularisation and pure nihilism:

"[...] religion in its manifold forms originated when the socially *constructed nomos* was 'cosmicised' and projected communally unto the universe as a higher order, thus forming a 'sacred canopy' over the abyss of meaningless. The opposite of the sacred is thus not just the profane, but, at a deeper lever, chaos, the intimation of nothingness."¹³

Against this individualist ethos associated with the State's emphasis on rapid industrialisation and atomisation of the society as expressed in the secular cities of Europe,¹⁴ but also in view of the disturbing news coming from Bolshevik Russia or Béla Kun's communist Hungary, where religion was persecuted and the importance of national community tended to disappear, wrapped in the red banner of revolution,¹⁵

9 I took the terms and the conceptual framework from Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity and Poland*, Oxford 2011, 4-15, 167. For Austrian Conservative thinking which seem to share a common ground with some ideas of the traditionalists, see Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy. The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism*, New York 2013, 1-50.

10 Keith Hitchins, *Gindirea: Nationalism in Spiritual Guise*, in: Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940*, Berkeley 1978, 140-173.

11 Roger Griffin, *Modernity, Modernism and Fascism. A 'Mazeway Resynthesis'*, in: *Modernism/modernity* 15 (January 2008) 1, 9-24; Roger Griffin, *Modernity and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, Houndmills 2007, 106-108.

12 The term has been coined by Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, London 1967. I understand here this term as in the reading of Roger Griffin, *Modernity and Fascism*, 74-80.

13 Roger Griffin, *Modernity and Fascism*, 74.

14 For the tension between city and village in Prussian Germany, please see Hans Otte, 'More Churches More Church Goers'. *The Lutheran Church in Hanover between 1850-1914*, in: Hugh McLeod (ed.), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*, London 1995, 89-116; Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Human Life. Nobility, Protestantism & Nazism in Weimar Germany*, New York/Oxford 1995, 102-116.

15 For the impact of Hungarian revolution from 1919 see Leonard Paukerow, *Experimente bolșevice. Ce am văzut în Ungaria Comunistă. Bilanțul Regimului Bolșevic în Ungaria* [Bolshevik Experiments. What I Saw in Communist Hungary. A Balance of the Bolshevik Regime in Hungary], Cluj 1920. For Bolshevik Russia's impact on Romania, Maxim Gorki, *Un an de revoluție rusească* [One Year Russian Revolution], București 1919. For the aftermath of the Hungarian Bolshevik Revolution, see Thomas Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary, 1920-1925. István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation*, Boulder 2006, 5-42.

traditionalist intellectuals started to search for a new source of transcendent meaning. The carnages of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolutionaries taking over Russia, Germany, and Hungary increased this sensation of uncertainty and growing despair among intellectuals, who felt that they lived in an apocalyptic age. As a consequence, intellectuals looking for shelter from this general dissolution of the traditional world searched for a spiritual sanctuary that would give significance to their lives and access to transcendence so they could face the deluge and dehumanisation of the modern world. Apparently, through a synthesis of opposing categories or notions, the modernist drive was aimed at forging a new worldview in which decadence and degeneracy were epitomised in one enemy, the Jew.

In the Orthodox world, this “mazeway resynthesis” was coupled with a process of hybridisation of the Orthodox doctrine with ideas from the Roman Catholic, Protestant, or even secular milieus. This process, which Fr. Georges Florovsky referred to as “pseudo-morphosis”, was characterised in the 19th century by the penetration of foreign ideas such as nationalism to the Church’s doctrine.¹⁶ Contrary to the claim of exceptionality of the Romanian Orthodox case, this concept also designates the transferability of religious and secular concepts from one area to another as well as their ultimate appropriation and re-adjustment according to the specific needs determined by the context in which they were adopted.¹⁷ As this process intensified in the wake of the formation of Orthodox national churches in the Balkans and their consolidation after the end of the First World War, the transfer of ideas to the Orthodox doctrine surpassed the theological innovations from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism and even included secular ideas such as antisemitism and racism.¹⁸

The fact that Orthodox theologians became more radical in their views of Judaism and sided with the fascists is also related to the academic milieu of faculties of theology in post-WWI Romania. Discontented with the theological faculties’ rationalist teaching methodology borrowed from the Austrian/Prussian academic context, young students started to explore more irrational, radical intellectual alternatives associated with a highly nationalist, extremist political mindset.¹⁹ The faculties of theology all over Romania wholeheartedly embraced the nationalistic, antisemitic drive cultivated by the radical fascist movements. Students of theology envisioned themselves as missionaries chosen to enlighten the masses as to the importance of radical nationalism and antisemitism. Paradoxically, many fascist theologians such as those affiliated with the Sibiu faculty of theology also adhered to the principles of inter-orthodox relations, ecumenism, and tolerance contained in the

16 Fr. Georges Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology*, in: Fr. Georges Florovsky, *Aspects of the Church*. Volume Four in the *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Belmont 1975, 183-213. For Fr. George Florovsky’s theology see Peter E. Chamberas, *Some Aspects of the Ecclesiology of Father Georges Vasilievich Florovsky*, in: D. Neiman/D. Schatkin (eds.), *The Heritage of the Early Church. Essays in Honor of Rev. George V. Florovsky*, Rome 1973, 421-436; Paul Gavriluk, *Florovsky’s Neo-Patristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology*, in: George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, New York 2013, 102-124.

17 Elizabeth Harvey, *Emissaries of Nazism: German Student Travellers in Romania in the 1930’s*, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 22 (2002) 1, 135-160. For a complete overview of the German expansion in the Balkans see Stephen G. Gross, *Export Empire. German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890-1945*, Cambridge 2016, 68-107.

18 John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, Cambridge 2012, 13-16.

19 Geoffrey J. Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany*, New Haven 1985, 250-265; Steven Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth. The Nazification and Denazification of a German University*, Cambridge 2002, 12-49; Susannah Heschel, *For ‘Volk, Blood, and God’: The Theological Faculty at the University of Jena during the Third Reich*, in: Anson Rabinbach/Wolfgang Bialas (eds.), *Nazi Germany and the Humanities*, Oxford 2006, 365-394. For Göttingen’s Faculty of Theology, see Robert Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust. Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*, Cambridge 2012, 61-93.

concept of *sobornost* and preached by the Russian theology, as well as to the rediscovery of the Fathers of the Church known as the neo-patristic renaissance.²⁰ Paradoxically, the views of young theologians were determined by the association of opposing aesthetic and philosophical categories in the same narrative. In the vortex of modernity, Christian theologians now found their love for the neighbour tainted with hate, and expanded their Christology grounded on Christ's commandment of love for humankind by a downright ecumenical theological justification of racial hatred directed against the Jews, Roma or other ethnic minorities. Like in Nazi Germany, in addition to social and economic reasons the fascination of theologians and Christian clergymen with the 'science of antisemitism' was related to the innovative, 'avant-garde', irrational nature of the synthesis between Christian theology and the narrative of racial hate. This new theological approach was a challenging and provocative research methodology, offering young scholars a scientific foundation for their theological racist idiom.

Racial Theology or Antisemitism Religious Fascism?

After a secular, antisemitic 19th century with a secular intellectual elite that denied religion a role in building the national community and perceived nationalism as a secular ideology, a new approach to antisemitism spread across Europe. As different scholars have pointed out (George L. Mosse, Jay Winter, Christopher Clark), the end of WWI also meant a return to religion as a therapeutic way to deal with the horrors of the Eastern and Western fronts and the feeling of social anomie that dominated European societies. In the Romanian case, this return to religion and the millennial values exhibited by the Orthodox Church was coupled with a growing, almost apocalyptic fear of social unrest and "godless Bolshevism" as "products" of the world Jewry.²¹

In targeting the Jew as a pathogenic source of social decomposition and spread of socialist and communist ideas, Alexandru C. Cuza, the leading patriarch of the Romanian antisemites, joined forces with the physiologist professor Dr. Nicolae Paulescu. They exposed what they believed was a Masonic/Bolshevik/Capitalist conspiracy threatening the Romanian nation's very existence. At the beginning of 1920s, with a Jewish minority of five per cent of the population, these two Romanian intellectuals gave vent to their rabid, radically antisemitic views to energise the student youth in adopting their political ideas. As for religion, the self-declared atheist Cuza criticised the Romanian Orthodoxy in a book from 1925 programmatically entitled *Învățătura lui Isus. Iudaismul și Teologia creștină* (The Teachings of Jesus. Judaism and Christian Theology) for not doing its national duty of resisting the Jewish flood,

20 One of the most striking examples of coexistence of the theological openness towards *sobornost* and national Orthodoxy can be found in the pages of Nicolae Terchilă, *Metafizica lui Vladimir Solovieff*. Introducere: Viața lui Vladimir Solovieff [Vladimir Solovieff's Metaphysics. Introduction: The Life of Vladimir Solovieff], in: Nicolae Colan (ed.), *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiene* [Yearbook of the 'Andrei Șaguna' Theological Academy] XI (1934–1935), 5–39. In the same volume there was an article signed by the student Ioan Faur, *Creștinismul și Naționalismul* [Christianity and Nationalism], in: *ibid.*, 65–71. For a theological reading of the concept of *sobornost* by a fascist theologian, see Hierodeacon Nicodem Ioniță, *Natura și sensul termenului 'sobornicesc'* [Nature and Meaning of the Term 'Sobornost'], in: *Revista Teologică* [Theological Review] XXVI (January–February 1936) 1–2, 32–34. For one of his fascist texts supporting the Iron Guard, see Hierodeacon Nicodem Ioniță, *Problema iubirii lui Dumnezeu și a omului* [The Issue of God's Love and of Man's love], in: *Gândul Neamului* [The Nation's Thought] II (December 1935) 1, 6.

21 William I. Brunstein, *Roots of Hate*, 177–264; William I. Brunstein/Ryan D. King, *Balkan Antisemitism: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust*, in: *East European Politics and Societies* 18 (2004) 3, 422–423.

which, according to him, was invading Romania and stripping its population of its rights and fortune. In the 19th century, the Jewish minority started to engage in liberal professions the Romanians were not interested in. They were also part of a process of rapid urbanisation, which made them stand out in university centres, where they interacted with Romanian students, most of whom came from villages to complete their education.

Arguing that the Romanian Orthodox Church had been bought by the Jewish finance in order to keep a quiet distance from the Jewish problem, Cuza recommended to Orthodox theologians that they adopt a new Christology in line with his antisemitic views. He 'cleansed' Jesus of His Jewishness and proclaimed the end of the 'Judaic religion'; the main messianic attribute of Christ was that of being an assiduous fighter against the Jews. Accordingly, he lambasted the Church for its inefficiency and lenience towards the Jews, and of course the Jews themselves, whom he perceived as sons of the devil:

"Christianity is a mystery. It has a meaning. The meaning of this mystery is in the being of Jesus and is summarised in a word. This word, decipherer of the mystery, is not what the Christian theology imagines it to be. It is not the mercy, the forgiveness, the passive acceptance, but exactly their opposite – the fight! The fight of the truth against the lie. The fight of the good against the evil. The fight of the light against the darkness. The truth, the good and the light are from the loving God. The lie, the evil and the darkness are from the devil, the one that kills people. Therefore in an abstract and symbolic way Jesus is the Son of God and the Jews he is fighting against are the people of Satan."²²

Following Claudia Koonz, I argue that Cuza's tirades against the Orthodox Church's commandment to love thy neighbour provided the necessary moral anaesthesia for the Christian conscience regarding the Jews.²³ The clergy fully embraced this biased perspective, asking for a more involved Orthodox Church in the struggle against the internal enemy, the Jew. Shortly after Cuza's book came out, the same argument related to the Jewish economic superiority and their overwhelming presence in the cities could be found in the most prestigious Romanian theological journal, *Revista Teologică* (Theological Review), published in Sibiu. In describing his impressions of a pilgrimage to the Monasteries of Bukovina, the young priest Pomponiu Morușca, a professor and spiritual confessor at the Sibiu Theological Academy, represented the residual antisemitism present in the Transylvanian academic milieu from the former Austro-Hungarian context:

"The sea of Jews that crowds the streets of our town proves our statements that our poor Bukovina is flooded by this herd drying out its seed and stripping its inhabitants of their energy, thus ripping off their incomes. Regardless of how much humanitarian largesse our soul of Christian believers and priests has, it was troubling to see how the daily work of the Romanian peasant and the goods that he accumulated go into the pockets of the foreigner; it is because of our incapacity and weakness obviously since we don't have the sharpness that it takes to get them out of commerce, move them from the booths and send them to the hard labour in the fields."²⁴

22 A. C. Cuza, *Invățătura lui Isus. Iudaismul și Teologia creștină* [The Teachings of Jesus. Judaism and Christian Theology], Iași 1925), 7.

23 Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, Cambridge 2005, 190-220.

24 Policarp Morușca, *Un drum de reculegere* [A Road of Silence], in: *Revista Teologică* XV (August-September 1925) 8-9, 275.

Fr. Pomponiu Morușca's view represents a vulgar, economy-centred version of the antisemitism that inspired most of Cuza's followers, who clung to the late 19th century antisemitism that originated in the views of Édouard Drumont, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the Viennese Christian Socialism and yielded writings like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. According to these paranoid dystopian views, the Jews extended their global influence through financial power, aiming for ultimate domination of the world and the nations.

In 1930, the Bucharest *Cuvântul* (The Word) newspaper launched a major campaign headed by the philosopher Nae Ionescu against the Greek-Catholic and Roman Catholic minorities, denying them the status of 'true Romanians' and relegating them to the inferior status of being 'good Romanians'. By welding together ethnicity and religious confession, which were henceforth considered as synonymous ontological concepts, Nae Ionescu, a lay intellectual involved in issues of the Orthodox Church, tore down the already porous dikes that had kept at bay the religious marginalisation of the Jews. This was the turning point in constructing a theological narrative of racial hate against the Jewish minority. Going further still, in 1934, after adopting the fascist ideas propagated by the Iron Guard, Nae Ionescu focused his attention on the Jews. Asked by his disciple Mihail Sebastian to preface his latest novel entitled *De două mii de ani* (For Two Thousand Years), Ionescu wrote an inflammatory introduction in which he reshuffled some of his earlier insights on the Jewish question:

"Therefore the Jews either admit that the Messiah has come in the shape of Christ and then, from that moment, they cease to be the chosen people or they question the authenticity of Christ the Messiah and then they deny their function as the chosen people, as God's instrument for the salvation of the world [...] Judah suffers. Why? Because Judah lives in the midst of people who cannot be hostile to him even if they wish not to be; because by refusing to acknowledge Christ as Messiah, by continuing to rightly or wrongly hold himself apart in his capacity as the chosen people he owes to himself to fulfil the role which devolves on him, that of the Christian values. Judah suffers because he birthed Christ, because he saw Him and did not believe in Him. This would not have been a too serious matter. But others believed; we did. Judah suffers because he is Judah."²⁵

Nae Ionescu denied the Jews any chance of salvation and believed that in their case the Messiah had already come. He went even further in his theological argument by clearly and boldly stating that Jews were destined to eternal damnation unless they confessed to Christ as Messiah and converted to Christianity.

Appalled by their mentor's radical remarks, some of his disciples such as Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica criticised their professor's theological assumptions and his defiance of God's sovereign will to choose who would be saved and who would be doomed to hellfire.²⁶ Against their criticism of Nae Ionescu's assertions, a young Romanian graduate in Orthodox theology and philosophy associated with the Romanian Iron Guard championed the professor: Gheorghe

25 Nae Ionescu, Introducere, in: Mihail Sebastian, *De două mii de ani* [For Two Thousand Years], București 1934, 8 and 9.

26 See Mircea Eliade, Judaism și antisemitism [Judaism and Antisemitism], in: *II Vremea* (22 July 1934) 347, 2; Constantin Noica, Creștini, marxiști și teologi [Christians, Marxists and Theologians], in: *Credința* [Faith] II (9 September 1934) 231, 4. For a complete scholarly overview of the polemic see Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism. The Case of the Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Oxford 1990, 101-105. See also Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* [The Thirties. The Romanian Far Right], Iași 2015, 148-178.

Racoveanu, at that time a PhD candidate in Orthodox theology at Bucharest University and with an impressive journalist track-record supporting the Iron Guard, defended Nae Ionescu. In a series of articles published in *Credința* (Belief), Racoveanu picked up Nae Ionescu's views of the necessity to convert Jews to Christianity to relieve them of their existential suffering and their hope for the Messiah to come. He also argued that God's grace is shared only by those who are already baptised and members of the Christian Church and refused to allot any moral or theological value to the good deeds of Jews. The novelty of Racoveanu's approach as opposed to Nae Ionescu's was in claiming that, in God's eyes, only two categories were damned from the start, namely the fallen angels (the demons, the devils) and the Jews. By picking up some references from the liturgy of the Orthodox Church, Racoveanu – like Fr. Ilie Imbrescu before him (who had spoken of a 'satanic generation')²⁷ – considered the figure of Judas Iscariot as the typological representation of the Jewish people and did everything in his power to demonise them: "Judah is an angel of the devil. Worse yet, the devil himself [...]. Thus Judah and the devils will not find salvation."²⁸

Racoveanu's deliberate demonization of the Jewish people took antisemitism one step further. When criticised by Mircea Vulcănescu, who grounded his opinion in the newest approach to Orthodox soteriology represented by Fr. Serghei Bulgakov and claimed that, in the end, even the demons would be saved by God's grace, Racoveanu provided a stunning, rabidly antisemitic answer.²⁹ First, he questioned the relevance of Vulcănescu's reference to Bulgakov's writings, quoting from a personal letter he received from Bulgakov saying that those writings were addressed not to the Orthodox, but rather to other Christian denominations, so they were not written with a strict observance of controversial doctrinal issues. Second, Racoveanu dismantled as heretical the theological idea that a final restitution (*apokatastasis panton*) of all being into God would take place at the end of time; after all, its best-known advocate, Origen of Alexandria, was condemned as a heretic at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553 AD). Nevertheless, Racoveanu pointed out that, although the final eternal punishment of the demons was a reality of Christian doctrine, there was still hope for them to be redeemed in the beyond, whereas for the Jews there was no hope due to their obstinate refusal to recognise Christ as the Messiah.³⁰

Because of the growing influence of Nazi Germany and the spread of theological ideas from the Third Reich, which advocated a Germanic version of Christianity based on Aryan Christology and racist ecclesiology, a transformation took place in the Romanian Orthodox theology with regard to the Jewish problem. Orthodox theologians affiliated to the Iron Guard dropped almost all patristic or scriptural references in shaping their antisemitic views and began to forge their theological expression of hatred against Jews by adopting a racist conceptual framework when arguing against the pagan character of the Nazi Germanic religion. As Susannah Heschel accurately pointed out in a book on the Nazification of Protestant theology during the Third Reich, the racial approach to theology was extremely appealing to theologians because it was regarded as avant-garde to mix nationalism, theology,

27 Mircea Vulcănescu, O problemă teologică eronat rezolvată? Sau ce nu a spus d. Gheorghe Racoveanu [A Theological Problem Erroneously Solved? Or What Mr. Gheorghe Racoveanu Did Not Say], in: *Credința* II (3 September 1934) 225, 4.

28 Gheorghe Racoveanu, O problemă teologică eronat rezolvată: sau ce n-a înțeles dl. Mircea Eliade [A Theological Problem Erroneously Solved? Or What Mr. Mircea Eliade Did Not Understand], in: *Credința* II (29 July 1934) 195, 4.

29 Gheorghe Racoveanu, Pentru lamurirea dl. Mircea Vulcănescu, Noul Bogoslov [XXX], in: *Credința* II (5 September 1934) 227, 4-6.

30 Ibid., 6.

and racism.³¹ This method was also extremely popular among Romanian theologians such as Nichifor Crainic, Fr. Nicolae Neaga or Fr. Liviu Stan, especially after 1936.

That year, Nichifor Crainic wrote a seminal text entitled *Rasă și religie* (Race and Religion) in his cultural journal *Gândirea* (The Thought). Crainic criticised the German Nazis for emphasising the superiority of the Germanic race, condemned the erroneous German spirit that engendered excesses like the sterilisation of the unwanted, and repudiated the pseudo-Christian Germanic religion and the exchange of the Roman for a Germanic Law; in short: he seemed to embark on a complete refutation of the Germanic antisemitic religion. And yet, he also preached the inequality of races, the degeneracy of the Jewish race, and the Christian spiritual factor as the leading argument for a fruitful development of the races:

“Almighty is but God. And the values of this world are more or less valuable by how they report positively or not to the Almighty. A race for instance can be inferior or superior based on how its genius accomplished more or less from the essence of Christianity.”³²

In order to refute the Nazi idea that Christianity was a Jewish religion and its founder had been a Jew, Crainic envisaged Christ as a divine-human person in whom there was no hint of Jewish blood, thus radicalising the German hypothesis of an Aryan Jesus:

“Is Christianity a Judaic religion? It could have been in just one instance: if its creator would have been nothing else but the son of the man from the royal line of David. Then its doctrine wouldn’t have been but a Semitic myth of a relative value as all the other religious myths of the people. However the nature of Christianity is given by the divine and human nature of its creator. In Jesus the divine nature and human nature without being combined are actively and mysteriously united in the same person. What does the church teach us regarding the man Jesus? That this man was born without sin, that there is no sin in him and he cannot sin.”³³

Nichifor Crainic denied Jews the moral right to use the books of the Old Testament in their religious practice, claiming that the Jewish Scriptures were already fulfilled by the coming of Christ, who had abolished the Judaic religion and now only belonged to Christians. Furthermore, he acknowledged the rightful character of the Germanic racist religion only in what concerned the Jews, and claimed that Christians hated only the racial myth of Judaism based on the Talmud, whose historical and racial essence was centred on the denial of Christ as Messiah and his resurrection from the dead:

“The Talmud is the obscurantist organisation of the most tremendous hatred against the Savior Jesus Christ and against Christians. Its spirit is the cruel spirit of Herod, the killer of 14 000 innocent babies and the spirit of the crime on Golgotha. The Talmud is the total negation of Christianity on the part of a people that has decreed that it is above all other peoples and that does not recognise God’s salvation of any of them [...] The Talmud is the wellspring of the worldwide Masonic action to discredit Christianity and

31 Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus. Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, Princeton 2009, 19. For the Romanian case see Paul Shapiro, *Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church*, in: Kevin Spicer (ed.), *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, Bloomington 2007, 136-172.

32 Nichifor Crainic, *Rasă și religie* [Race and Religion], in: *Gândirea* XIV (1935) 2, 59.

33 *Ibid.*, 65.

the Marxist action to transform through violent means people into atheists. As long as the Jews continue to isolate themselves from all other peoples in that fortress of diabolical hatred, there will be no peace between us and them. Henceforward, this road will blindly lead to the implementation of the prophetic words: Thou shall destroy thyself, O Israel!”³⁴

The racist rants against the Jewish minority in Romania voiced by Nichifor Crainic went hand in hand with an already existing antisemitic discourse within the structures of the Church. Continuing the late 19th century obsession with Judaism as closely associated with the spread of freemasonry, the bishops, priests, and theologians of the Romanian Orthodox Church rejected from the beginning these kind of ‘occult’ organisations, which they perceived as being openly anti-Christian and the source of all malaise engulfing the Church’s initiatives to promote a Romanian Orthodoxy. Seizing the momentum of the funeral of legionary leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin’s, where three hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church led a procession of 200 priests, openly demonstrating their support for the Iron Guard, the Holy Synod took a historical decision: shortly after the funeral (on 11th March 1937), freemasonry was condemned at the behest and inspiration of Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, who had attended the burial and drafted a memorandum approved by the Holy Synod. This official step by the Orthodox Holy Synod in further isolating the Jews can be looked upon as a natural progression in the relationship between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church, since both the Synod and the fascists saw freemasonry and the Jewish world finance as the evil forces behind the Romanian political parties associated with the spread of communism and atheism. The Patriarch vainly tried to use his influence and persuade the bishops to ban priests from politics and stop them from decorating churches with political symbols or contributing to political propaganda. In the same session, the Holy Synod refused the request of the State to dissolve the newly created legionary working camps built around its churches and monasteries. Moreover, influenced by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, the Synod claimed to uphold “a Christian point of view” against “the spirit of secularism” in politics, arguing that the Church could choose what party was worthy of support according to its moral precepts.

The decision of the Holy Synod caused confusion in that part of society that was not attached to the legionary cause and values: they perceived the step as a direct attack against King Carol II’s intimates, namely his Jewish mistress Elena Lupescu and his circle of influential cronies from the world of finance. The Iron Guard saw them as the epitome of Jewish capital penetration through freemasonry and the source of the nation’s moral corruption, and thus the decision of the Holy Synod was perceived as a victory of the Iron Guard. Corneliu Codreanu saluted the decision of the Holy Synod as “the beginning of greatness” for the Romanian people in its struggle against the corroding influences from within. In his 64th circular, he urged all legionaries to read the acts of the March Synod.

After being appointed as prime minister on 11 February 1938 by King Carol II during his royal dictatorship, Patriarch Miron Cristea continued the racial initiatives of the previous government led by Octavian Goga and Alexandru C. Cuza. He oversaw and patronised the implementation of antisemitic legislation, but also the violent containment of the Iron Guard from the Romanian public sphere. Apart from the anti-Jewish legislation that was passed and implemented, the puppet government installed by King Carol II during his personal dictatorship and headed

³⁴ Ibid., 66.

by Patriarch Miron Cristea displayed an economic variant of antisemitism, disregarding its theological aspect.

The anti-Jewish legislation was toughened through the instauration on 6 September 1940, of a joint military and Iron Guard government led by General Ion Antonescu. In addition to confiscating Jewish property and looting Jewish businesses, the National Legionary State proclaimed on 14 September 1940 also decided to ban all masonic lodges in Romania. This particular step was perceived by the Romanian Orthodox Church as a direct confirmation of its 1937 decision. Thus, the Orthodox Metropolitan Irineu Mihălcescu, a representative of the theological view of freemasonry as a dangerous threat both to the Romanian nation and the Church, began to vent his antisemitism ideas, denouncing Jewishness as the essence of freemasonry. A professor of symbolic theology and Orthodox dogma and Metropolitan of Moldavia from 1939, Mihălcescu published in 1941 a detailed attack on freemasonry, which he considered to be 'Satan's Synagogue' and an open enemy of the Christian Church. Metropolitan Mihălcescu praised the earlier condemnation by the Holy Synod and the prohibition of the masonic lodges by the Romanian National Legionary State in 1940. Drawing inspiration from his articles published in the early 1920s, he stated his reason for endorsing these decisions:

"One can tell that the Jews have infiltrated Freemasonry by simply looking at the leaders of the lodges around the world: both the leadership and the majority of members consist of Jews. Although recently appeared, Freemasonry has a bloody past."³⁵

The same judgmental thinking that linked freemasonry with world Jewry was expressed by Deacon Nicolae Mladin. In a text dedicated to Dr. Nicolae Paulescu, Mladin recycled some of the arguments produced by others before him and suggested that "Judaism is a creation of the Talmud", "the Talmud is a testimony of a satanic messianism", and the "Old Testament belongs to Christianity and Judaism belongs to the Talmudic spirit". In defining the link between antisemitism and freemasonry, Mladin stated that:

"Antisemitism is therefore directed not against the Old Testament but against the Talmud that grew from the hatred against Christ and shaped the twisted physiognomy of the current Judaism. Freemasonry is the tool through which Judaism recruits, even from among the Christians, fighters against Christ. Obviously we talk about people driven by material gains. The supreme leadership is held by the American Kikes."³⁶

The purpose of the Jewish conspiracy embodied by freemasonry was nothing other than:

"De-Christianising the people and keeping them enslaved by passions and wants under the yoke of the universal kingdom of Israel. This is why the Kahal and the Freemasonry are the cause for all the vices that destroy civilisations and crush the nations: debauchery (Freudianism, open marriage, sexuality and so on), alcoholism, thievery, murder, capitalism, anarchy, communism. An instrument of public corruption, Judaism made out of religion an opium of the people, from art a shameless exhibition, from science a weapon against God, from philosophy a negation of Christ, from

35 Irineu Mihălcescu, *Francmasoneria. Teologia luptătoare* [Freemasonry. Theology's Fighter], București 1941, 5-6.

36 Nicolae Mladin, *Doctrina despre viață a profesorului Nicolae Paulescu* [Professor Nicolae Paulescu's Life Doctrine], in: *Revista teologică* (1942) 3-4, 200-201.

education an instrument of spiritual mess, from the free press a means of falsifying Romanian spirituality.”³⁷

Nicolae Mladin stated these suppositions bluntly and presented the consequences even to those who already followed the Masonic principles or simply had Jewish origins. According to him, there was no salvation for Jews or freemasons, but rather the reality of eternal punishment in hellfire: “A terrible downfall awaits those who reject Christ and fall into the hands of Judah.”³⁸

Crainic’s racist rants against the Jews were confirmed and systematised later on in the works of Fr. Liviu Stan. A fervent reader of German and French racists and supporter of the Iron Guard, Liviu Stan authored *Race and Religion* in 1942, a theological explanation of the racist conception. As Crainic before him, he argued against the neo-pagan theology of the Third Reich and claimed that for any racist theology the main assumption had to be the primacy of the spiritual over the biological aspect of race. He refuted both moderate and radical views related to the relationship between religion and race and claimed that religion was beyond races and was the overarching principle, maximising the biological legacy of a certain race.

“This original unity, lost in the meantime because of the original sin, is recreated through Christianity that is not in any way a product of the Semitic race but the religion par excellence, the absolute religion, that one that gathers all the natural and supernatural conditions to produce the straightest connection between man and God with the most suitable means and guiding him to the highest purpose of his life and of life in general.”³⁹

Referring to the Romanian theology’s understanding of race, Liviu Stan claimed that

“[t]he racist truth with all its consequences and addenda imposes in the life of the western Christian revisions and reforms. For us, the eastern Orthodox Christians, these reforms are not problematic because both racism and nationalism with their entire value system could be found in the doctrine and life of the Orthodox Church. They are realities that Orthodoxy considers both in the form of doctrine and in its practice with its organisation into national churches, honouring them as creations by the hands of God. Thus, if you are a racist you are and will be Romanian and when you no longer are racist, when you stopped being racist, you start to disappear as Romanian, as a nation, you start melting, dissolving in a stronger racist solution, a more concentrated one that will last and survive your temporary, natural and your eternal divine purpose.”⁴⁰

As Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic before him, Fr. Liviu Stan established a close relation of dependence between religion/Christianity and race. In point of fact, he applied Ionescu’s reasoning to the concept of race claiming that race associated with Christianity made someone a Romanian, and anyone who did not fit that particular model was not a true Romanian. In relation to the Jewish minority, this denominational understanding of race exported by the Orthodox chaplains on the Eastern Front and missionary priests of the Romanian Exarchate established in the conquered Ukraine tranquillised the moral and human feelings of the Orthodox clergy when involved in the Holocaust.

³⁷ Ibid., 201.

³⁸ Ibid., 202.

³⁹ Liviu Stan, *Rasă și religie* [Race and Religion], Sibiu 1943, 92.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 122.

Instead of conclusion

Interwar theological antisemitism in Romania stood not just as missionary means of spreading the nationalist and xenophobic gospel of evil, but also as a failed attempt to re-connect the outdated Orthodox theology with the newest developments in the German academic milieu. The alleged 'science of antisemitism' once adopted from German universities provided its Orthodox counterparts with the illusory hope that antisemitism could function as an independent nationalistic brand of theology. In an economically backward country such as interwar Romania, where the rural, agricultural and traditional proportion of the population reached almost 78 per cent, where the industrial modernisation stalled, where urbanisation lacked the input needed from state authorities and the autochthonous, urban middle class consisted of ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Saxons, Jews, etc.), the xenophobic prejudices and nationalistic dreams of grandeur out of sheer frustration thrived dangerously. In this unstable social and economic climate the Romanian Orthodox Church accommodated its public speech to the needs and increasingly anti-Semite tendencies of its parishioners.

People like Nichifor Crainic, Gheorghe Racoveanu or Fr. Liviu Stan scolded the Jews not only out of antisemitic conviction, but also due to their political options and the ideological trajectory of the Orthodox Church in its entirety. Antisemitism and a stern nationalism offered a moral and political justification of the other, more mundane grievances of the Church. Nevertheless, in endowing antisemitism with a theological significance and presenting their students with a theological justification for excluding Jews from the midst of the national community, the aforementioned theologians opened a dangerous path, with murderous consequences. Orthodox theology was transformed by these people from a moral and ascetical discipline into a powerful instrument of ethnical exclusion suited to the ideals and goals of the Romanian fascist movements (the Iron Guard, for example).

While former fascists translated the intellectual discourse of a limited number of highly-skilled theologians into the concrete action during the short-lived Transnistrian Orthodox Exarchate, students of these theologians and their powerful antisemitic master narrative would pave the way for the Romanian Holocaust and the wilful participation of Romanians in the genocidal undertakings of the assigned missionary clergymen.

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Quotation: Ionut Florin Biliuta, Sowing the Seeds of Hate. The Antisemitism of the Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 20-34.

http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Biliuta/ART_Biliuta01.pdf

Article

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Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

The Hunger Letters

Between the Lack and Excess of Memory

Abstract

After examining thousands of letters written between 1940 and 1944 by Polish Jews in ghettos on the verge of starvation, the author approached a visual artist to assist with processing the emotional aspect of the letters. The goal was to reflect the voices of their senders and addressees. Between October 2008 and spring 2010, two sample letters, reproduced from originals in the archive, were sent together with an explanatory letter to 3,000 randomly selected Varsovians. The Hunger Letters Project, the 'letter in a bottle', had repercussions that exceeded all expectations. Finally, the specific understanding of this public intervention is elaborated upon in the context of its ethnographic results.

In his book *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach describes practices that make it possible to imaginatively recreate, revive, and reinvent the past.¹ Discussing such events as delayed burials and sacrifices made for the dead, auctions of old objects and funeral parades, the author examines the recollection process course processes of substitution or surrogacy that Atlantic cultures use to fill the void left by the dead, the expelled and the lost. A culture that has survived disaster recreates itself in that process. "Those who had survived use substitutes to fill the loss caused by death and expulsion."² Performance, which he defines as personifying or transmitting something hitherto absent, proves a significant notion for Roach. There is no guarantee whatsoever that the object being performed had in fact previously lived. "To perform also, however oftentimes secretly, means to reinvent."³ The motivations behind our project, which I discuss below, include a number of assumptions Roach makes in his book, including the claim that identities have a chance to survive only in relation to the present. The historical anthropologist should spend more time in the street than in the archives, as the street proves the best at remembering the dead; performance constitutes the main memory topoi, and it is only through the bodies of the living that the dead can speak freely.⁴

In 2008, I spent a number of weeks examining thousands of letters written by Polish Jews who were starving and confined in ghettos throughout Poland in the years between 1940 and 1944. The letters were addressed to Jewish organisations in the West, in particular to Joint,⁵ which had its headquarters in neutral Switzerland. They contained appeals for help and testimony of substantial food aid they had already received. The packages I looked through contained some thousands of receipts for delivered products – sugar, cocoa, powdered milk, marmalade, sprats, flour, Ovomaltine – interspersed with laconic information about the fate of respective

1 Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*. Circum – Atlantic Performance, New York 1996, XI.

2 Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 2.

3 Ibid., XI.

4 Ibid., XII-XIII.

5 See photographic documentation of some aspects of this help in the album Linda Levi (ed.), *I Live. Send Help*, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, New York 2014.

addressees. "In January Dorka and Bronisław stayed in the Sandomierz ghetto. [...] Aunt Krysia and Andzia had left with the transport and we have not heard from them ever since. We love you."⁶ Prepared in such a way that they passed through German postal censorship, the letters often represented a coded answer to questions posed by the Jews' anxious relatives. Reading deeper into the multitude of these letters, a number of individual, recurring voices emerge. Gradually, over the course of time, more and more of these voices fall silent.

Overwhelmed by the size of this archive (which remains unpublished to this day) I approached Artur Żmijewski, a visual artist associated with the Foksal Gallery Foundation,⁷ and asked him for advice on how to process the emotional load of the letters in a way that would resemble the voices of their senders and addressees. This marked the beginning of the *Hunger Letters* project. If classified using Alfredo Jaar's terminology, the project might fall into the category of public intervention.⁸ At the end of this article, I elaborate on my understanding of the intervention in the context of its ethnographic results.

We have selected two letters from the archives housed at the Jewish Historical Institute and reproduced them in the appendix to this article.⁹ Anna Najmanowiczowa authored the first letter, which was written in 1940 and addressed to the Central Welfare Council.¹⁰ The second letter, addressed to the Central Committee of the Jewish Social Self-Help, was written by Motel Pszenica, a journalist who had been displaced from Warsaw and was now wandering about the Lublin Province.¹¹ Left destitute with no money whatsoever, both authors requested help for themselves and their starving families.¹²

We wrote and signed an accompanying note of explanation. In October 2008 and the spring of 2010, we attached it to both letters and sent them to 3,000 random Varsovians. The Polish Post provided us with addresses. The mailing covered, among other places, Warsaw districts such as Muranów (site of a former ghetto) and parts of Wola, Żoliborz, and Saska Kępa.¹³

The letter explaining our intentions reads as follows:

"Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Confined in the ghettos throughout Europe in the years 1940–1944, the Jews were starving. They sent letters to welfare institutions as well as their families asking for material help, food and whatever work possible. However, which European Jews possessed anything beyond the elements that made up their bodies: fat, hair, bones, golden caps on their teeth? Later on they were also deprived of these possessions.

6 I would like to thank Paula Sawicka for the opportunity to look into the above unpublished fonds.

7 See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artur_Żmijewski_\(filmmaker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artur_Żmijewski_(filmmaker)), (16 April 2016).

8 Dlaczego Alfredo Jaar podpalił muzeum sztuki współczesnej [Why Alfredo Jaar set fire to the museum of contemporary art], an interview with Alfredo Jaar by Aleksandra Lipczak, http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,96856,17293061,Dlaczego_Alfredo_Jaar_podpalil_muzeum_sztuki_wspolczesnej_.html, (17 March 2015).

9 I would like to thank Karolina Panz, who ran a search query on our behalf in the Jewish Historical Institute and selected the letters we sent out.

10 Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute. Najmanowiczowie 1-2, AŻIH-ŻSS 211-36, 10-11.

11 Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, AŻIH-ŻSS 211-31, 49. According to the letter, Motel Pszenica published the novel *Pajin* in Yiddish before the war. Unfortunately, consultations with Yiddish philologists did not help me to find the novel yet.

12 For letters by Anna Najmanowiczowa and Motel Pszenica, see appendix.

13 A letter by Artur Żmijewski to the author of the present text, 24 March 2015: "When it comes to financing, we bought stamps, while volunteers helped us to pack and send out the letters. We packed the letters and stamped them in 2 sessions. During the first session we were helped by humanities students and during the second one by students of the Academy of Fine Arts. This was a home-based work performed at our own expense."

The Jewish letters asking for food are still kept in the archives. This is precisely because they are letters and applications, the aim of which is to do their pleading job by circulating among people.

Madam/Sir, today it is you who are the addressee of such a Jewish letter – coming back to life after sixty years of crying for help. What is your response to this plea, this Jewish application?

We ask you to give us your answer and your remarks. Madam/Sir, how do you feel being the addressee of a letter authored by a sender who most likely died a long time ago?

Please place your answer in the envelope attached to this letter and drop it in your mailbox or send it by e-mail to: [our e-mail address]

Kind regards,

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (cultural anthropologist, University of Warsaw)

Artur Żmijewski (filmmaker)”



The ‘letter in a bottle’ shown above had repercussions that exceeded our expectations. We received answers from nearly every third addressee. Some letters showed traces of domestic life; one had been lying on a kitchen table for quite some time.¹⁴ The letters were often written by elderly people who were not used to writing¹⁵ and sometimes visually impaired,¹⁶ which makes it all the more amazing that they decided to write back. Many approved of the project and expressed their gratitude to the organisers. Critical feedback of the *Hunger Letters* came mostly from respondents with excellent writing skills,¹⁷ though some addressees, who might be less skilled at writing, simply sent us letters torn to pieces.

Our intervention received an extraordinary response in the media. Articles on the *Hunger Letters* appeared in all the major newspapers¹⁸ and we were approached

¹⁴ Letter 30.

¹⁵ Letter 29: “Back in those years I was a child. I feel so sorry for the Jews and the Poles and all the people in the world. I feel sorry for those, who died and are still dying of starvation and exhaustion all over the world” [signature illegible].

¹⁶ Letter 32.

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Dystynkcja. Społeczna krytyka władzy sądowniczej*, transl. P. Biłos, Warsaw 2005, 221, footnote 5: “Townsppeople are distinct for their ability to control the situation of the survey (this is an ability that any results analysis should take into consideration).” [Title of English translation of the French original: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*].

¹⁸ See, e.g. Tomasz Urzykowski, *Krązą listy z getta* [Circulating a List of the Ghetto], in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 December 2008.

by several other periodicals including the military monthly *Polska Zbrojna*. Interviewed by the newspapers in question, Jan Oldakowski, Director of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, expressed anxiety over possible harm the intervention may have caused, while a representative of the Polish Jewish Youth Organisation shared his fears that the intervention would trigger anti-Jewish resentments.¹⁹ Scholars, on the other hand, praised us for the innovative form we chose to examine the Jewish letters.²⁰

Below, I refer to reactions to our letter, grouping them into six categories:

1. Ambivalence,
2. There are more important things,
3. This is an important issue, but ...,
4. Not only Jews suffered,
5. I feel,
6. I remember.

Statistically speaking, the responses (330 letters) to our letter are represented by the following figures. Ambivalence (Category 1: 162 letters – 98 torn to pieces, 64 empty envelopes) proved the group with the largest number of responses, while the combined categories 2, 3, and 4 made up the second largest group (28; 45; 27). The third largest group consisted of letters falling into the ‘I feel’ category (Category 5: 70 letters), while the type of response we encountered least often were those from the category ‘I remember’ (Category 6 – five letters).²¹

In the summary below, I refer to respondents by name using signatures found on the letters, having assumed that if respondents did not wish them to be disclosed, then the letters would have contained an appropriate provision. What I omitted were confessions pertaining to the respondent’s personal life. With the exception of letters torn to pieces – all of which were sent anonymously – most answers were signed with a full name and surname, and many contained a return address. A very small number of respondents signed the letters with their initials or signed them illegibly.

Ambivalence

I will begin with an attempt to unravel the attitudes behind the most ambiguous answers. I would be grateful for any suggestions on how to better understand those that resist interpretation.

Regardless of whether our correspondents praised or rebuked us, their reaction proved strong enough to convince them to drop the letters into a mailbox. Even if the envelopes we received contained copies of our letter torn to pieces (this was the content of approximately 100 letters received, a number that amounts to a little less than 30 per cent of all responses), our intervention must have made an impression, as it motivated our respondents to act. Rather than simply throw the letter away, they had

¹⁹ Anna Brzezińska, *Wołają o pomoc po latach* [After Years, They Cry for Help], in: *Życie Warszawy*, 4 December 2008, Jan Oldakowski: “There is a risk that while meaning to evoke a sense of emotional commitment, we may accidentally trigger indifference not towards the problem itself, but to the form of the action.”

²⁰ Marcin Zarzecki, sociologist from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw: “This is a well thought-out socio-anthropological study. The study has a cognitive character not only for the investigators, but also for all the participants. The authors of the study apparently want to cause a shock. Judging by the reaction to the letter, one can see to what extent do declare values such as tolerance or empathy, and to what extent we implement them”, *ibid.*

²¹ The categories sometimes overlapped, while the classification relates to the motive that prevails in a given letter. The above figures represent only rough approximates and are by no means representative.

to remember them and find a mailbox. Tearing a letter to pieces is a gesture of rejection. One can only guess at the emotion behind a gesture like this. Irritation? Indignation? Were these people driven by anger at us disturbing their peace and reminding them of something that should not be recalled, in a form that does not meet their idea of communication? Did their anger result from the fact that, once again, we were speaking about Jews? This is something we do not know.

Letters containing a blank sheet of paper constituted the second largest category of ambivalent responses. What the gesture of putting a blank sheet into an envelope means remains a disputable issue. We do not know if the sender was unable to find words to describe what he or she had read, and how it had made them feel, or if it was meant to express that the authors of this letter were stupid, and that the letter was a waste of the recipients' time. I am inclined to view this gesture as conscious silence rather than criticism. In any case, the sheets were blank, even though they did not have to be. They did not contain signatures or words that could have been offensive, nor were they scribbled on, as it sometimes proves easier to draw something rather than write it. This might not be an indication of rejection so much as restraint. While the sender establishes contact with the addressee, he or she is either mistrustful or does not find the words to articulate what they feel.

In one case, we received a letter with content that bordered on two of the categories mentioned above. While our letter had been torn to pieces, the letter written by Mrs Najmanowiczowa was left intact. Enclosed with her letter was a sheet of paper showing a cross drawn with a pen.²²



While the letter above differentiates between various types of texts intended to be destroyed (as we received some torn to pieces), it alerts us to yet another dimension of the non-verbal answer. Tearing a letter to pieces – especially a *Hunger Letter* – and returning it to the sender is a symbolically loaded gesture. The charge could have something to do with “defacement”²³ as Michael Taussig describes it in the following: “When the human body, national flag, money or a monument is destroyed, an odd surplus of negative energy is activated inside the object being destroyed.”²⁴ I assume

²² Letter 13.

²³ The English verb deface means: 1. to mar the surface or appearance of; disfigure e.g. – to deface a wall by writing on it; 2. to efface, obliterate, or injure the surface of, as to make illegible or invalid e.g. to deface a bond, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/defacement>, (22 March 2015).

²⁴ “When the human body, a nation’s flag, money, or a public figure is defaced, a strange surplus of negative energy is likely to be aroused from within the defaced thing itself”, Michael Taussig, *Defacement. Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, Stanford 1999, 1.

that a *Hunger Letter* could be listed among the examples Taussig gives here. Perhaps the addressee sensed precisely this kind of energy, and it stopped them from tearing up Mrs Najmanowiczowa's appeal? However, the same kind of energy was certainly disregarded by those who decided to shred her letter after all.

The thought mentioned above allows us to understand the gesture of sending an empty sheet back to the sender even better. Sending both the sheet of paper and the appeal authored by one of the starving Jews back to the sender and agreeing that the Jewish letter stays with the addressee are two different things.

Category: There are Other, More Important Things

"Dear professor, this and similar issues should be of more interest to you, shouldn't they?" – writes SK, who sends brochures for the Polish Children's Aid Foundation Maciuś together with two beautiful postcards with floral ornaments, signed: "Kind regards."²⁵ The author of this response politely draws our attention to something she (or he) believes to be more deserving than the *Hunger Letters*.

A similar response came from Wiesława Zakrzewska. "Dear Sir and Madam," she writes:

"Please think about why you are asking other people what they feel when they read the letter [...] 60 years after the war. Why do you chase the ghosts of the past? [...] Life is short and it's such a pity to waste it on senseless and pointless conversations. I don't know what the purpose of all this is. I wouldn't like the things I write to eat up our energy."²⁶

Further on in her response, we see the following written in capital letters: "This is a SELF-IMMOLATION WITH NO PURPOSE IT WOULD BE WORTHY OF." Still, having said all this (and just as we expected) Mrs Zakrzewska shares the feelings our letter evoked in her:

"Reading the letter you sent me, a letter which is more than 60 years old, I would like the human being to be strong enough to push away the sorrow. I would like people to be free. I would like them to see themselves and others as a sacredness you must neither destroy, nor hurt."²⁷

Mrs Zakrzewska's letter is typical of this category, as it contains a struggle between the desire to express a negative opinion about our intervention and the wish to take part in it and share her feelings.

Kazimiera Pełka is also torn. She writes that "she feels sorry for this sick and abandoned human being"²⁸ and that the letter makes her feel guilty even though she was just two years old in 1940. However, right after these words, she expresses her scepticism about our intervention. "It's easy to be outraged or moved. What is much more difficult is to put yourself to test: share your last slice of bread or risk your own life for another human being." Kazimiera Pełka admits that she usually does not turn down those in need. For example now, "perhaps influenced by your letter", she decided to send out a Christmas package and to support Maciuś, a charity foundation supporting children. "But that's not what it is all about!" She ends her letter in a way we find rather surprising. Still, this is something we wanted to achieve.

²⁵ Letter 4.

²⁶ All the quotes from the letters adapted in their original form, have been corrected only if the correction made them more legible.

²⁷ Letter 1.

²⁸ Letter 22.

Another response that falls into the same category as Kazimiera Pelka's letter is the one authored by the "Poor Pensioner" from Warsaw. She admits that it is a good thing to "investigate into the past. However, what proves even better is to investigate into the harm being done today to old people, whose pensions are low and who do not have enough money to buy medicine and make a living." The author of this letter calls "the war started by Hitler [...] the greatest crime". However, she also writes about other wars and mentions "Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan". She does not have a high opinion of people who pursue politics everywhere and calls them "hyenas", who "run around wherever they can make their pile or have their hands in the till no matter whether it's in the government, in the parliament, in Brussels or in the Church". Such people "plunder everything we managed to build in the poverty after World War II". What follows is a better identification of the feelings and views our letter evoked in the author. "I recalled, above all, the poor years of my childhood and youth and the harms made by those in power, in particular by Jews, who have always ruled us and still rule us."²⁹ The only politicians the Poor Pensioner calls "Great Poles" and finds worthy of being role models were Wojciech Jaruzelski and Edward Gierek.

Category: This is an Important Issue, But ...

Addressees such as Edyta Pasek-Paskowska, a Master's degree holder in ethnography who (we came to find out) had dealt with "the deportees, prisoners of the Pawiak prison and those imprisoned and tortured in the Gestapo headquarters in Szucha Avenue, prisoners of concentration camps", would be willing to "conditionally accept" the issue we touched upon. She would gladly answer our questions, but only if we specified: "1. the aim of the action, 2. the form of the action (a reliable questionnaire or brief opinion poll), 3. the character of the action (scholarly, popular-scientific, artistic), 4. the topic of the study [...], 5. the author of the project [...], 6. the sponsor of the action." She writes that it is all the more difficult for her to participate in the project, since "the letter covering [our] action is marked by a specific kind of emotionality, which results in statements with an affective undertone. Still, only 25 per cent of human nature is made up by emotions."³⁰

A letter from Halina Jaskólska, another addressee, presents a similar set of conditions before she would agree to take on our intervention topic. "What does an anthropologist need such confessions for?" she asks, irritated. She begins her letter by reproaching us and saying that since our letter contains neither a date nor a signature, it is not eligible for any kind of response.³¹ However, she unexpectedly gives us her answer after all:

"You ask me to answer a question concerning hunger. Hunger takes on a variety of faces. I was 14 when Warsaw was captured by Nazi troops [...]. For five years, I never had enough to eat and dreamed of a slice of buttered bread and wheat cake, some cold meats and a Frikadelle for dinner. [...] Another kind of hunger was suffered by thousands of men, women and children – Polish citizens of Jewish origins, cramped inside the Warsaw ghetto. I had an opportunity to witness that kind of hunger only once in my life. Al-

²⁹ Letter 5.

³⁰ Letter 9.

³¹ According to the author, this is the reason why "most of the residents of the house at Anielewicz Street 11; the building located at the intersection of former Gęsia Street" will not respond to our letter.

though years have passed by, the memory of that hunger has stayed with me ever since. Just like the clear memory of two Jewish children who risked their lives and got out of the ghetto to get some potatoes and white, stale bread.”³²

Category: Not Only Jews Suffered

A sizeable category of responses (17) is based on the incorrect assumption that our letter constitutes a reproach to the Central Welfare Council for not helping Mrs Najmanowiczowa. Some of our respondents were so anxious about the fact that the Central Welfare Council referred Mrs Najmanowiczowa’s case to Jewish Social Self-Help that they provided us with extensive justifications as to why the wartime help associations had to distinguish between aid to Polish citizens of Jewish and non-Jewish origin. The letter by Maria Tyszel, which is full of historical details and figures, certainly falls into this category. She writes, “we need to remember that the displacements that caused the loss of property, did not affect only Jews”. Next, she discusses in detail the circumstances within which the Central Welfare Council³³ had to function, quoting a variety of figures. Her conclusion reads as follows: “I do not think that in those circumstances the Central Welfare Council had the financial capabilities to compensate any requests addressed” at her and “the Jewish Social Self-Aid would be a better addressee of [our] letter”.³⁴

Another letter from Mikołaj Wróblewski also falls into this category. While he was “deeply touched” by the archival materials we sent, he also accused our letter of being “biased”.

“I wonder why you emphasise only the suffering of Jews? Were there no other nations that suffered, were starving and dying? My grandfather and two of my uncles, as well as hundreds of other people were murdered by the Germans in 1941 in the Eastern Borderlands. Do they not deserve our memory? Why are they not talked about? Isn’t it because they were not Jews?”

The letter ends with an appeal to the organisers to seek “some basic balance in evaluating history”.³⁵

A letter sent from the same address on Anielewicz Street – this time by Mrs M. Grabowska – also asks for “balance in evaluating history”, although her appeal is a different one. She was born towards the end of the war and has no memories of her own. Nevertheless, she wants to participate in our intervention. “I belong to the lost generation. The poverty I grew up in and my family lived in after the war certainly does not compare to the atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish nation.”³⁶

The author of yet another letter from the discussed category is a nurse.³⁷ Like other addressees, she also stands up for the citizens of all other the countries in Europe

³² Letter 11.

³³ The Central Welfare Council was a Polish self-aid organization established during the First World War I in the Kingdom of Poland, active in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The organization ran dormitories, shelters, day-care centres and orphanages, distributed food, clothes and cash support and recorded wartime losses. In the years 1940–1945, the organisation was reactivated by Adam Roniker and functioned by the permission of governor Hans Frank. Apart from the funds acquired from the occupational authorities, the organisation was also supported by the government of the United States and Polish government in exile. See Bogdan Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza 1939–1945 [The Welfare Council, 1939–1945]*, Warsaw 1985.

³⁴ Letter 2.

³⁵ Letter 18.

³⁶ Letter 21.

³⁷ Letter 26.

affected by the war. "I respect the Jewish nation, maybe even more than other nations (obviously except for my own nation)." Nevertheless, the author goes on to describe the disappointment she experienced during a trip to the Holy Land:

"A centuries old culture, tradition and architecture. The paradise land and (I will not hesitate to say it) is the land of RACISM AND GHETTOS. Walls and walls everywhere. Walls guarded by soldiers armed with rifles ready to fire any minute. [...] All my ideas about Jews were ruined."³⁸

An anonymous letter from this category uses a similar type of argumentation. First it suggests that Jews were not the only group that was deported and robbed, nor was it the only one that was starving. Next, the author defends the Central Welfare Council's right to help only non-Jewish Poles: "Is there any sense in sending out this appeal and emphasising in a drastic way what the bodies of the Jews consisted of? Is this a provocation?"³⁹

Another letter notes: "This was a cruel time. We all suffered."⁴⁰

A visually impaired person, author of another anonymous letter, writes:

"In the times of the occupation, my family was expelled from a large farm, just like the Jews were. When I was in a concentration camp and in prison as a 14-year-old girl, I shared my slice of bread with Jewish girls. I cannot imagine a distinction between a Jew and a Pole. I distinguish only between a good and a bad human being. [...] I cannot imagine not to share what I have with those who are confined behind barbed wires in the ghetto."⁴¹

The last letter I would like to mention in this category was written by Ms Maria, surname unknown. It begins with a typical confession: "Reading your letter, I was surprised, since the Poles believe that Jews keep (and have always kept) gold and jewellery in the event of disaster."⁴²

What is striking here is that of all the answers we received, only a scarce number refer to issues connected to faith. Except for the drawing of a cross and a letter to be discussed later on in the present text, these references appeared in only two cases: in a letter written by a Protestant woman, a member of the Salvation Army,⁴³ and an anonymous letter authored by a relative of one of the Righteous Among the Nations. Strangely enough, it was the latter response that was marked by resentment:

"A long time ago, not in a galaxy far away but here on Earth, a Roman said 'Behold the man' [...] and these words were addressed to a Jew. The Jew was a man special in the history of mankind. Providence burdened him accusations much greater than that of being hungry (and he hungered for humanity). He could not cry for help to the Jewish Social Self-Aid, since to some extent it was this organisation that sentenced him to be crucified!"⁴⁴

38 The war waged by the state of Israel and the unjust treatment of Palestinians are also mentioned in the letter by Tadeusz Cegiełka, letter 35.

39 Letter 27.

40 Letter 33.

41 Letter 30.

42 Letter 25.

43 Letter 24: "War is an evil the human being inflicts upon another human being. Jesus did not teach us to hate. Those who wrote about that, are already in a better world and see us from heaven above. [...] As a member of the Church, I signed a paper obliging me to fight against evil and Satan."

44 Letter 36.

Category: I Feel

A sizeable (70) category of letters consists of spontaneous and sensitive statements made by people who felt touched by what they read. "After reading your letter I felt sadness and remorse", writes Krzysztof Frydrych:

"I also felt embarrassed that, compared to the life of that man, my life is safe and free of such disasters. Maybe that was even shame? [...] So you can view this letter as being up-to-date. There will always be people among us who are in need and we should listen closely to their needs."⁴⁵

"When I was reading the 'hunger letter' I had received, I pictured the man who was seriously ill and had a six-year-old daughter and wife to support. He himself was helpless and asked for help", writes Marek Brzezicki, a mathematics student:

"Apart from sadness and compassion, this letter made me angry at the people who perpetrated this situation. [...] If I had the opportunity to help people in those times, I certainly would have done it. However, I do not really know for a fact. [...] I hope I would have helped them, but I am not sure. Similar situations are taking place these days as well, even here in Warsaw. But do I do something? I don't think so. What use are these few zlotys I gave the beggar or those I dropped into the moneybox in the church?"⁴⁶

Śławomir Kowalczyk writes that our letter made him "incredibly emotional",⁴⁷ though in a slightly different way. The first part of his text is devoted to the reasons why the Germans started the war (answer: "This had been in their blood since the Teutonic times."), while another compares the Nazis to Soviet soldiers and concludes that the latter were even worse ("they were like a barbaric swarm from the East"). The comparison ends with: "if there is no tight grip and wise governance in a nation, such a nation becomes barbaric." Further on, the letter is devoted to the Poles among the Righteous Among the Nations, who sacrificed their lives to save Jews. "I'm proud to be Polish", writes Mr Śławomir, comparing his fellow countrymen favourably to the Czechs, who he views as cowardly and who did not want to fight Hitler.

Mr Marcin Buczek is 28 years old and has always been interested in history and the past.⁴⁸ He does not like the fact that the history of the Polish Jews is now being viewed only through the perspective of the Shoah.

"Why do young Jews on their trips to Poland get to know this country only through concentration camps, monuments, and suffering? [...] Keeping the suffering of Jews in memory is important, however there is a thin line you cannot cross. Behind this line, you are bombarded with the Holocaust by the media and become insensitive to suffering [...] and compassion turns to boredom."

Mr Buczek feels sorry reading our letter, because although he would like to help, he cannot.

A letter from Oskar Cichocki shows one example of unconditional acceptance of our intervention. He writes that while he is too young to elaborate on the topic, he would like to share his experience. He practices combat sports, especially those connected with Krav Maga, the Israeli combat and self-defence system. He does not like the stereotypes he observes in society. The prejudice he is referring to concern so-called *dresiarze* – a subculture of young Polish males who wear tracksuits and are

⁴⁵ Letter 3.

⁴⁶ Letter 14.

⁴⁷ Letter 10.

⁴⁸ Letter 17.

usually portrayed as being undereducated, unemployed, aggressive, and anti-social. This stereotype is all the more painful for him as he often wears tracksuits just to feel comfortable. The author recalls another first-hand experience of other prejudices. When he was putting up posters inviting people to visit Krav Maga trainings, he was sometimes approached by people (he stresses that these were only older and very elderly people) who said, "You are putting up Jewish posters", "I hate Jews", or asking him: "Why are you putting up their posters? Are you a Jew yourself?"⁴⁹ "I'm very surprised by this kind of behaviour", Oskar Cichocki writes:

"I don't like the country I live in, because so many ridiculous stereotypes prevail here. I was touched by the description I read in your letter. I would never like to find myself in a situation like that [...] the only thing I know is that sometimes you can only count on yourself. I learned that sometimes you can get [more] help from a stranger than from people you grew up with. So what must it have been like back then?"

A different, powerful response to the *Hunger Letter* came from 35-year-old Sebastian Badurski, a printer from Warsaw. The letter below is a testament to how much some of the addressees opened up to our intervention, allowing us to understand it better:

"Although my generation didn't experience the war, I have great respect for the people who lived in those tragic times. [...] Reading the appeal made by the Najmanowicz family, I saw in my mind's eye an image of the ghetto I know from the movies. I saw people buried while they were still alive, who were sentenced for their origins. [...] While reading your letter, I felt such a great compassion in my heart for that family. [...] What drew my attention were the words: 'humble plea' [...]. I don't know if this is the reaction you expected, but my answer to your question is: yes. I help the Najmanowicz family."⁵⁰

Ms Marta M., addressed her letter directly to Motel Pszenica:

"Dear Man! I have read your letter with great attention. I think I can help you by giving your wife a job. This will provide you with financial support to cover the costs of your medical treatment and allow your daughter to start her preschool education. I realise that it is difficult for you to ask others for help and that you'd rather die were it not for your family, but it's your God, not you, who decides about this. He made you humble. Send your wife to work for me and I will give her decent food and a decent pay."⁵¹

Ms Grażyna understood our action in a similar way. She addressed her letter directly to the senders: "Dear Mr and Mrs Najmanowicz. In response to your letter, we will try our best to provide you with material support in order to compensate for at least a little of your losses and pain. We will do our best to allow you to live with the dignity that befits every human being." What follows is a letter addressed to the organisers of the intervention, answering our questions: "What do I feel? I feel pain and compassion for all the people who were deprived of everything. [...] How would I feel [...] if I were deprived of everything, robbed by my 'brothers', seeking help and justice in vain?"

An author who signed his or her letter with an 'E', wrote:

49 Letter 6.

50 Letter 15.

51 Letter 38.

“60 years have passed, and the letter is still touching and shocking. What remains is grief, sadness, and deep compassion. The letter is like a travel journal. This man was sick and completely helpless, moved from one place to another. [...] Any kind of help was hardly probable. I felt what an ordinary human being would feel. I have lots of empathy and compassion for him and his loved ones. I also feel helpless.”

What comes next is the following reflection:

“But this had been done by the Germans [...]. They drew all disasters on Europe, they perfectly implemented the annihilation of the Jewish nation [...] and let nobody say we are anti-Semites. This is not that generation!!! They don’t burn synagogues here, they do it in France, Germany, Switzerland. [...] The Jews? They were rightful Polish citizens. Poland was also their motherland. [...] Nearly two decades ago, my little daughter attended preschool. One day, a group of old Jews from Israel came to Warsaw [...], the children and their teachers organised a concert. [...] When they were singing ‘Flow, Vistula Flow through the Polish Land’ [...] you could hear a great sob in the hall. These were our Polish-Jews crying. [...] They lived through horrible things here and still managed to miraculously survive! [...] They are no strangers to us, they are our compatriots. [...] The damage done to culture is indescribable. What we missed are diversity and Polish Jews. I’m sorry.”⁵²

Category: I Remember

Two letters stand out in the category ‘I remember’. The first one was written by Mr Miżyński, who was born in 1931 and lived in a house at Złota Street 8 together with both Catholic and a few Jewish families. He remembers the names of his neighbours, especially that of Adaś Centkier, a boy four years older than he was back then:

“Once the Jews had been confined in the ghetto, Adaś used to drop by in our place. He was terribly thin and wore tattered rags. This lasted until the ghetto was liquidated. I have no idea what happened to the people I knew. Wondering what would I feel reading (if I would receive such a letter from them), [I would answer with a question]: why did they have to die?”⁵³

The second letter was written by painter Jacek Sempoliński. I will quote the entire text:

“Dear Joanna,
When it comes to the ‘Jewish’ letter, I think exactly the same that all human beings do (except for non-human beings). I won’t write you that extermination is one of the greatest adventures of our species. Unlike others, I know this from my own experience. When I stood in the Krasiński Square together with other Varsovians. You could see a sea of fire that began on the other side of the square and hear sounds also coming from that side. When I was ‘touring’ the street abandoned by Jews in what was once the ghetto (e.g. the ghetto in Leszno), I was walking through shreds of duvets, smashed furniture, in stench. Remnants of a poster put up on a broken window of one of the cafes read: ‘Diana Blumenfeld performs today.’

⁵² Letter 16.

⁵³ Letter 23.

I think to myself: 'Well, well.' Later on, I learned she was a famous actress. Then, after another sea of fire and stench, among the rubbles of the slain Warsaw, I saw the remnants of yet another poster with: Lutosławski and Panufnik. When it comes to the main topic, I think this is some shady issue. Historical explanations are not enough. Some kind of defect.

Anyway, if thinkers say that art penetrates unspoken areas, why can't things look like this in the history of mankind? Interestingly enough, these inconceivable things do not relieve anybody from, but quite to the contrary force to ..."⁵⁴

Methodological commentary

In the ethnographic context, the method used in the study presented above can be classified as an "eliciting interview",⁵⁵ wherein knowledge is acquired by presenting an artefact, text or photograph to the respondents to serve as a starting point for narration. This operation also aims to reduce respondents' possible inclination to meet investigators' expectations.

Consequently, the form our letter took was essential to the intervention's success. The second paragraph of our letter alludes to Giorgio Agamben's figure of "bare life", which is to say "the fat, hair, bones, golden caps on their teeth" to which many European Jews were reduced during the Holocaust. The figure metonymically pointed to the register our survey concerns. However, we preferred not to name the register directly, as this would prevent us from receiving undisturbed associations, feelings, and evaluations. Our point was to verify whether the Shoah would be called as it should be (no, it was not, except for six letters),⁵⁶ whether we would encounter a rivalry between martyrologies (yes, we did in 27 cases), and whether we would meet with sympathy or antipathy towards the victims. The responses we received displayed all of the above options together with the infamous motif of Jewish gold, "Jews – exploiters, who rule us", the motif of deicide, penal mythology containing speculations about the metaphysical causes of the Holocaust, the motif of unjust policy pursued by the state of Israel,⁵⁷ and unjust accusations of "Polish anti-Semitism".⁵⁸ Our respondents also expressed how proud they were of actions taken by the Righteous Among the Nations, and emphasised the need to defend the rules the Central Welfare Council followed in distributing to non-Jewish Poles only, and in a few cases reminded us that helping Jews was punishable by death at that time.⁵⁹

We were astonished at the *Hunger Letter's* ability to trigger such a rich cross-section of attitudes, anxieties, prejudices, and opinions, and in such a small and unrepresentative study. Regardless of how touching the contact was, it is hard not to notice that

⁵⁴ Letter 34.

⁵⁵ See, e.g. Wendy Hollway/Tony Jefferson, *Eliciting Narrative Through the In-Depth Interview*, in: *Qualitative Inquiry* 3 (March 1997) 1, 53-70.

⁵⁶ Letter 20: "This is the evidence of the great tragedy of the Jewish nation, which suffered unimaginably in the years 1940–1945. The Germans used the most cruel of methods to annihilate this nation creating ghettos and death camps."; letter 35: "I constantly feel how horrible was the suffering and debasement experienced by the Jewish nation during the Second World War in the years 1940–1944."; letter 16: "they [the Germans] have perfectly implemented the extermination of the nation."; letter 36: "The last world war [...] How much ink, film stock and paper were used to produce the reports and books by people, who had survived the Holocaust"; letter 21: "the poverty I grew up in [...] does not compare to the atrocities that came upon the Jewish nation. I quote the sixth letter, written by Jacek Sempoliński, in the part: 'I remember'".

⁵⁷ E.g. letter 35: "For many years [Israel] has been waging war against the Palestinians, taking their land, building walls and is becoming the aggressor, jeopardising world peace."

⁵⁸ Letters 16, 31, 18.

⁵⁹ Np. list 25.

the most common reaction our correspondents gave to mention of Jewish hunger was something Pierre Bourdieu would call false universalisation,⁶⁰ which often has a noble motive.⁶¹ A typical response to our letter reads as follows: “I believe the difficulties of surviving the war and coping with hunger were connected less to nationality: Jewish or Polish, than to the environment you lived in and the situation created by the occupiers.”⁶² Only two people noted that ‘Polish’ and ‘Jewish’ hunger constituted two entirely different things, given the fact that the Jews were outlawed and forced to live in cramped ghettos.⁶³ Not learning the differences between both hungers could be called, to use J. L. Austin’s term, a “valid falsity”⁶⁴ reflecting many years of negligence when it comes to educating children about the Holocaust in Poland.⁶⁵ Contrary to the facts contained, for example in the response from the Central Welfare Council, which referred Mrs Najmowiczowa’s appeal to the Jewish Social Self-Aid, the respondents to our letter usually denied the hunger’s ‘ethnicity’ or its murderous uniqueness. Refusing to accept that hunger affected Jews in an exceptional way, they stubbornly insisted that their reactions were not triggered by their own particular interest: “having read this touching letter, I said I couldn’t stay indifferent. Indifferent to the fate of the human being and an Arab, Jew, or representative of any other particular nation.”⁶⁶

In the formal sense, a common feature of the responses received was that out of two possible senders, the correspondents chose to address their response to the anthropologist, and not the artist. This could be due to the fact that the anthropologist’s name was the only one written on the addressed envelope. Thus the person of the “professor”, to whom the response was addressed, became a valid screen for projecting and sharing knowledge; a screen showing expectations failed or fulfilled, praise, reprimands, opinions, and feelings.

In the technical sense, the cognitive mechanism of the *Hunger Letters* is based on the phenomena of transference and countertransference known from psychoanalysis.⁶⁷ The respondents were confronted with archival materials. Empathising with the situation of the starving Jews was the transference, while the reaction to the feeling of discomfort – sometimes violent and aggressive and sometimes patient and full of compassion – was the countertransference. The intervention’s first and most important aim was to begin this process, giving respondents a magnified space in which to express themselves. The point was to allow the past to ask the present a question and to consider the response received by the past.

60 Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, transl. K. Wakar, Warsaw 2006, 94.

61 Letter 30: “I cannot imagine a distinction between a Jew and a Pole. I distinguish only between a good and a bad human.”

62 Letter 32.

63 Letters 11 and 21.

64 Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 346: According to Austin, a fabrication or deceit made public to everybody as something that deserves universal respect, becomes a valid lie, which means that it is made familiar with and denied the name of the deceit, beginning with the deceiver himself. Here, Bourdieu refers readers to J.L. Austin’s book, *How to Do Things With Words*, [in:] idem, *Mówienie i poznawanie. Rozprawy i wykłady filozoficzne*, [Speaking and Learning. Hearing Philosophical Lectures] transl., ed. and introduction by B. Chwedeńczuk, PWN, Warsaw 1991 (Original Title: idem, *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lecture Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Oxford 1962, http://pubman.mpdl.mpg.de/pubman/item/escidoc:2271128:3/component/escidoc:2271430/austin_1962_how-to-do-things-with-words.pdf, (22 March 2015).

65 The problems of school programs on Holocaust in Polish literature are referred to by Sylwia Karolak in her recently published, renowned book: *Doświadczenie Zagłady w literaturze polskiej 1947–1991. Kanon, który nie powstał* [The Experience of the Holocaust in Polish Literature, 1947–1991. A canon that never was], Poznań 2014.

66 Letter 37.

67 <http://www.psychodynamika.pl/index.php/page/materialy-szkoleniowe/2-przeciwprzeniesienie.html> (19 March 2015).

Joseph Roach, who I mention at the beginning of the present text, suggests that identities can survive only in processes of surrogacy in a constantly changing relationship with the present. Our intervention was an example of such a surrogacy, as it constituted a re-enactment of the Jewish cries for help, this time in a situation where providing help was not punished with death. Perhaps we owe the massive response to the *Hunger Letters* precisely to that re-enactment.⁶⁸ Faced with the uncertainty caused by the intervention's artistic inspiration and a sizeable per cent of ambivalent responses, it is difficult to provide an unambiguous interpretation of the received results. Even if we assume that the interpretation was an artistic metaphor, let us try to see it clearly: out of the 3,000 appeals sent out, 70 responses were empathetic, 98 letters were sent back in shreds, 64 responses were empty and 103 responses questioned the purpose of dealing with this subject.

The *Hunger Letters* allowed both the senders and the addressees to broaden their experience and gave them some food for thought. This in turn falls within Michel Foucault's definition of work as

"that which is susceptible of introducing a significant difference in the field of knowledge, at the cost of certain difficulty for the author and the reader, with, however, the eventual recompense of a certain pleasure, that is to say of access to another figure of truth."⁶⁹

O d p i s

55 Do Motel Pszenica
Centralnego Komitetu Międzyrzec.
Żydowskiej Samopomocy Społecznej
w K r a k o w i e.

Niniejszym zwracam się z prośbą następującą :

Przed wojną zamieszkiwałem w Warszawie na ul. Konarskiego 3. Po wojnie przyjechałem do miasta rodzinnego Ładziń, ale tu mnie znowu wysiedlili do Słowatycze. Ze Słowatycze jechałem do Międzyrzec, w lecie pracowałem trochę przy krawiectwie oraz na robotę rolną. W jesieni tego roku odesłano mnie do obozu pracy w Lublinie. Tam zachorowałem na zapalenie nerek. Leżałem trzy tygodnie w Lublinie. wyszedłem ze szpitala 12.12. 1940 w stanie zapalnym, bo nie miałem pieniędzy do zapłacenia. Teraz leżę w domu w Międzyrzecu. Potrzebuję diety, lekarstwa i co tydzień analizy. A ja nawet i czarnego chleba nie mam. Mam żonę i 5-letnią córeczkę. Znajduję się w beznadziejnym stanie. Przed wojną wydałem książkę opowieść "Pajn", która miała ciepły oddźwięk. Dotychczas nie wyciągałem dłoni o pomoc, ale teraz jak zachorowałem i to ciężko, to zmuszony jestem. Ja wiem, że dużo ludzi, którzy się do Was zwracają wedle pomocy, nie potrzebują o

Jestem autorem różnych raportów, opowieści wydrukowanych w rozmaitych pismach na tle życia robotniczego i uprzejmie wzywam o rychłej pomocy, gdyż stoję przed przepaścią. Pracować nie mogę, potrzebuje leczenia i muszę patrzeć jak moje dziecko głoduje i żona. Jesteśmy bosi, bez opału i ja muszę leżeć w łóżku i patrzeć nad tym. Wolałbym śmierć, ale gdzie pójść dziecko i żona.

Apeluję do Was pośpieszcie z pomocą, obiecuję, że jak wyzdrowieję, stanę do służby Waszej instytucji.

Z poważaniem

68 Eric L. Santner wrote about the purpose of similar re-enactments that allow us to re-approach lost cases in *Stranded Objects. Mourning, Memory and Film in Postwar Germany*, Ithaca and London 1990.

69 James D. Fabian (ed.), Michel Foucault, *Power*, (transl. Robert Hurley et al.), New York 2000.

Copy

Motel Pszenica

Międzyrzec

To: Central Committee of the Jewish Social Self-Aid in Kraków

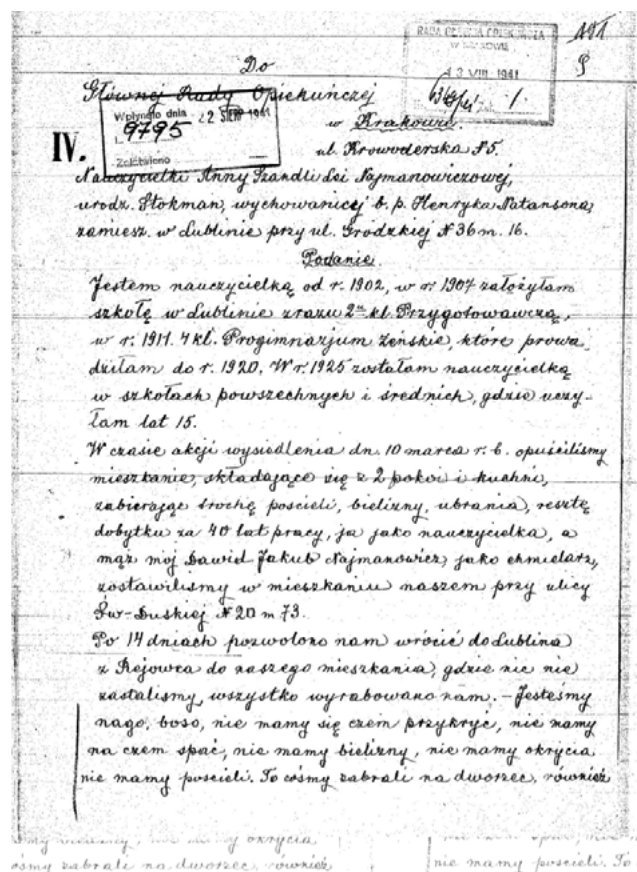
I hereby request what follows:

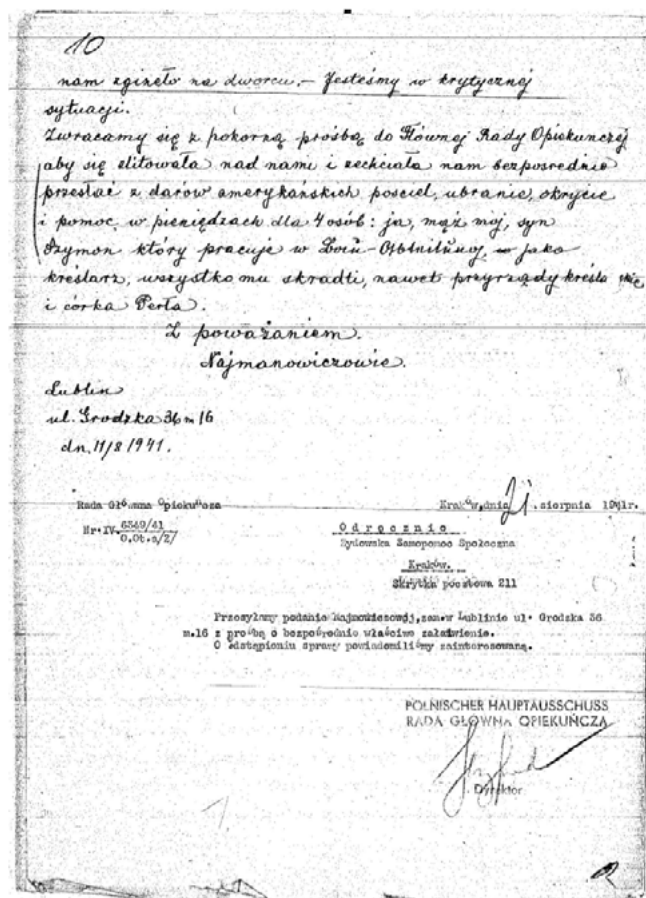
Before the war I lived in Warsaw at Konarskiego Street 3. After the war I came to my hometown Radzyń, but here I was deported again – to Słowatycze. Then I went from Słowatycze to Międzyrzec, and in the summer I worked a little bit in tailoring and then worked on a farm. This year in autumn, I was sent back to the labour camp in Lublin. There, I contracted nephritis. I spent three weeks in Lublin and left the hospital on 12.12.1940 with the nephritis uncured, because I had no money to pay for the medical treatment. Now I am lying in bed at home in Międzyrzec. I need a diet, medicine and a check-up each week. I have nothing, not even some black bread. I have a wife and 5-year-old daughter. My situation is hopeless. Before the war I published the book *Pajń*, which met with a warm reception. I have not asked for help so far, but now I am forced to do so, because I am seriously ill. I know that many people who ask you to help them according to their needs do not need that help at all.

I'm the author of several features, stories on the life of workers that have been printed in several papers. I kindly ask you to help me as soon as possible, because I'm on the brink of disaster. I cannot work, because I need medical treatment and have to watch as my wife and child suffer hunger. We are bare-footed and I have to lie in bed and watch all this. I would rather die, but where would my wife and child go?

I appeal to you, come to our aid. Once the war is over, I promise I will come to serve your institution.

Regards,





To: Central Welfare Council in Kraków
Krowoderska St.

Received: August 22nd

Settled:

Teacher Anna [illegible word] [illegible word] Najmanowiczowa, born Stokman, a pupil of Mr Henryk Natanson, residing at Grodzka Street 36/16.

Application

I have been a teacher since 1902, and in 1907 I established a two-grade preparatory school. In 1911, founded a four-grade preparatory junior high school for girls, which I ran until 1920. In 1925, I started to teach at common schools and high schools and worked there for 15 years.

During the displacement action, on 10 March, we left our flat, which consisted of two rooms and a kitchen. We managed to take some bedclothes, clothes and underwear, and had to leave behind the rest of our belongings – the fruit of 40 years of work – mine as a teacher and my husband Daniel Jakub Najmanowicz's work as a hop-grower in our flat at Św.Duska Street 20/73.

After 14 days spent in Rejowiec, we were allowed return to our apartment in Lublin. Upon our return, we did not find a thing. We had been robbed of everything. We are naked, barefoot and have nothing to cover ourselves with. We have nowhere to sleep. We have no underwear, no cover, nor bedclothes. We had even lost the things we took to the train station. We are in a critical situation.

We humbly ask the Central Welfare Council to have mercy and send us some bedclothes, clothes, blankets and support in cash from the American donations for four people: me, my husband, our daughter Perla and our son Szymon, who works as a

draftsman in Lviv [illegible word written in Cyrillic alphabet] – he was robbed of everything, they even took his drawing instruments.

Regards,

The Najmanowicz family

Lublin Grodzka 36/16

Central Welfare Council

Nr IV 6349

O.ot./a/2

Kraków, August 21st 1941

Signed in manuscript/Jewish Social Self-Aid

Kraków/P.O. box 211

We hereby send the application written by the Najmanowicz family, residing in Lublin at Grodzka Street 36/16 with the request to have their issue settled directly.

We have informed the interested party about dropping their case.

POLNISCHER HAUPTAUSSCHUSS

CENTRAL WELFARE COUNCIL

Director

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir
Ethnologist and Cultural Anthropologist, University of Warsaw
j.tokarska-bakir@uw.edu.pl

Quotation: Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, The Hunger Letters. Between the Lack and Excess of Memory,
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation.
3 (2016) 1, 35-53.

http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Tokarska-Bakir/ART_Tokarska-Bakir01.pdf

Article

Copy Editor: Miha Tavcar

Johannes-Dieter Steinert

Die Heeresgruppe Mitte

Ihre Rolle bei der Deportation weißrussischer Kinder
nach Deutschland im Frühjahr 1944

Abstract

Based on German and Belorussian archives as well as on testimonies, this paper examines the deportation of Belorussian children as forced labourers to Germany by units of Army Group Centre in 1944. It analyses the decision-making process, the imprisonment of thousands of children, their deportation, employment in Germany, the role of Belorussian collaborators, and finally the liberation of the children by the Red Army. By focussing on the participation of German military units in deporting child forced labourers, the article sheds light on the contemporary and post-war web of lies to create and maintain the myth of the 'clean' Wehrmacht.

Die Verschleppung weißrussischer Kinder im Frühjahr 1944 nach Deutschland gehört zu den unzähligen Kriegsverbrechen der deutschen Wehrmacht und ihrer Soldaten im östlichen Europa. Sie war Teil der 1941 aus den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion begonnenen Deportation von Zwangsarbeitern in das Deutsche Reich, fanden sich doch die verschleppten weißrussischen Kinder in Fabriken der Junkers Werke und in Arbeitslagern der Organisation Todt (OT) wieder.¹ Wie viele Kinderzwangsarbeiter insgesamt in Güterzüge gepfercht und aus Osteuropa nach Deutschland gebracht wurden, lässt sich in Ermangelung zeitgenössischer Statistiken lediglich schätzen. Ausgegangen kann jedoch von einer Mindestzahl von 1,5 Millionen Kindern aus Polen und den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion, die in Deutschland haben arbeiten müssen; möglicherweise waren es jedoch noch erheblich mehr.² Die Deportation der weißrussischen Kinder stand darüber hinaus im Kontext der für die Wehrmacht unmittelbar hinter der Front geleisteten Zwangsarbeit, was in diesem Beitrag analysiert werden soll.

Unter der Überschrift *Errichtung von Jugenddörfern* vermerkte der Quartiermeister des Armeekorpskommando 9 (AOK 9, Heeresgruppe Mitte) am 14. Mai 1944:

„Die aus dem Gefechtsgebiet zu evakuierenden Jugendlichen im Alter von 8-14 Jahren werden im Armeegebiet in geschlossenen Ortschaften untergebracht. Das erste Jugenddorf wird in Skobrowka [...] errichtet. Die Ortschaft ist für die Aufnahme von 1.000 Jugendlichen vorzubereiten. Sie ist daher von allen Zivilpersonen zu räumen. [...] Die Betreuung der Jugendlichen wird dem Kampfbund gegen den Bolschewismus übertragen. Das Betreten

1 Nationales Archiv der Republik Belarus, Minsk (NAB) 385/2/56, Zusammenstellung Anschriften und Lager Ende 1944.

2 Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Deportation und Zwangsarbeit. Polnische und sowjetische Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa 1939–1945*, Essen 2013, 28. Als Kinderzwangsarbeiter werden Personen angesehen, die bei Antritt ihrer Arbeit das 18. Lebensjahr noch nicht vollendet hatten. Damit folgt die Studie der international anerkannten Altersbegrenzung für Kinder, wie sie beispielsweise in der Convention on the Rights of the Child der Vereinten Nationen von 1989 niedergelegt wurde (Art. 1).

des Jugenddorfes ist allen Angehörigen der deutschen Wehrmacht verboten. Über die Auswahl und Zuführung der Jugendlichen ergeht Sonderbefehl.“³

Nach dem jetzigen Forschungsstand kann dieser Vermerk als das früheste überlieferte Dokument angesehen werden, das sich auf die Verschleppung der Kinder bezieht. Das Alter der Kinder, hier mit 8 bis 14 Jahren angegeben, wurde in den darauffolgenden Wochen etwas modifiziert, und nun finden sich auch in weiteren Dokumenten die ersten Informationen über die Hintergründe und Absichten der Aktion. So hielt das Kriegstagebuch des AOK 9 am 28. Mai 1944 fest, dass an diesem Tag der Befehl erlassen worden war, alle Kinder im Alter von 10 bis 14 Jahren im Gefechtsgebiet zu erfassen. Das AOK stellte diese Anordnung in eine Reihe mit anderen Versuchen „zur vermehrten Aktivierung der einheimischen Bevölkerung für Kriegsaufgaben“ und begründete die Gefangennahme der Kinder damit, dass sie sonst von der Roten Armee zum Stellungsbau, zur Unterstützung der Kampfeinheiten und Partisanen sowie als Soldaten eingesetzt würden. Da die Kinder somit ohnehin in das Kriegsgeschehen einbezogen würden, so die Argumentation, könne ihre Arbeitskraft auch in Deutschland genutzt werden. Die Reichsjugendführung habe zugestimmt, sie in besonderen Lagern unterzubringen, wo sie im „antibolschewistischen Sinne erzogen“ und in der Landwirtschaft und im Handwerk arbeiten sollten.⁴

Der Deckname dieser größten geplanten Kinderverschleppung in der Geschichte war „HEU-Aktion“, wobei HEU für „Heimatlos – Elternlos – Unterkunftlos“ stand.⁵ Hinter der Aktion, für die unter Androhung von Kriegsgericht strikte Geheimhaltung galt, verbarg sich eine propagandistische Lüge, über die sich die beteiligten Wehrmachtseinheiten durchaus bewusst waren. Zwar ist anzunehmen, dass sich unter den deportierten Kindern auch obdachlose Waisen befunden haben, die Realität sah jedoch zumeist anders aus. Die im weißrussischen Staatsarchiv in Minsk aufbewahrten Aussagen deutscher Kriegsgefangener vermitteln einen Eindruck von der Brutalität des deutschen Vorgehens. Vom 16. August 1947 datiert beispielsweise eine handschriftliche Erklärung des Soldaten Kurt Merettig von der 102. Infanteriedivision, worin er schilderte, dass im gesamten Divisionsbereich die Dörfer umstellt und die Kinder „von ihren Müttern gerissen, auf den Bahnhof getrieben, verladen und nach Deutschland verschleppt“ worden waren.⁶ Franz Koch, um ein zweites Beispiel zu nennen, berichtete, dass „Kinder im Alter von 8-14 Jahren auf die Lastwagen verladen und abtransportiert“ wurden,⁷ während schließlich Willi Schröder einräumte, dass seine Kompanie ein Dorf umstellte, während die Feldgendarmarie „ca. 20-30 Kinder im Alter von 4-12 Jahren „evakuierte“.⁸

Unter den Opfern der HEU-Aktion befand sich die 1933 geborene Matrjona Kirillowna Koschewenko, eine Vollwaise, die bei ihrer Tante lebte und zuvor aus nächster Nähe mit hatte ansehen müssen, wie ihr Vater von deutschen Soldaten erschossen worden war. Während eines Interviews beschrieb Matrjona ausführlich, dass alle Kinder ihres Dorfes in einem geschlossenen LKW zu einem Gebäude gebracht wurden, wo sie von deutschen Ärzten untersucht wurden. Diese malten ihnen anschließend verschiedenfarbige Kreuze auf die Stirn. Diejenigen mit einem roten Kreuz waren krank oder für ungeeignet befunden worden. Ihre etwas ältere

3 Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv Freiburg (BA-MA) RH 26-9/198, AOK 9, A.H.Qu., Errichtung von Jugenddörfern, 14. Mai 1944

4 BA-MA RH 20-9/176, AOK 9, Kriegstagebuch, 28. Mai 1944.

5 BA-MA RH 20-9/198, AOK 9, Qu. 2, Erfassung von Arbeitskräften; hier Rückführung von Jugendlichen ins Reich (Deckname: „Heuaktion“), 28. Mai 1944.

6 NAB 1363/1/597, Handschriftliche Erklärung von Kurt Merettig, 16. August 1947.

7 NAB 1363/1/1335, Handschriftliche Erklärung von Franz Koch, 16. Februar 1949.

8 NAB 1363/1/2650, Handschriftliche Erklärung von Willi Schröder, 24. September 1948.

Freundin Malja erhielt ein schwarzes Kreuz und wurde sogleich nach Deutschland deportiert; sie selbst wurde mit einem blauen Kreuz gekennzeichnet und mit einem Zug in das Lager Skobrowka gebracht, von wo aus ihre Deportation nach Deutschland vorgesehen war, was aber letztlich durch die Offensive der Roten Armee vereitelt wurde.⁹

Ohne längeren Lageraufenthalt wurde hingegen Leonid Pawlowich Ossipow nach Deutschland verschleppt. Er war zwar 1930 geboren, jedoch gaben ihn seine Eltern als zwei Jahre jünger aus, um eine Deportation zu vermeiden.¹⁰ Ende April 1944 wurde er schließlich zusammen mit anderen Kindern seines Dorfes von Deutschen „mit Hunden“ auf dem Hof der Kolchose zusammengetrieben und in ein Lager bei Krasny Bereg gebracht, von wo aus er dann nach zwei Tagen mit dem Zug nach Deutschland geschafft wurde. Jenseits der Grenze fand sich der mittlerweile an Typhus erkrankte Leonid in einer Baracke eines ihm unbekannten Lagers wieder, wo er auf nackten Brettern und ohne besondere Pflege seine Krankheit überstand. Anschließend wurde er in ein weiteres Lager gebracht, das er mit „Kapen“ bezeichnete. Hier war der Alltag durch militärische Übungen bestimmt: „Sie wollten deutsche Jungs aus uns machen“, so Leonid. Es kann angenommen werden, dass es sich um eines der Lager handelte, in denen weißrussische Kollaborateure die Kinder „betreuten“.¹¹ Nach einiger Zeit kam Leonid zu den Junkers-Werken nach Dessau, wo er bis zur Befreiung Rohlinge zuschliff.

Um das Kriegsverbrechen zu kaschieren, legte die Wehrmacht von vornherein Wert darauf, dass die HEU-Aktion unter der Parole stehen sollte: „Schutz der russischen Jugend, Möglichkeit der besseren Ausbildung und Erhaltung für ihr Volk“. Zudem war geplant, dass pro 250 Kinder eine Mutter und eine Lehrkraft mit nach Deutschland fahren sollten, wobei die Mütter nach etwa zwei bis drei Wochen zurückkehren sollten, um dann ihrerseits zu Propagandazwecken eingesetzt zu werden.¹² Verantwortlich für den Plan war der Chef des Generalstabs der 9. Armee, Generalmajor Helmut Staedtke, in dessen Gebiet 1944 rund 100.000 weißrussische Zwangsarbeiter vornehmlich zu Schanzarbeiten in kasernierten Einheiten, den Zivilarbeitsdienstabteilungen (ZADA), eingesetzt waren. Darunter befanden sich Eltern, die von ihren Kindern getrennt worden waren, wodurch die Wehrmacht den Kreis der sogenannten „herumlungernden Kinder“ vergrößerte. Mit diesem Problem hatte sich die 9. Armee bereits seit 1942 zusammen mit den Sonderkommandos 7a und 7b der Sicherheitspolizei und dem Reichskriminalpolizeiamt befasst und wohl bereits zu diesem Zeitpunkt sogenannte Anhaltelager für alleinstehende Kinder aus frontnahen Gebieten geschaffen.¹³ In solchen Kinderlagern – mitunter auch Kinderdörfer genannt – wurden Kinder eingewiesen, deren Eltern in den ZADA arbeiten mussten. Aus Sicht der Wehrmacht bestand ein wesentlicher Vorteil dieses Vorgehens darin, dass die Eltern besser kontrolliert werden konnten, wenn sich ihre Kinder als Geiseln in deutschem Gewahrsam befanden. Da die Zwangsarbeitereinheiten von den zurückweichenden Truppen mitgenommen wurden, bot es sich schließlich an, die Kinderlager nach Deutschland zu verlegen. Wichtig für die mili-

9 Forced Labour 1939–1945, FU Berlin (FL), Matrjona Kirillowna Koschewenko, geb. 1933 in Koschewitschi.

10 FL Leonid Pawlowich Ossipow, geb. 1930 in Lučinsko, Gebiet Gomel.

11 NHAB 385/2/56, Zusammenstellungen, Anschriften und Lager, Ende 1944.

12 BA-MA RH 20-9/198, AOK 9, Qu. 2, Erfassung von Arbeitskräften; hier Rückführung von Jugendlichen ins Reich (Deckname: „Heuaktion“), 28. Mai 1944.

13 Christian Gerlach, Verbrechen deutscher Fronttruppen in Weißrußland 1941–1944. Eine Annäherung, in: Karl Heinrich Pohl (Hg.), Wehrmacht und Vernichtungspolitik. Militär im nationalsozialistischen System, Göttingen 1999, 89–114, hier 102 f. Zu den ZADAs s. a. Nicholas Myles Terry, The German Army Group Centre and the Soviet Civilian Population, 1942–1944, PhD thesis, London 2005, 115–131.

tärischen Planer war indes, dass die Kinder in Gruppen zusammenblieben, um weiterhin Druck auf die Eltern ausüben zu können. Dies erklärt, warum die beteiligten Wehrmachtseinheiten großen Wert darauf legten, die Kinder unter die Obhut des Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete zu stellen, wo sie einen Sonderstatus beibehalten konnten, und sie nicht Fritz Sauckel und seiner Behörde zu überlassen.

Ähnliche Überlegungen dürften dazu geführt haben, nicht nur die Kinder von ZADA-Arbeitskräften zu deportieren, sondern im großen Stil Kinder von ihren Eltern zu trennen und nach Deutschland zu verschleppen, um die Zivilbevölkerung im Besatzungsgebiet besser kontrollieren und ihre Arbeitskraft optimal ausnutzen zu können. Vor diesem Hintergrund wird die im bereits zitierten Kriegstagebuch gewählte Formulierung verständlich, dass die Erfassung der Kinder „in Fortführung der Maßnahmen zur vermehrten Aktivierung der einheimischen Bevölkerung für Kriegsaufgaben“ zu sehen sei.¹⁴ Schließlich erklärt dies auch den immensen Propagandaaufwand sowie die Beteiligung von Kollaborateuren, zu denen das Weißruthenische Jugendwerk ebenso gehörte wie der Kampfbund gegen den Bolschewismus, der 1944 insbesondere im Gebiet der 9. Armee aktiv wurde.¹⁵ Hinzu kamen gelegentlich anzutreffende Überlegungen hinsichtlich einer „biologischen Kriegsführung“, wie beispielsweise vom Oberquartiermeister der Heeresgruppe Mitte Oberst Georg von Unold 1944 vorgeschlagen, der Kinder unter 10 Jahren nach Deutschland deportieren und mit einem Transport von 10.000 bis 20.000 Kindern im Alter von 8 bis 10 Jahren beginnen wollte. Zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt, so von Unold, sollten die etwa 250.000 von deutschen Soldaten in der besetzten Sowjetunion gezeugten Kinder ebenfalls nach Deutschland gebracht werden.¹⁶

Georg von Unold führte zudem das Protokoll einer Besprechung, die am 1. Juni 1944 Vertreter des Reichsministeriums für die besetzten Ostgebiete, des Oberkommandos der Heeresgruppe Mitte, des Heeresgruppenwirtschaftsführers, der HJ-Bezirksstelle Weißruthenien sowie der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD zusammenführte. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatten die Vorbereitungen für die ersten Transporte der HEU-Aktion bereits begonnen. Sie sollten am 15. und 20. Juni das Gebiet der 9. Armee verlassen.¹⁷ Das Protokoll unterstrich zunächst die besondere Rolle, die der Reichsjugendführung bei der „Betreuung“ der Kinderzwangsarbeiter zukommen sollte. Offenbar bestand zu diesem Zeitpunkt bereits Konsens, dass es keine bestimmte Höchstzahl geben sollte, „da Reichsführung unbeschränkt abnehmen will“. Über den Arbeitseinsatz der Kinder ließ Hauptbannführer Siegfried Nickel¹⁸ (Ostministerium) im Protokoll festhalten:

„Die OT und Junkers-Werke Träger der Maßnahmen. OT, die Einflußmöglichkeit auf Reichshandwerkerschaft hat, soll das ländliche Handwerk für die Unterbringung in den Arbeitseinsatz einschalten. Von vornherein gelten die Jugendlichen als OT- und junkereigenes Personal. Im Einzelnen soll durch eine Vereinbarung mit OT und Junkers festgelegt werden, daß die fachliche Ausbildung die OT bzw. Junkerswerke, die erzieherische Betreuung das Ostministerium und die HJ übernehmen.“

14 BA-MA RH 20-9/176, AOK 9, Kriegstagebuch, 28. Mai 1944.

15 Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA) R6/309, Oberkommando Heeresgruppe Mitte, Monatsbericht für Mai 1944, 12. Juni 1944.

16 Gerlach, Verbrechen deutscher Fronttruppen in Weißrußland, 102 f.

17 BA R6/309, Oberkommando Heeresgruppe Mitte, Monatsbericht für Mai 1944, 12. Juni 1944.

18 Zu Siegfried Nickel: Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-KO) B 120/698, Bericht des ehemaligen Hauptbannführers Nickel über die Jugendarbeit der dt. Bes. Verwaltung in den besetzten Ostgebieten (Heuaktion), Darmstadt, 3. September 1956 und 14. September 1956.

Ein weiterer Teil der Besprechung diente der Diskussion der Logistik des Unternehmens, wobei gleich mehrere Teilnehmer deutlich machten, dass die Deportation der Kinder nur unter Anwendung von Zwang möglich sei, während sich Hauptsturmführer Walter Brandenburg vom Ostministerium für eine „freiwillige Werbung“ aussprach. Einigung bestand darüber, dass die Kinder zunächst in sogenannten Kinderdörfern gesammelt werden sollten, um anschließend in zwei Lager in Litzmannstadt (Łódź) und Falkenburg in Pommern weitergeleitet zu werden.

Wesentlich ausführlicher wurde Brandenburg in einem Vermerk, den er für seinen Vorgesetzten im Ostministerium, SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger, am 12. Juni 1944 anfertigte, und in dem er nun eine Zahl von 40.000 bis 50.000 Kindern im Alter von 10 bis 14 Jahren nannte, die aus den Armeegebieten der Heeresgruppe Mitte „evakuiert“ werden sollten. Um den Eindruck einer „Kinderverschleppung“ zu vermeiden – Rosenberg hatte hierüber, wie der Vermerk festhielt, bereits seine Befürchtungen gegenüber Berger geäußert und offenbar darauf gedrängt, nur 15- bis 17-jährige Kinder zu deportieren – sollte die Aktion unter dem Motto *Fürsorge-maßnahme des Reiches für die weißruthenischen Kinder, Schutz vor Banden* stehen und entsprechend propagandistisch begleitet werden. Brandenburger wies insbesondere auf vier Punkte hin, mit denen er Rosenberg umstimmen wollte:

1. Die „biologische Kraft“ des Gegners sollte langfristig vermindert werden, wobei er auf entsprechende Äußerungen von Hitler und Himmler verwies.
2. Die Kinder würden „ein geeignetes Bindemittel“ zu ihren Eltern in den Arbeitsbataillonen darstellen und sicherstellen, dass diese bei den Truppen blieben, was ihre Funktion als Geiseln betonte.
3. Die Heeresgruppe Mitte würde die Aktion auch ohne Zustimmung des Ostministeriums durchführen, da die Kinder aus den vom Militär verwalteten Gebieten stammten.
4. Wenn sich das Ostministerium verweigere, würde die „Abschöpfung“ voraussichtlich durch den Generalbevollmächtigten für den Arbeitseinsatz erfolgen, was die Heeresgruppe Mitte vermeiden wolle. Vielmehr lege diese Wert darauf, die Kinder in eigenen Lagern unterzubringen.

Zwei Tage später stimmte Rosenberg der HEU-Aktion zu¹⁹ – zwei Jahre später musste er sich dafür während des Nürnberger Prozesses verantworten, wobei er dort den Eindruck erwecken wollte, dass es ihm lediglich um das Wohl der Kinder gegangen sei. Bei einem Besuch in Dessau habe ihm sogar „eine Frau aus Weißruthenien, die die Kinder betreute, [...] mit Tränen in den Augen für diese menschliche Betreuung ihren Dank ausgesprochen.“²⁰ Das Gericht ließ sich davon allerdings nicht beeindrucken. In der Urteilsbegründung wurde ausdrücklich vermerkt, dass er die HEU-Aktion mit seiner Unterschrift genehmigt habe. Entscheidend für das Gericht war allerdings nicht die Zwangsarbeit der Kinder, sondern Rosenbergs Beteiligung an der „planmäßigen Entvölkerungspolitik.“²¹ Er wurde am 1. Oktober 1946 zum Tode verurteilt und am 16. Oktober gehängt.

19 Vermerke des SS-Hauptsturmführers Walter Brandenburg, persönlicher Referent des Chefs des Führungsstabes Politik im Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete, vom 12. und 14. Juni 1944 über die geplante Verschleppung von Kindern aus dem Bereich der Heeresgruppe Mitte nach Deutschland („HEU-Aktion“), zit. nach: Norbert Müller (Hg.), *Die faschistische Okkupationspolitik in den zeitweilig besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion (1941–1944)*, Berlin 1991, 562–564.

20 Der Nürnberger Prozeß: Einhundertneunter Tag, Dienstag, 16. April 1946, 64–66. Digitale Bibliothek Band 20: Der Nürnberger Prozeß, 13794–13796 (NP Bd. 11, 538–539).

21 Serge Lang/Ernst von Schenck, *Portrait eines Menschheitsverbrechers nach den hinterlassenen Memoiren des ehemaligen Reichsministers Alfred Rosenberg*, St. Gallen 1947, 307.

Unabhängig von den skizzierten politischen Diskussionen und Entscheidungen liefen im Mai 1944 im Gebiet der 9. Armee die Vorbereitungen zur HEU-Aktion an. Nur wenige Kilometer von Marina Gorka entfernt wurde das Dorf Skobrowka Mitte Mai von den Bewohnern geräumt, um fortan als sogenanntes Jugenddorf zu dienen. Die von den Truppen in Gewahrsam genommenen Kinder wurden hier bis zum Abtransport gesammelt. Verwaltet wurde das Dorf von weißrussischen Kollaborateuren, die im Kampfbund gegen den Bolschewismus zusammengeschlossen waren.²² Die damals 10-jährige Matrjona Kirillowna Koschewenko erinnerte sich, dass es im Dorf nur Kinder gegeben habe, und sie in ein Gebäude gebracht wurde, wo Etagenbetten standen, die mit Stroh ausgelegt waren. Zum Zudecken gab es „irgendwelche Decken oder etwas graues Undefinierbares“, zudem wurden leere Blechdosen ausgeteilt, in denen die Kinder ihr Essen – eine „Pampe“ – erhielten. Besonders in Erinnerung bleib ihr die „ständige Schikane“, der militärische Charakter des Lageralltags und die Strenge der sogenannten Erzieher, weißrussische „Mädchen im Alter von 17 oder 18 Jahren“, die Uniformen trugen.²³

Folgt man den wenigen vorhandenen Quellen, so diente das Lager allerdings nicht nur zur Deportation der 10- bis 14-jährigen nach Deutschland, sondern es wurden auch jüngere Kinder ab acht Jahren gefangen gehalten, die vom Kampfbund „geschult und handwerklich unterwiesen“ wurden, wobei die Auswahl der Kinder „nach gesundheitlichen und rassischen Gesichtspunkten“ erfolgen sollte.²⁴ Wie viele Kinderlager insgesamt existierten und wie viele davon vom Kampfbund als sogenannte Schulungslager für „rassisch wertvolle“ Kinder betrieben wurden, ist ungewiss. Einer Notiz in den Akten des AOK 9 folgend, ist es allerdings wahrscheinlich, dass mehrere solcher Lager bestanden.²⁵ Dies entspricht einer nicht näher zu verifizierenden Information im ITS Bad Arolsen, dass nach Angaben des Museums des Großen Vaterländischen Krieges in Minsk elf Kinderlager in Weißrussland bestanden hatten, die meisten von ihnen allerdings nur kurzfristig in Frontnähe. Für längere Zeit wurden hingegen die Lager in Skobrowka, Krasnyi Bereg und Parici genutzt. Eine weitere Funktion einiger dieser Lager bestand nach Zeitzeugenaussagen darin, den Kindern Blut für verwundete Wehrmachtssoldaten abzunehmen.²⁶

Im Freiburger Militärarchiv haben sich nur wenige und zumeist recht kurze Informationen über die HEU-Aktion und die Kinderlager in Weißrussland erhalten. Jedoch bieten die Tätigkeitsberichte für den Monat Juni 1944 der Abteilung Ic des Generalkommando LV.A.K. (Raum Bobruisk, Pripjet) einige Anhaltspunkte.²⁷ Wie andere Dokumente, verweisen sie insbesondere auf die Beteiligung der 102. und der 292. Infanteriedivision bei der Gefangennahme der Kinder. Zudem wird deutlich, dass der Propagandaaufwand innerhalb der Zivilbevölkerung sowie der ZADA-Lager enorm gewesen sein muss. Zwei Lautsprecherwagen tourten insbesondere zwischen dem 15. und 21. Juni 1944 durch das Korpsgebiet; aber auch noch für den 23. Juni, nachdem die sowjetische Offensive bereits begonnen hatte, war ein Lautsprechertrupp im Einsatz. Speziell geschulte Redner begleiteten die Soldaten der bei-

22 BA-MA RH 20-9/198, AOK 9, Qu.2, Vortragsnotiz des Quartiermeisters, 16. Mai 1944.

23 FL, Matrjona Kirillowna Koschewenko, geb. 1933 in Koschewitschi.

24 BA-MA RH 20-9/198, AOK 9, Qu.2, Vortragsnotiz des Quartiermeisters, 16. Mai 1944.

25 BA-MA RH 20-9/198, AOK 9, G.Qu.2, an Gen.Kdo, XXXV.A.K., 15. Mai 1944.

26 International Tracing Service, Bad Arolsen (ITS), Sachdokumente, Ordner Krasniy Bereg und andere Kinderlager; Staatskomitee für Archive und Aktenführung der Republik Belarus u. a. (Hrsg.), Handbuch der Haftstätten für die Zivilbevölkerung auf dem besetzten Territorium von Belarus, Minsk 2001; s. a. FL, Matrjona Kirillowna Koschewenko, geb. 1933 in Koschewitschi.

27 BA-MA RH 24-55/97, Generalkommando LV.A.K., Tätigkeitsbericht der Abt. Ic für Monat Juni 44, 5. August 1944.

den Infanteriedivisionen. In Kopzewitschi, wo sowohl ein Jungenlager als auch ein Mädchenlager eingerichtet worden war, fanden am 16. Juni jeweils zwei Musikvorführungen statt, zudem wurden zwei Sprecher „zur Beruhigung der Mütter eingesetzt, die am Lager standen“. Offenbar war die Bevölkerung nicht gewillt, die Kinder widerstandslos preiszugeben. Zumindest hatten sich einige Mütter auf den Weg gemacht, um ihre Kinder noch einmal zu sehen, ihnen vielleicht sogar zur Flucht zu verhelfen. Ein ähnlicher Hinweis findet sich für den 17. Juni 1944 für das Lager in Nowosselki, wo die Kinder in zwei Kinos untergebracht waren.

Beim Verladen der Transporte am 21. Juni wurde massiv militärische Gewalt eingesetzt. Der Tätigkeitsbericht vermerkte: „In Krassn[iy] waren zu wenig Soldaten für diese Aktion eingeteilt. Darum mußte die Feldgend[armerie] hart eingreifen. Die Frauen konnten beim Verladen der Kinder nicht vom Wagen abgehalten werden. Die Kinder konnten dadurch entlaufen. Die Feldgend[armerie] mußte gegen die Mütter tätlich vorgehen.“ Der Bericht befasste sich auch mit den weißrussischen Kollaborateuren, die als Propagandisten eingesetzt waren. Einige von ihnen seien zu jung gewesen. Sie hätten sich mit den Kindern nicht unterhalten und die Mütter „nicht beruhigen oder überzeugen“ können. Und schließlich finden sich einige Bemerkungen, die möglicherweise auf sexuellen Missbrauch hindeuten: „Sie gaben sich nur mit den älteren Mädels ab (14-16 Jahre). [...] Es soll vorgekommen sein, daß sie den Mädels zur Flucht verhelfen wollten.“

Weitere Transporte vereitelte die am 22. Juni 1944 beginnende Offensive der Roten Armee, gegen die auch Hitlers Weisung, die HEU-Aktion zu beschleunigen, machtlos war.²⁸ Die Zahl der verschleppten Kinder schwankt zwischen 2.500 und 4.500. Die Mehrheit von ihnen stammte aus dem Gebiet der 9. Armee, die nach Angaben des Heeresgruppenwirtschaftsführers Mitte 3.000 Kinder im Alter von 10 bis 14 Jahren deportierte.²⁹ Daneben beteiligte sich die 2. und die 4. Armee an der HEU-Aktion. Die meisten Kinder wurden schließlich als Zwangsarbeiter zu den Junkers-Werken nach Crimmitschau gebracht. Nach Angaben von Siegfried Nickel (Ostministerium) kamen aus beiden Aktionen, der HEU-Aktion und des Programms des Weißruthenischen Jugendwerkes, insgesamt 3.500 Jungen und 500 Mädchen zu verschiedenen Standorten der Junkers-Werke, während 2.000 Jungen und 700 Mädchen für die OT arbeiten mussten. Möglicherweise gelangten weitere 100 Kinder zu den Walther-Werken in Zella-Mehlis. Genaue Informationen liegen hierüber jedoch ebenso wenig vor, wie über ähnliche Kinderverschleppungen aus Galizien, der Nordukraine und Polen.³⁰

Über den Aufenthalt der Kinder in Deutschland und ihre Befreiung ist so gut wie nichts bekannt. Nach Angaben von Siegfried Nickel, die mit größter Vorsicht zu betrachten sind, bestand der Arbeitsalltag der Kinder bei den Junkers-Werken aus vier Stunden praktischer und drei Stunden schulischer Ausbildung.³¹ Zeitgenössische Berichte betonten hingegen, dass die Kinder in den Fabriken arbeiten mussten.³² Entsprechend äußerte sich auch der 1930 geborene Leonid Pawlowich Ossipow, aus dessen Interview bereits eingangs zitiert wurde:

28 Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944*, Hamburg 1999, 1088 f.

29 BA-MA RW 46/17, Heeresgruppenwirtschaftsführer Mitte, Abt. Arbeit, Beitrag zum KTB für die Zeit vom 26. Juni bis 2. Juli 1944, 11. September 1944.

30 Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1088 f.

31 BA-KO B 120/698, Bericht des ehemaligen Hauptbannführer Nickel über die Jugendarbeit der dt. Bes. Verwaltung in den besetzten Ostgebieten (Heuaktion), Darmstadt, 3. September 1956, 14. September 1956.

32 NAB 385/2/56, Hauptmädelführerin Dr. N. Abramoff an Hauptbannführer Nickel, Ostministerium, 12. August 1944.

„Sie brachten uns nach Dessau, luden uns aus, es war ein sehr großes Lager. [...] Und wir hatten dort eine Baracke, eine große Baracke. [...] Nun, in der ersten Zeit machten wir also drei Tage lang gar nichts, aber dann mußten wir eines Tages antreten. [...] Sie verteilten Uniformen. Solche, das heißt, ich weiß nicht, woraus sie genäht waren, aber im Großen und Ganzen konnte man sehen, daß es aus solcher groben Baumwolle war, weil diese kleinen Risse von den Flachsfasern darauf zu sehen waren, ja, eine grüne Uniform also, sie teilten eine Jacke, eine Hose und Schuhe aus. Frühstück gab es also um sieben Uhr. Um acht, um halb acht gingen wir schon los, die Fabrik war in der Nähe. Sie brachten uns in den Betrieb. Ein Flugzeugbetrieb, man mußte da also buchstäblich nur so hineingehen, und das war also so buchstäblich direkt hinter dem Lagerzaun. Das war eine Flugzeugwerft. Und sie brachten uns also in diesen Betrieb zum Arbeiten, das heißt, zuerst brachten sie uns die Arbeitstechniken bei, jedem eine andere, ich war zum Beispiel Schleifer, andere arbeiteten also an den Werkbänken. Ich habe da also irgendwelche Rohlinge zugeschliffen. [...] Und wir haben da bis 1945 gearbeitet. [...] Da begann ein Bombenangriff, ein massiver Bombenangriff, es war furchtbar, was da vor sich ging. Eine Flugzeugstaffel griff also an, etwa vierzig Stück, die warfen ihre Bomben ab, flogen weiter, gerade waren sie weg, da tauchten fünf Minuten später neue auf und zersprengten alles zwischen Himmel und Erde. Nun, wir wurden natürlich in diesen Bombenschutz da getrieben, und dort saßen wir bis, äh, zehn Uhr des folgenden Tages. [...] Um zehn Uhr morgens war alles ruhig. Es war ruhig geworden, wir schauten raus – Nebel! Man konnte also keine drei Meter weit sehen, wir hörten das Dröhnen der Panzer, da waren Panzer unterwegs. Ja, nun, wir hörten also den Panzer auf einen Hügel rauffahren, und die Kantine war dort in der Nähe, er fuhr in die Ecke der Kantine, brach da zu uns durch. [...] Da kamen Amerikaner heraus. Ja. Sie kamen heraus, das heißt, irgendeiner versuchte auf Russisch was zu erklären, also: ‚Freunde, Freunde, Freunde.‘ Nun, sie standen da wahrscheinlich zehn oder zwanzig Minuten bei uns, dann zogen sie weiter. [...] Befreit wurden wir am sechsten [...] April. Ja. Das heißt, wir hielten uns dort bis zum neunten auf, am neunten gingen wir los, das war in der Nähe, das Lager war in der Nähe der Elbe, 800 Meter weiter. Es stellte sich sehr gutes Wetter ein, wir kamen also zur Elbe. Ja, und wir fingen an, da rüber zu winken, da zu schreien, nun, kann man da rüber rufen, sie ist breit, die Elbe. Kurz gesagt, der Hauptmann des Sanitätsdienstes, eine Frau, zog sich aus und schwamm zu uns rüber, sie kam rüber geschwommen zu uns, [...] versammelte uns zu einem Haufen, die da waren, und erklärte: ‚Geht nicht weg, geht nicht auseinander.‘ Sie sagte: ‚In ein, zwei Tagen, in höchstens zwei Tagen,‘ sagte sie, ‚kommen wir und holen euch. Und bringen euch auf die sowjetische Seite.‘“³³

Das Bild von der ‚sauberen Wehrmacht‘ hat in den letzten Jahren tiefe Risse bekommen; vorbei sind die Zeiten, in denen in öffentlichen Diskussionen jede wissenschaftliche Kritik am Mythos von Zeitzeugen niedergeschrien wurde. Es wird sicherlich noch etlicher Jahre intensiver Forschung bedürfen, um die insbesondere im Osten begangenen Kriegsverbrechen aufzuklären, soweit dies überhaupt noch möglich ist. Über die HEU-Aktion haben sich nur einige wenige Dokumente in deutschen und weißrussischen Archiven erhalten. Der Rest wurde vorsätzlich oder durch

33 FL Leonid Pawlowich Ossipow, geb. 1930 in Lučinsko, Gebiet Gomel.

Kriegseinwirkungen vernichtet. Operation Bagration, die am 22. Juni 1944 gestartete sowjetische Offensive, befreite nicht nur die sogenannten Kinderdörfer und verhinderte weitere Deportationen, sondern trug auch ungewollt dazu bei, Beweismaterial zu vernichten. Im Westen war die HEU-Aktion bekannt, sie wurde jedoch als ein sozialpolitischer, geradezu humanitärer Akt kaschiert und trug so zum Mythos der sauberen Wehrmacht bei. Kinder als Zwangsarbeiter zu verschleppen muss als Kriegsverbrechen bezeichnet werden – Kinder darüber hinaus als Geiseln zu nehmen, um ihre Eltern und Familienangehörigen willfährig zu halten, hebt den deutschen Besatzungsterror auf eine bislang wenig bekannte Stufe.

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Zitierweise: Johannes-Dieter Steinert, Die Heeresgruppe Mitte und die Deportation weißrussischer Kinder nach Deutschland im Frühjahr 1944, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 54-63.

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Article

Lektorat: Philipp Rohrbach

Tim Corbett

“Was ich den Juden war, wird eine kommende Zeit besser beurteilen ...”

Myth and Memory at Theodor Herzl's Original Gravesite in Vienna¹

Abstract

Theodor Herzl is mostly remembered as the founder of the Zionist movement and a significant forebear of the State of Israel, where his memory thrives today. This article posits Herzl's original gravesite in Döbling, Vienna, as instrumental to the construction of Herzl's legacy through the first part of the twentieth century, when it was used by Jewish community functionaries and Zionist organisations to mobilise a variety of political agendas. By contrast to Herzl's new burial site in Jerusalem, the now empty grave in Döbling constitutes a powerful alternative *lieu de memoire*, a counterbalance to the manner in which Herzl's life and memory are conceived in Israel.

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) today enjoys the greatest familiarity in Israel, where he is called *chozeh hamedinah*, ‘the visionary of the state’. The city of Herzliya is named in his honour, and there is a Sderot Herzl (Herzl Boulevard) or a Rechov Herzl (Herzl Street) in just about every city, town and village in the country. Tel Aviv, Israel's cultural capital, is dubbed after the Hebrew title of Herzl's 1902 utopian novel *Altneuland*, in which he outlined his vision of a Jewish State.² Last, but certainly not least, Israel's vast national memorial complex in West Jerusalem, including Yad Vashem, its official Shoah memorial and museum, is named Har Herzl, Mount Herzl, atop which Herzl's mortal remains today lie under a sleek marble monument located in the national cemetery. Images of Herzl abound throughout the country, whether in iconic photographs such as his portrait hanging over David Ben-Gurion at the Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948, or in graffiti found in the back streets of Tel Aviv's Neve Tzedek neighbourhood. At a symposium to mark the centenary of the publication of Herzl's momentous 1896 work *Der Judenstaat*,³ Israeli journalist and peace activist Uri Avnery characterised the omnipresence of this *fin-de-siècle* dramatist-cum-visionary as follows: “His picture hangs on our walls, but hardly anyone knows who he really was.”⁴

1 This article emerged from a postgraduate seminar held at Lancaster University in November, 2013, and a research seminar held at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) in March 2015. I thank all participants in Lancaster and Vienna for their thought-provoking contributions, as well as the anonymous reviewers of the first draft of this article for their pertinent and encouraging suggestions.

2 Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, Leipzig 1902.

3 Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*, Leipzig/Vienna 1896.

4 Cited in Theodor Herzl Symposium Wien: 100 Jahre „Der Judenstaat“, Vienna 1996, 87.

Herzl: Man and Myth

The chasm between Herzl the man and Herzl the myth is vast, and the story of how an Austro-Hungarian feuilletonist, a literary dandy of modest renown based in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, became the figurehead of one of the most improbably successful yet deeply contested movements of the twentieth century, is a remarkable tale that has perennially captured the fascination of contemporaries and historians alike. Even the epithet most commonly attributed to Herzl – ‘founder of the Zionist movement’ – is not necessarily or completely accurate. As Walter Laqueur remarked in his seminal history of Zionism: “Zionism, according to a recent encyclopaedia, is a worldwide political movement founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897. Equally it might be said that socialism was founded in 1848 by Karl Marx.”⁵ The principle of a Jewish national movement, and the term ‘Zionism’, had already been developed years before Herzl’s *Judenstaat*. Jewish pioneers were establishing settlements in Palestine long before Herzl ever conceived of championing Jewish nationalism, while effective international action towards the establishment of a Jewish State did not get properly going until years after Herzl’s untimely death.

In fact, during his lifetime, Herzl’s ideas were often not taken seriously, and the man himself was frequently dismissed as an idealist and a dreamer, as a dramatist given to flights of fancy. Arthur Schnitzler, for example, one of Austria’s preeminent modern writers whom Herzl admired greatly, noted in his diary on 11 September 1894: “I actually do not tolerate Herzl too well; his ponderous speaking with those big eyes at the close of every sentence irritates me.”⁶ When, in 1897, Herzl published his play *Das Neue Ghetto* through his Zionist periodical *Die Welt*,⁷ addressing the hopelessness of the ‘Jewish Question’ in post-emancipation Europe, Schnitzler noted simply and sardonically: “Herzl novella for *Die Welt*. Disgust.”⁸ Although Herzl almost single-handedly mobilised the first mass-movement of Zionists in the Basel Congress in 1897, he quickly invited dismissive reactions from leading Zionists, too. Ahad Ha’am, for example, who went on to pioneer the Cultural Zionist movement, wrote in the aftermath of the Congress:

“Dr. Herzl, it is true, said in the speech mentioned above that ‘Zionism’ demands the return to Judaism before the return to the Jewish State. But these nice-sounding words are so much at variance with his deeds that we are forced to the unpleasant conclusion that they are nothing but a well-turned phrase.”⁹

Herzl’s nebulous persona, and the manner in which his myth has posthumously been elevated to become the very symbol of the Zionist movement and of the history of the modern State of Israel, has elicited widespread attention from admirers and detractors, contemporaries and successors.¹⁰ His life has been the focus of numerous

5 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, New York 1972, 40.

6 Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1893–1902*, Vienna 1989, 87.

7 Theodor Herzl, *Das Neue Ghetto*, Vienna 1897.

8 Schnitzler, *Tagebuch*, 265.

9 Ahad Ha’am, *The Jewish State and Jewish Problem*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/haam2.html> (30 July 2015).

10 A collection of multifarious contemporary reactions to Herzl was published after his death by Tulo Nussenblatt, *Zeitgenossen über Herzl*, Brno 1929.

biographies,¹¹ he has been discussed in numerous works on Zionism,¹² and, in recent years, scholars, intellectuals and politicians have reflected on how Herzl's legacy – specifically the realities of Zionism going into the twenty-first century – compare to the life and work of the man himself.¹³ Herzl has further appeared in numerous works on the much-studied culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, constituting one of a trio of political figures whom Carl Schorske construed as generating Vienna's "politics in a new key".¹⁴ The trope underlying these examinations of Herzl – the man, not the myth – is that, in the words of Herzl biographer Amos Elon, "Herzl was also, perhaps first and foremost, a Viennese [...] Hungarian by birth, Jewish by religion, Austrian by naturalization, German by culture".¹⁵ As Ruth Klüger, the Viennese-born author, literary critic, and survivor of the Shoah, put it: "I know of course that Herzl was not a born Viennese, but spiritually he was Viennese. Vienna was the landscape that moulded him, and it is no coincidence that the novel *Altneuland* begins in a Viennese coffeehouse."¹⁶

This article proceeds from two premises. The first is that Herzl *the man*, and therefore his work, was fundamentally a product of his time, place and culture – the conflicted yet vibrant "ethnic cauldron", as Robert Wistrich termed it, of *fin-de-siècle* Central Europe, and of the cultural hotbed of Vienna in particular.¹⁷ The second is that Herzl *the myth*, as a construct of cultural memory, has been repeatedly and sometimes radically reconceived since his death, especially in Israel. Here I analyse a little-known site of memory relating to Herzl's life and legacy, namely his original burial site in the communal cemetery of Döbling, today Vienna's nineteenth district, where he lay buried from his death in 1904 until the reinterment of his mortal remains on Har Herzl in Jerusalem in 1949, and construes this site as instrumental to the creation of Herzl's myth and its eventual supplanting to Israel. Gravesites, as Philippe Ariès' pioneering work among others explored, constitute significant memorial sites in modern European culture, with urban cemeteries having since at least the Enlightenment been conceived as monumental spaces, as places to be visited, as shrines to great individuals through whose commemoration a sense of 'community' can be invoked.¹⁸ The burial sites of influential individuals lend themselves well to the mobilisation and enactment of memorial practices designed to invoke and consolidate political agendas.¹⁹ The interplay of name and fame, critical for the invocation of political narratives, and of the materiality of the body and the burial site, as Katherine Verdery remarked in her study of political (re-)burials, endow burial sites

11 Some of the most influential include Amos Elon, *Herzl*, New York 1975; Julius Schoeps, *Theodor Herzl 1860–1904: Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen*, Wien 1995 and Shlomo Avineri, *Herzl: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*, London 2013.

12 Aside from Laqueur's above-cited *History of Zionism*, these include Jacques Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl: A Reevaluation*, in: *The Journal of Modern History* 52 (June 1980) 2; Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, London 1981; Yaacov Shavit, *The 'Glorious Century' or the 'Cursed Century': Fin-de-Siècle [sic] Europe and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Nationalism*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991) 3/4: *The Impact of Western Nationalisms: Essays Dedicated to Walter Z. Laqueur on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*; and Robert Wistrich, *Zionism and Its Religious Critics in fin-de-siècle Vienna*, in: *Jewish History* 10 (1996) 1.

13 For example the above-cited *Theodor Herzl Symposium Wien*, and an interesting reflection by Israel's former prime minister and later president, Shimon Peres, *The Imaginary Voyage: With Theodor Herzl in Israel*, New York 1999.

14 Carl Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, London 1980, 116.

15 Elon, *Herzl*, 7.

16 Cited in *Theodor Herzl Symposium Wien*, 17.

17 Robert Wistrich, *Laboratory for World Destruction: Germans and Jews in Central Europe*, Lincoln 2007, 31.

18 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, London 1981.

19 As explored by Richard Huntington/Peter Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, Cambridge/New York 1979, 8–9.

with a potent “symbolic efficacy”, because “a corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places. Bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present.”²⁰

From the moment of his untimely death, the myth of Herzl began to be spun, lending itself readily to repeated reinterpretation and appropriation by the most diverse range of actors. Central to this creation of memory was the gravesite in Döbling, constituting – at least for the 45 years prior to his reinterment – a powerful and at times contested site of memory for the burgeoning Zionist movement and for Viennese, and European, Jewry more broadly. The multiplicity of responses to Herzl’s death, his grand funeral, the emergence of his gravesite as a site of pilgrimage in the years before the Shoah, and the theatrics of his reinterment in Israel, all evince the continual reappraisal of Herzl’s myth and memory that took place through the first half of the twentieth century. Herzl’s original grave-memorial, which stands in the Döbling cemetery to this day, is an under-studied and little appreciated artefact, the origins of which are wrapped in considerable and inexplicable mystery. However, as I here aim to demonstrate, it constitutes a significant if neglected site of memory, instrumental in the construction of Herzl’s myth and its relocation to Israel with his reinterment in Jerusalem, while simultaneously remaining today as testimony to another spatial and cultural context to Herzl’s life and work in contradistinction to his enduring legacy in Israel.

Herzl’s Death and Funeral, and the Birth of his Myth

Herzl was well aware of the mythical potency of his person and the potential for his influence to continue growing after his death, commenting after a speech he delivered in England on 15 July 1896: “I saw and heard my legend being born. The people are sentimental; the masses do not see clearly. I think that even now they no longer have a clear perception of me. A light fog is mounting around me, which could become the cloud in which I walk.”²¹ In his diaries, he sometimes referred to himself through analogy to influential personages from Jewish history and legend, such as to Moses (“I will tell the German emperor: Let us go!”),²² or to Shabbatai Tzvi, the seventeenth-century kabbalist who claimed to be the Messiah.²³ In full awareness of his declining health in the years following the foundation of the Zionist Congress, Herzl frequently reflected on his legacy and how this was likely to be conceived following his eventual death, commenting on 4 June 1902: “So, for example, in the field in which I spiritually achieved hardly anything [...] in the Jewish question I became world-famous as an agitator. As a writer, namely as a dramatist, I count for nothing, less than nothing. I am called only a good journalist.”²⁴ Most poignantly, Herzl reflected on his legacy just days before his death, while penning his literary testament (as cited in the title of this paper): “What I was to the Jews, a coming time will judge better than the vast majority of the present.”²⁵ Herzl was thus acutely aware of the gravity of his legacy and the portent of his death, as contemporaries post-

20 Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, New York/Chichester 2000, 27.

21 Theodor Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher 1895–1904*, Volume 1, Berlin, 1922, 485.

22 *Ibid.*, 39.

23 *Ibid.*, Volume 2, 458.

24 *Ibid.*, Volume 3, 207.

25 Theodor Herzl – *Mein literarisches Testament* (4 July 1904), reprinted in: *Illustrierte Neue Welt*, June/July 1994, 11.

humously remarked that Herzl's death was the turning-point in his legacy, and the birth of his myth.²⁶

Theodor Herzl died of cardiac sclerosis on the evening of 3 July 1904 in Edlach, Lower Austria. He had stipulated in his will that he wished "a funeral of the poorest class, no speeches, no flowers. I wish to be buried in a metal coffin in the tomb of my father and to remain there until the Jewish people conveys my corpse to Palestine."²⁷ The funeral, held on Thursday, 7 July in Döbling, the leafy bourgeois suburb of Vienna near where Herzl had lived with his family, was anything but poor. The weekly *Wiener Bilder* described the occasion as "representing a pomp that was far more imposing than could have been offered by wreaths and speeches."²⁸ The funeral drew over 6,000 mourners from across Europe and from as far as the Orient and Russia, including literati and community leaders, while remaining in the words of the periodical *Ost und West* "in its entire essence and in its entire conception [...] a Zionist funeral."²⁹ Despite Herzl's explicit wishes, psalms were recited by Viennese Rabbi David Feuchtwang, a choir performed, and his then thirteen-year-old son, Hans, recited the mourners' *qaddish* at the graveside, as is customary in Jewish religious tradition. The ceremonies were led by the *chevra qadisha*, the 'holy society' tasked with performing the religious funerary rites, and by the board of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (Vienna's Jewish Community organisation, hereafter IKG). The funeral was therefore, as the *Wiener Bilder* put it, "nothing other than a religious ceremony."³⁰

Eyewitnesses stated that the scene at the cemetery was unlike anything usually seen at funerals in Vienna, consisting of a general "raging, weeping, screaming."³¹ Several of Austria's preeminent modern writers commented on the ponderousness of the funeral. Stefan Zweig claimed that "Vienna suddenly realised that it was not a pure writer or a mediocre poet who had died here, but one of those fashioners of ideas as rises victoriously in a country, in a people, only at unbelievable intervals."³² Siegfried Trebitsch called it "the greatest and most heart-wrenching funeral that I have ever attended."³³ It was the moment that Hermann Bahr later claimed to have understood the meaning of Zionism.³⁴ The IKG wrote in its bi-annual report that year:

"The board regards it as its duty to commemorate the deceased leader of the Zionists, Dr. Theodor Herzl, who through the force of his personality, through enthusiastic devotion to the ideas he championed, evoked a wide-reaching movement within Jewry. The memory of the immortalised was honoured through the staging of an honorary funeral and a commemorative service in the Leopoldstädter synagogue."³⁵

The enormity of his funeral, and the swathe of actors who were moved to such deep eulogisation of the deceased leader of the Zionist movement, indicate the impact that Herzl's death effected not only amongst his followers, but amongst Jews and even non-Jews across Europe and beyond. As the Canadian poet A.M. Klein remarked in an essay penned in 1931:

26 Nussenblatt, Herzl, 5.

27 Cited in Schoeps, Herzl, 200.

28 Dr. Theodor Herzl gestorben, in: Wiener Bilder, 13 July 1904, 5.

29 Theodor Herzls Krankheit, Tod und Begräbnis, in: Ost und West, Herzl-Nummer, August 1904, 629-630.

30 Dr. Theodor Herzl gestorben, in: Wiener Bilder, 13 July 1904, 5.

31 Cited in Schoeps, Herzl, 207.

32 Cited in Die Beisetzung in Wien, in: Illustrierte Neue Welt, June/July 1994, 14.

33 Die Schicksalsstunde Hermann Bahrs, in: Neue Freie Presse, 13 April 1934, 1.

34 Herzls Begräbnis, <http://www.univie.ac.at/bahr/node/28294> (27 July 2015).

35 Bericht des Vorstandes der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Wien über seine Tätigkeit in der Periode 1902–1903, Vienna 1904, 4.

"In no more than three decades, within the period of a single generation, Theodor Herzl has already become a legend and a symbol. He has won for himself so exalted a place in the Jewish heart that if canonization were a Hebrew practice the Jewish calendar would have already been graced with a Saint Theodor. Yet though Herzl is universally admired and his memory everywhere respected, few if any have been able to fathom his enigmatic personality, and he has remained a 19th century sphinx."³⁶

The contradiction in the memory of Herzl 'the legend' and Herzl 'the enigmatic personality' which Klein was referring to was powerfully exemplified in his funeral, portending what would become a paradoxical memorial culture arising around Herzl's gravesite in Döbling.

Herzl and Religiosity: the Paradox of his Funeral

Aside from the obvious discrepancy between Herzl's stated wishes regarding his burial and the lavish memorial service which in fact took place, indicative of Herzl's death as an abrupt and profound turning point in his commemoration and legacy, the religiosity of the funeral is striking. Herzl, as has been often remarked by his biographers and as is clear in his writings and correspondence, held a deep-seated distrust, even antipathy, towards the religious and social establishment of the Jewish community in Vienna, particularly as embodied by the IKG, while he himself was extremely secular in his outlook and lifestyle. Herzl, the German-speaking literatus and resident of Vienna's pristine bourgeois suburbia, home to the city's secular cultural intelligentsia of both nominally Christian and Jewish descent, notoriously did not have his son, Hans, circumcised.³⁷ This was highly unusual even for secular Jews, compounded by the fact that Hans later converted to Christianity. That Hans recited the *qaddish* at Herzl's funeral – a profoundly religious rite emphasising the *zechut avot*, the "merit of the fathers" that is a cornerstone of the patriarchal Jewish faith – is therefore striking, because odd.³⁸ When, in December 1895, Vienna's Chief Rabbi Moritz Güdemann visited Herzl at his home, he was shocked by the sight of Herzl lighting a Christmas tree, remarking upon the incident: "I was led into a large reception room and found there – imagine my surprise – a large Christmas tree! The conversation – in the presence of the Christmas tree – was halting and I soon took my leave."³⁹ Recounting the scene in his diary, Herzl commented: "Well, I will not allow myself to be pressured! But I don't mind calling it the Chanukkah tree – or the winter solstice?"⁴⁰ The Christmas tree, as Klaus Hödl explored, was a Central-European cultural innovation paradoxically with roots in Jewish households, a meaningful irony reflected upon in exhibitions in the Jewish

36 A.M. Klein, *Beyond Sambation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928–1955*, Toronto 1982, 14.

37 Elon, Herzl, 93.

38 The religious background to the recitation of the mourners' *qaddish* is discussed in detail in Rabbi H. Rabinowicz, *A Guide to Life: Jewish Laws and Customs of Mourning*, London 1964, 82–91.

39 Cited in Albert Lichtblau, *Integration, Vernichtungsversuch und Neubeginn: Österreichisch-jüdische Geschichte 1848 bis zur Gegenwart*, in: Eveline Brugger/Martha Keil/Albert Lichtblau/Christoph Lind/Barbara Staudinger (eds.), *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, Vienna 2006, 460.

40 Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 1, 328.

museums of Vienna and Berlin.⁴¹ This incident was as indicative of Herzl's bourgeois *fin-de-siècle* character as it was of the lack of religiosity and of Jewish religious traditions in the Herzls' Viennese household. Güdemann meanwhile went on to become one of Herzl's most embittered critics, publishing an influential treatise in 1897 condemning the Zionist movement.⁴²

By the time Herzl had convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897, and despite the enormous following the movement quickly accumulated in the following years, rabbis, especially orthodox, from all over Europe condemned Herzl and the Zionist movement, going as far as likening him and his following to Satan.⁴³ Ironically it was Rabbi Feuchtwang, the man who had led the religious service at Herzl's funeral, who later said of him: "Embitterment against the rabbis filled him and he saw in each one of them his enemy."⁴⁴ In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl posed the question: "So will we ultimately have a theocracy? No!", and remarked concerning the rabbis: "We will know to keep them in their temples, as we will keep our professional army in the barracks."⁴⁵ Later, in *Altneuland*, Herzl created – and poured scorn on – the figure of Dr. Geyer, a former anti-Zionist who then became "more Palestinian than any of us [...] he is the national Jew" who preaches that "a non-Jew should not be accepted into our society".⁴⁶ Herzl's contempt did not stop with religious orthodoxy or nationalist intolerance, as he also lambasted in his diaries "the rich and the 'great men of Israel'" who failed the Zionist cause,⁴⁷ elsewhere employing terms that in other contexts would be considered antisemitic, such as "Geldjuden" (money-Jews),⁴⁸ and "anti-Zionist rich Börsenjuden" (stock-exchange-Jews).⁴⁹ As Jacques Kornberg remarked: "Herzl's anti-Jewish sensitivities surfaced – indeed sometimes exploded – well after he had become the keeper of Jewish sovereignty. He would employ terms such as 'Jewish vermin', Mauschel, against his Jewish detractors."⁵⁰ Herzl's antipathy to religious Jewry in general and to the successful socialites of Central-European Jewry in particular resulted in a deep rift with Vienna's IKG, which was in any case before the First World War dominated by political, religious and cultural factions that were strongly opposed to Zionism, albeit for different reasons. This was not to change until at the earliest the appointment of Vienna's first Zionist Chief Rabbi, Zwi Perez Chajes, in 1918.⁵¹ When, in November 1900, the IKG's president Alfred Stern offered Herzl a place on the board, a move calculated to bring Herzl under its control, Herzl remarked in his diary: "I of course declined and laughed at him."⁵² Only months previously, Herzl had noted in his diary, in the histrionic fashion that was typical of his writings: "I now know a good epitaph for me: 'He had too good an opinion of the

41 Klaus Hödl explicated the proliferation of the Christmas tree as characteristic of the interactive negotiation of culture between Jews and non-Jews, in Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener: Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert*, Innsbruck 2006, 32–34. The core exhibition of Vienna's Jewish Museum places a strong emphasis on this fact as representative of Vienna's Jews' foundational role in what has become Viennese culture, while the core exhibition of Berlin's Jewish Museum includes a decorated Christmas tree standing behind a portrait of Herzl in a silent commentary on this incident.

42 Moritz Güdemann, *Nationaljudenthum*, Leipzig 1897.

43 Cited in Theodor Herzl Symposium Wien, 91–93.

44 Cited in Nussenblatt, Herzl, 64.

45 Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 100.

46 Herzl, *Altneuland*, 129.

47 Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 2, 87.

48 *Ibid.*, 134.

49 Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 3, 472.

50 Kornberg, Herzl, 231. This seemingly anti-Jewish antipathy was not uncommon amongst the secular Jewish intelligentsia of the time, as also remarked by Wistrich, *Laboratory*, 11.

51 Wistrich, *Zionism*, 107.

52 Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 2, 490.

Jews.’⁵³ It seems no coincidence, therefore, that Herzl chose to have his father buried in a family plot – and by extension chose a plot for his own eventual burial – in a non-Jewish cemetery, outside the remit of the IKG.

Herzl's Choice of Burial Site: The Döbling Cemetery

The communal cemetery in Döbling opened in 1885, when the village had not yet been incorporated into the city of Vienna, following the closure of the inner-city cemeteries.⁵⁴ As already remarked, Döbling was an affluent bourgeois residential area, and thus its new cemetery came to reflect the pomp and prestige associated with its residents, as Hans Pemmer, a local historian and pioneer of historical conservation of Vienna's cemeteries, remarked in an early history of the cemetery.⁵⁵ Among the many predominantly secular bourgeois families buried at the site, there are numerous families with Jewish origins, such as the Wertheimstein, Todesco, Gomperz, Bettelheim and Kuffner families, comprising industrialists and patrons of the arts, including also the graves of the famed synagogue architect Jakob Gartner and the philosopher Wilhelm Jerusalem.⁵⁶ Their grave-memorials were designed by renowned contemporary architects, such as Max Fleischer, who also designed numerous prestigious works at the city's Central Cemetery.⁵⁷

The intermeshing of communities, of cultural and social milieus, and the complex networks of belonging comprising early-twentieth-century Vienna, whether these were defined in socio-cultural, ethno-linguistic or religious terms, was nowhere more evident than in the communal cemetery in Döbling, where the lines between 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' were blurry at best.⁵⁸ This is today still a communal cemetery without a religious denomination, although the majority of the graves, and hence the cemetery's overall façade, is predominantly Christian, as visibly accentuated through the preponderance of crucifixes on its grave-memorials. This is not a Jewish cemetery by Jewish religious criteria, though it is marked on official maps with a 'Jewish section'.⁵⁹ According to a report published by the IKG's cemetery office after the Shoah, "long before 1938, an agreement was reached between the IKG and the City of Vienna whereby a small section of the [Döbling] cemetery was used exclusively [sic] for the burial of Jews".⁶⁰ This section, on the eastern end of the cemetery, is not separated from the surrounding sections by a wall, and furthermore comprises both Jewish and Christian graves, while there are numerous Jewish – and

53 Ibid., 436.

54 See Isabella Ackerl, Vom Zentrum an den Stadtrand: Wiener Friedhöfe und ihre Geschichte, in: Isabella Ackerl/Robert Bouchal/Ingeborg Schödl (eds.), *Der schöne Tod in Wien: Friedhöfe, Gräfte, Gedenkstätten*, Vienna 2008, 41.

55 Hans Pemmer/Ninni Lackner, *Der Döblinger Friedhof: Seine Toten, seine Denkmäler*, Vienna 1947 (= Sonderheft der Zeitschrift *Wiener G'schichten* 1).

56 Many of these graves, including that of the Herzls, are today honorary graves under patronage of the city cemetery office. See the list in Ehrenhalber gewidmete bzw. ehrenhalber in Obhut genommene Grabstellen im Friedhof DÖBLING, https://www.friedhofewien.at/media/files/2011/ehreng%C3%A4ber%20d%C3%B6bling_56730.pdf (14 August 2015).

57 Pemmer/Lackner, *Der Döblinger Friedhof*, 32.

58 This blurring of lines has been the focus of intense debate in recent historiography of Viennese Jewry, as for example in Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars*, New York 2012; and the above-cited Hödl, *Wiener Juden*.

59 See for example Döbling Detailplan, http://www.friedhofewien.at/media/files/2010/doebbling_25299.pdf (15 August 2015).

60 Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien: *Die Tätigkeit der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien 1960 bis 1964*, Vienna 1964, 169.

Muslim, Chinese and other – graves scattered throughout the rest of the cemetery.⁶¹ The so-called ‘Jewish section’ is therefore neither exclusively Jewish, nor was it ever administered by the IKG, instead falling under the regulation of the city cemetery office. The pre-Shoah arrangement between the city and the IKG stipulated that graves could either be acquired “for the duration of the cemetery” or be repeatedly renewed for periods of ten years at a time.⁶² Should a lease no longer be renewed, “but also should a grave no longer be tended”, ownership reverted to the city who then liquidated the grave, as is common in non-Jewish sepulchral practice in Europe. In even liberal understandings of Jewish burial tradition, these graves were therefore entirely ‘un-Jewish’ in their conception, at least as far as ‘Jewishness’ is conceived in religious terms or by traditional norms.

The Döbling cemetery reflects the secular bourgeois culture of Vienna’s *fin-de-siècle* to such an extent that it is no longer generally useful or sometimes even possible to distinguish between ‘Jewish’ and ‘Christian’, or ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-Jewish’ practices in its sepulchral culture. Many of the gravestones in Döbling are demarcated with neither Jewish nor Christian symbolism, and most are entirely inscribed in German. The symbolism abounding from the era of the *fin-de-siècle* includes heraldry,⁶³ the use of noble titles, furthermore linking into the commemoration of patriarchal family dynasties,⁶⁴ the use of professional and academic titles,⁶⁵ and symbolism breaking entirely with Jewish tradition, such as the larger-than-life-sized statue of the businessman Heinrich Munk, right next to and staring down on Herzl’s grave (though it was created slightly earlier – Munk’s grave can be seen in Figure 3).⁶⁶ Some gravestones were explicitly marked with Jewish symbolism, such as most commonly the Star of David,⁶⁷ the blessing hands of the Cohenim,⁶⁸ or the common Hebrew epitaph TNZB”H (תנצב”ה), an abbreviation of “may his/her soul be bound in the bundle of life”, in reference to I Samuel 25:29.⁶⁹ In several cases, individuals of various generations within the same family were Jewish and Christian, their gravestones consequently marked with both Stars of David and crucifixes, and with a mix of Hebrew, German and other inscriptions.⁷⁰ It does not seem coincidental that Herzl chose this cemetery to create his family grave. Yet it does seem striking that the IKG, with whom he had such a conflicted relationship, took over the funeral to such a degree that it became, as cited above, a ‘religious ceremony’, organised and therefore conditioned by the IKG. This paradox was also powerfully encoded in the gravestone erected there.

61 As remarked also by Martha Keil, Floridsdorf, Döbling, Simmering: Jüdische Friedhöfe in den Außenbezirken, in: Martha Keil/Elke Florisch/Ernst Scheiber (eds.), *Denkmale: Jüdische Friedhöfe in Wien, Niederösterreich und Burgenland*, Vienna 2006, 60.

62 Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien: *Die Tätigkeit der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien 1960 bis 1964*, 169.

63 For example on the gravestone of Leopold Wertheimstein (1801–1883) and family, Section II.

64 For example the epitaph “resting place of the baronial family of Eduard von Todesco” on the gravestone of Eduard Ritter von Todesco (1814–1877) and family, Section II.

65 For example on the gravestone of Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854–1923) and family, Section I6.

66 Gravestone of Heinrich Munk (1824–1903) and family, Section II.

67 For example on the gravestone of Leopold Auspitz (1876–1897) and family, Section II.

68 For example on the gravestone of Franziska (1846–1913) and Ernst (1842–1914) Loewit, Section I2.

69 For example on the gravestone of Julie Kohn (1850–1914) and family, Section I4.

70 For example the gravestone of Adolph Engel Edler von Jánosi (1820–1903) and family, Section II.

Herzl's Gravestone: Encoding, and Decoding, the Paradox



Figure 1: Gravestone of Jacob (1835–1902), Jeanette (1836–1911) & Theodor (1860–1904) Herzl, Döbling cemetery, Section II. © Tim Corbett

The Herzl family's original gravestone in the Döbling cemetery, depicted in Figure 1, is a tall headstone framed by two limestone pillars and a limestone lintel, altogether measuring roughly 260 centimetres by 140 centimetres, encasing two black marble panels upon which the memorial inscriptions are incised in gold lettering. The grave, a family plot intended for up to four bodies, is surrounded by six short bollards designed to enclose the grave on both sides with chains, though these are no longer present. The bollards surround a capstone covering the grave, upon which stands a wrought-iron flowerbox. On the two bollards immediately in front of the gravestone stand two wrought-iron containers, possibly intended for flowers or candles. The gravestone is decorated on either side of the lintel with a Star of David, with six further Stars of David incised on the bollards surrounding the grave, totaling eight. The inscription consists of a 110-word eulogy in German and Hebrew. The typeface used for the German-language inscription is *Desdemona*, an art-nouveau design that emerged in the 1880s and reflects the progressive tastes of the *fin-de-siècle*.⁷¹ The aesthetic design of the gravestone was therefore consistent with the general design of the Döbling cemetery, significantly complementing its secular, bourgeois character. Photographs from before the Shoah reveal that the grave has remained largely unchanged, with the exception of an additional inscription added after the reinterment of the family's remains in Jerusalem.

⁷¹ See Kate Clair/Cynthia Basic-Snyder, *A Typographic Workbook: A Primer to History, Techniques and Artistry*, Hoboken 2005, 175.

הערצל	Herzl
Jacob Herzl geb. 14. April 1835 gest. 9. Juni 1902	Jacob Herzl born 14 April 1835 died 9 June 1902
Jeanette Herzl geb. 28. Juli 1836 gest. 20. Februar 1911	Jeanette Herzl born 28 July 1836 died 20 February 1911
Dr. Theodor Herzl Sohn von Jacob und Jeannette Herzl Geb. 7. Mai 1860 Gest. 3. Juli 1904	Dr. Theodor Herzl son of Jacob and Jeannette Herzl Born 7 May 1860 Died 3 July 1904
פ"נ הר"ר בנימין זאב הערצל ז"ל נולד ביום ב' ט"ו אייר שנת תר"ך לפ"ק ונפטר ביום א' כ' תמוז שנת תרס"ד לפ"ק	P"N HR"R Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl Z"L born on Monday 15 Iyar in the year 620 LF"Q and died on Sunday 20 Tamuz in the year 664 LF"Q
ועליו נבנה	TNZB"H
In diesem Grab wurde am 3. Juli 1904 Dr Theodor Herzl zur letzten Ruhe bestattet. In dem gleichen Grabe ruhten seine Eltern Jacob und Jeanette Herzl Am 14. August 1949 wurden die sterblichen Überreste Dr Herzls und seiner Eltern exhumiert und, dem Wunsche Dr Herzls entsprechend, nach Israel überführt.	In this grave on 3 July 1904 Dr. Theodor Herzl was laid to rest. in the same grave his parents rested. Jacob and Jeanette Herzl On 14 August 1949 the mortal remains of Dr. Herzl and his parents were exhumed and, according to the wish of Dr. Herzl, were brought to Israel.

Figure 2: Inscription, left, and translation, right, of Herzl's gravestone. © Tim Corbett

The inscription lists Herzl and his parents in descending order of age (father, mother and son), although his mother died most recently, offering their names and dates of birth and death in the German language and the Gregorian calendar, Theodor moreover being attributed the title “Dr”. Theodor is the only one to receive a Hebrew-language eulogy calling him, by contrast to the German name “Theodor”, by the Hebrew names “Binyamin Ze’ev”. This is a common practice in Jewish-European culture which emerged in the early modern period, in which individuals receive both a civic name, usually drawing from a European-cultural pool of names, and a synagogal name, usually drawing from a Hebrew-Biblical pool of names. Herzl himself played on this division in his writings, generally signing his name as “Dr. Theodor Herzl”, though for example in articles relating to his Zionist activities signing his name simply as “Benjamin Seff”, in crude German rendering of the Hebrew names.⁷² This was in agreement with the editors of the *Neue Freie Presse*, with whom Herzl was employed, who politically opposed his Zionist ambitions and therefore objected to Herzl using his real name in Zionist publications.⁷³ This division between civic and synagogal names appears rather traditional, yet notably a more traditional or religious rendering of the name would not have been “Binyamin Ze’ev Herzl”, but rather the patronymic “Binyamin Ze’ev ben Yaqov”. Nevertheless, the differences in connotation arising from the nomenclature are indicative of differences in the memories of Herzl generally, as we shall also see by reference to the new grave in Jerusalem later. Similarly, a facet of the Hebrew inscription that at first glance appears strikingly religious is the Hebrew honorific HR”R, an epigraphic abbreviation literally

72 As in Mauschel, in: *Die Welt*, 15 October 1897, 1.

73 As Herzl remarked in his diaries Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 2, 43.

meaning “the great Rabbi” (הר"ר / הרב רבי), as well as the abbreviation Z”L, meaning “his name is invoked in blessing” (ז"ל / זכר לברכה), a tacit reference to Proverbs 10:7. Such Hebrew inscriptions with their religiously-derived honorifics were common in Vienna in this period, routinely used on honorary graves of IKG notables to denote their importance to the community, whether for religious or secular functions.⁷⁴ Yet the implied religiosity jars with Herzl’s secular values, as also with his often-remarked dismissiveness towards the Hebrew and Yiddish languages.⁷⁵ This incongruence is compounded in the spelling of the family name in Yiddish fashion as הערצל, with the ‘e’ in Herzl substituted with an ‘ע’. Notably, the spelling on his new grave in Jerusalem, and the spelling of his name in Israel in general, conforms to the modern Hebrew transliteration הרצל.

The incongruence of religiosity and language in the inscription powerfully reflects the incongruence of the burial of the man construed as the father of Jewish nationalism in a non-Jewish cemetery, and altogether marks this site as a poignant example of the ethereality and malleability of memory in general, and of Jewish identity in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna in particular. It also underlines in symbolic fashion the shifting nature of the memory of Herzl, particularly in its spatial, temporal and cultural transposition from *fin-de-siècle* Vienna to modern Israel, as we shall see when we turn to his new grave towards the end of this paper. A final oddity are the two mistakes in the inscription. The first is the spelling of Herzl’s mother’s name as Jeannette in the tenth line, although she is elsewhere in the inscription twice referred to correctly as Jeanette – in the line added after her death in 1911 and in the inscription added after the family’s reinterment in 1949. The second mistake is Theodor’s birthdate given as 7 May in the Gregorian calendar and 15 Iyar in the Hebrew calendar, when in actuality he was born on 2 May / 10 Iyar. The repetition of the mistake in both the Gregorian and Hebrew calendars suggests that this was the result of misinformation on the part of the author of the inscription, rather than an oversight on the part of the mason.

A Persisting Enigma: Who Authored the Gravestone?

The background to this gravestone, including the identity or identities of both the architect(s) of the memorial and author(s) of the inscription, remains bizarrely steeped in mystery. Herzl originally had his father, who died in June 1902, buried in a provisional grave in the Döbling cemetery, but then had him reinterred into the grave under discussion a year later, little over a year before his own death, as he explained in a diary entry from 16 May 1903:

“I considered the Sinai affair [the negotiation with the British government to create a Jewish settlement in Al-Arish] for so accomplished that I did not want to purchase a family plot anymore at the Döbling cemetery, where my father provisionally rests. I now hold the affair for so failed that I have already been to the district court and purchased plot Nr. 28 [sic, it was actually plot Nr. 30].”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ The gradual appropriation of traditionally religious honorifics for use in secular contexts is discussed in Bernhard Wachstein, *Die Inschriften des alten Judenfriedhofs in Wien*, Band 1, Vienna 1912, XXXVIII.

⁷⁵ Herzl repeatedly voiced this dismissiveness, as in Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 1, 195 & 351 f., believing that German would be the ideal language for his Jewish State. Indeed, German was the absolute lingua franca amongst Vienna’s Jews before the First World War, with Yiddish only becoming popularised in the interwar period and Hebrew only after the Shoah. See *Illustrierte Neue Welt – Eine Zeitschrift mit Tradition*, in: *Die Gemeinde*, 29 March 1996, 31.

⁷⁶ Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Volume 3, 429.

Unfortunately, the records of the city cemetery office pertaining to the Döbling cemetery, although they survive from 1903 onwards, make no mention of the Herzl grave – or consequently of the origins of the gravestone – in the indices of the years 1903 or 1904, the years of Jacob's reinterment and of Theodor's interment.⁷⁷ Puzzling too for such an artistically designed grave-memorial of the *fin-de-siècle*, especially for such a prominent individual, is the absence of an attribution to its architect. Many of the contemporaneous memorials in Döbling, and elsewhere in Vienna's cemeteries, were designed by prominent architects of the era, and correspondingly included a signature engraving, yet no such signature is evident on the Herzl grave. The German-language Wikipedia article on Oskar Marmorek, the Viennese architect, Zionist and friend of Herzl's, lists as part of his oeuvre the "grave-memorial of Theodor Herzl (presumably), 1903", but without citations or evidence.⁷⁸ It is not listed as one of Marmorek's works, which included numerous grave-memorials, in the entry of the *Architektenlexikon* published by the Vienna Architekturzentrum.⁷⁹ I discussed the case with Marmorek biographer Markus Kristan, a curator at the Albertina museum and a specialist in Viennese architecture, who also could not find evidence for authorship of the Herzl grave, though he assumes it was not Marmorek's work since, according to Kristan, Marmorek "would surely have tried to make this public", and since the grave-memorials Marmorek did design were all similar to each other yet different from Herzl's.⁸⁰ Kristan directed my attention towards a letter from Herzl to Marmorek, dated 3 November 1903, in which he thanked Marmorek "for the grave-memorial design", stating that "I have chosen the one with the two trees of life", a reference to *etz chaim*, a popular motif in Jewish sepulchral epigraphy at the time.⁸¹ While the timing, and the reference to the Döbling cemetery in the archival record, would certainly suggest that Herzl was referring to a gravestone erected for his father, the description bears no resemblance to the actual gravestone on the site. In our correspondence, Kristan posed the pertinent questions: "It would still be interesting to know: if Marmorek did not design the Herzl-grave, then who did? Who 'took away' this 'commission' from Marmorek?" This remains a mystery.

It is generally customary in Jewish sepulchral culture to erect the gravestone on the first anniversary of death. Yet the reinterment of the remains of Herzl's father Jacob from one grave to another raise the question of which anniversary this could have been – June 1903, a year after Jacob's death, or May 1904, a year after Jacob's reinterment, and only weeks before Theodor's death? In either case, had Herzl himself commissioned the gravestone, he made no mention of it in his otherwise expansive diaries. One possible scenario, which I consider the most likely hypothesis, is that the gravestone, or at least the Hebrew portion of the inscription commemorating Theodor Herzl, was commissioned by the IKG. That I have not found any records in the IKG archives pertaining to the Herzl grave is disappointing, but not unusual considering its fragmented nature in the aftermath of the Shoah – if indeed the IKG had anything to do with the creation of the gravestone in the first place, or kept records of the fact. This hypothesis is supported by three salient points:

1. According to its own records, as cited earlier, the IKG organised an 'honorary funeral' for Herzl, led by its board and the *chevra qadisha*, which contemporary

77 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, 1.3.2.213a.B2, Friedhofsindex.

78 Oskar Marmorek, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oskar_Marmorek (14 August 2015).

79 Oskar Marmorek, <http://architektenlexikon.at/de/385.htm> (27 July 2015).

80 Personal correspondence between Markus Kristan and Tim Corbett, 7 November 2013.

81 Central Zionist Archives, WV 1903/5 E, Wien XIX., Döblinger Friedhof, Isr. Abt. I/1/Gruft 30: Entwurf eines Grabmales im Auftrag Theodor Herzls.

newspapers regarded as a religious ceremony. From the moment of his death, and despite their strained relationship, the IKG evidently had a vested interest in honouring Herzl's memory, an interest that was to grow enormously in the next decades, as we shall see shortly.

2. The style of the inscription closely parallels the manner in which the IKG generally commemorated its notables on contemporaneous honorary graves in the older Jewish section of the Central Cemetery. From the mid-1890s, the IKG financed the creation of honorary graves for what it called "distinguished, especially notable men of the Vienna Community",⁸² which over the ensuing years came to include rabbis,⁸³ cantors,⁸⁴ religion teachers,⁸⁵ community notables,⁸⁶ and fighters for Jewish legal emancipation.⁸⁷ These mostly included inscriptions much like that on Herzl's grave: bilingual in German and Hebrew, distinguishing between an individual's civic (German) and synagogal (Hebrew) names and between their secular (German) titles and honorary (Hebrew) titles of rabbinical origin.
3. Herzl's father received a simple, German-language epitaph while Herzl's more complex epitaph included two mistakes, as discussed earlier. Herzl's mother, Jeanette, lived for several years after her son's death and must have noticed the mistakes, as presumably the gravestone was erected and/or the inscription was authored long before her death in 1911. It seems unlikely that she would have misspelled both her own name and the birthdate of her son. She can therefore safely be ruled out as the author of the inscription. The same goes for Herzl's estranged wife, Julie. A strikingly absent figure in the expansive biographical literature on Herzl, she was not buried in the Döbling grave. She died three years later, on 10 November 1907, and was cremated, an increasingly common practice amongst secular Jews in the early twentieth century.⁸⁸ Her ashes, so the story goes, were misplaced by one of her children, and so she was not reinterred along with the rest of the family in Jerusalem.⁸⁹

Herzl's Grave as a Site of Pilgrimage in the Interwar Period

It is striking that the man remembered as the founder of the Zionist movement and today idolised as the founding father of the Jewish state and a significant forebear of Vienna's IKG should have been buried in what was essentially a non-Jewish cemetery. This paradox reflects powerfully Herzl's *fin-de-siècle* Viennese character as well as his conflicted relationship to Judaism and to mainstream Jewish society as embodied in Vienna in the umbrella organisation of the IKG. From the moment of his death, Herzl was appropriated as a Jewish figurehead in a much broader fashion than he had been perceived during his lifetime, when the young Zionist movement was still a minor and

82 Bericht des Friedhof-Comités, in: Bericht des Vorstandes der israel. Cultusgemeinde in Wien über seine Tätigkeit in der Periode 1890–1896, Wien, 1896, unpaginated.

83 For example the gravestone of Adolf Jellinek (1820–1893), Chief Rabbi of the IKG, plot 5B-1-2.

84 For example the gravestone of Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890), Chief Cantor of the IKG, plot 5B-1-1.

85 For example the gravestone of Samuel Hammerschlag (1826–1904), Sigmund Freud's childhood religion teacher, plot 20-1-84.

86 For example the gravestone of Salomon Rosner (1848–1905), IKG board member, plot 20-1-95.

87 For example the gravestone of Adolph Fischhof (1816–1893), leader of the 1848 revolution in Vienna, plot 5B-1-3.

88 This issue and its contestation by religious factions in the Jewish community were discussed in Bericht der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in der Periode 1912–1924, Vienna 1924, 7.

89 This Day in Jewish History 1889: A Zionist Makes a Very Unfortunate Marriage, in: Ha'aretz, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/premium-1.662801> (25 June 2015).

widely contested faction within the political spectrum of the IKG. The incongruence of Herzl's epitaph with his self-professed values, as well as the glaring mistakes on the part of the unknown author(s) contained therein, thus work as a powerful metaphor for how Herzl's myth became divorced from the man himself, transforming his tomb into a vehicle for political mobilisation. Herzl's popularity continued to grow immensely in the years following his death, as Zionism became a burgeoning force within the IKG. Largely in response to growing ethnocentrism and antisemitism in Austrian society following the First World War, Zionist factions went on to consistently win about a third of the IKG vote throughout the interwar period.⁹⁰ This was also a reflection of the changing attitudes towards Zionism following the increased possibility of *aliyah* or emigration to Palestine during the British Mandate era, with 8425 Austrian Jews, mostly from Vienna, making *aliyah* between 1920 and 1935.⁹¹



Figure 3: Memorial march of circa 6,000 Viennese Jews to the grave of Theodor Herzl in the Döbling cemetery, 23 May 1948. © Bildarchiv Austria

In this context, Herzl's gravesite in Döbling became a major site for the mobilisation of his memory by and in support of Zionist organisations.⁹² Numerous Zionist organisations in Vienna were named after Herzl,⁹³ as were Zionist events,⁹⁴ which

⁹⁰ See the election results in Bericht [1924], 3-4; Bericht der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in der Periode 1929-1932, Vienna 1932), 3; Bericht des Präsidiums und des Vorstandes der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1933-1936, Vienna 1936), unpaginated.

⁹¹ Evelyn Adunka, Die Veränderungen der Wiener jüdischen Gemeinde in der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918 bis 1938, paper from the conference Jüdisches Wien vom Ende des 1. Weltkriegs bis zur Schoa, 1918-1945, Vienna, November 2012, published under <http://www.misrachi.at/index.php/geschichte/geschichte-der-juden-in-wien/56-symposium-shoa> (18 November 2014), 3-5.

⁹² Similar stations from Herzl's life emerged in this period as sites of memory and pilgrimage for followers of the Zionist movement, such as the spa in Franzensbad/Františkovy Lázně, discussed in Mirjam Triendl-Zadoff, Nächstes Jahr in Marienbad: Gegenwelten jüdischer Kulturen der Moderne, Göttingen 2007, 191.

⁹³ As for example the Herzl Club, the Verband der Herzl-Zionisten, Revisionisten und Judenstaatler, and the Zionistischen Jugendgemeinschaft Histadruth Hanoar Hazioni "Brith Herzl". A complete list of Zionist organisations was drawn up pending their liquidation after the Nazi 'Anschluß', see Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik, ADR ZNSZ Stiko Wien, 31-W 2, Schlußbericht, Der Reichskommissar für die Wiedervereinigung Österreichs mit dem Deutschen Reich.

⁹⁴ See for example Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, A/W 3172, Programm fuer den am 06.12.1908 stattfindenden Theodor Herzl-Abend.

moreover often included official visits by delegates to the Herzl grave, as at the opening of the eleventh Zionist Congress in September 1913.⁹⁵ The grave itself became a trademark for the Zionist movement, appearing for example in an artistic rendering with a transcript of the Hebrew-language epitaph, including the incorrect date of birth, on a postcard of the Jewish National Fund, presumably dating before 1938.⁹⁶ The so-called *Herzl-Grabgang*, a neologism used in contemporary sources translating literally as ‘Herzl grave-walk’, became a popular pilgrimage to the Döbling cemetery that by the 1920s was undertaken by hundreds of followers of the Zionist movement.⁹⁷ As Herzl’s grave thus became a central site for staging support for the Zionist cause, it simultaneously became a scene for the mobilisation of oppositional political factions. After a *Herzl-Grabgang* in May 1931, for example, some members of the Revisionist (right-wing) *Zionistische Studenten* complained that they had been barred by what they called ‘Palestinian pioneers’ from bearing the blue-and-white flags of their movement, the ‘pioneers’ – from the context obviously Labour (left-wing) supporters – only allowing red flags at the event.⁹⁸ At the same event, some twenty Nazi students heckled and shouted abuse at the procession, following which the police had to protect them from the enraged crowd of Zionists.⁹⁹ Notably, the *Neue Welt*, cited above, reported on these two incidents separately, while together they underline the political contestation, galvanisation and mobilisation underlying the visits to Herzl’s grave in this volatile period. The *Herzl-Grabgang* was even continued during the Shoah, as Herbert Rosenkranz wrote: “An almost ghostly oppressive spectacle was the annual Grabgang to Herzl’s memorial in the Döbling cemetery, once a proud affirmation of the Zionists of Vienna. On 15 July 1941, at 9 o’clock in the morning, fifteen people attended [...]”, including Josef Löwenherz, the coerced Jewish community leader during the Shoah, and other Jewish community functionaries.¹⁰⁰



Figure 4: Zionist graffiti on the back of Herzl’s gravestone. © Tim Corbett

95 Der XI. Zionistenkongreß in Wien, in: Jüdische Zeitung, 5 September 1913, 1.

96 Jüdisches Museum Wien, Nr. 4841, untitled.

97 As remarked in Nussenblatt, Herzl, 64.

98 Mißliches vom Herzl-Grabgang, in: Die Neue Welt, 8 June 1931, 6.

99 Hakenkreuzkrawall beim Herzl-Grabgang, in: Die Neue Welt, 8 June 1931, 6.

100 Herbert Rosenkranz, Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung: Die Juden in Österreich 1938–1945, Vienna 1978, 275.

A hitherto unremarked, and therefore presumably unnoticed, yet captivating feature of the gravestone is an array of etchings on the reverse side, portrayed in Figure 4, incised in the years before the Shoah by the many Zionist pilgrims who visited the site.¹⁰¹ These etchings were made in a space measuring no more than 55 centimetres between the gravestone and the cemetery fence, the spatial confinement visible in Figure 3. Figure 5, meanwhile, to which we shall return in more detail shortly, evinces that the graffiti used to cover the frontal surfaces of the grave-memorial, too. The frontal etchings were presumably effaced during on-going restorative works in the cemetery in subsequent decades, the graffiti on the reverse presumably surviving – fortunately for posterity – due to oversight. The graffiti consists essentially of a loose collection of personal names, place names, and dates, mostly but not exclusively rendered in Hebrew script both formal and cursive, with dates offered in both the Hebrew and Gregorian calendars. For example, a column down the left-hand side of the memorial reads in formal Hebrew characters, from right to left and top to bottom: MKN / ברסק / פניסק / (???) / שלמה / טננבום תר"פ / (לודז) / דרור / חלוצי / ברסק / פניסק / (???) / שלמה / טננבום תר"פ / (לודז) / MKN. This translates as: “*Dror* [Hebrew, freedom; spelled with diacritics] / pioneers / Brisk [Yiddish, Brest] / Pinsk / [unintelligible] / Shlomo / Tennenbaum [spelled with diacritics] / 680 [Hebrew calendar; 1920 in the Gregorian] / (Łódź) / MKN”. *Dror* was a Zionist Socialist movement which originated in Kiev shortly before the First World War before moving to Poland with the advent of Bolshevism, finally being subsumed under the *En Harod* kibbutz movement in the latter 1920s.¹⁰² The first part of the graffiti message therefore translates more generally as something like: “the pioneers [*chalutzei*, meaning early émigrés to Palestine] of the *Dror* movement from Brisk/Brest and Pinsk”, while the second part, which may or may not be related to the first part, is the signature of one Shlomo Tennenbaum from Łódź, who visited the grave in 1920, 680 in the Hebrew calendar. It is unclear to me what the letters MKN, rendered in Roman block capitals, signify.

The remaining graffiti is similar throughout, listing names and origins, mostly in Hebrew, such as “Belizovsky and Hatzruni, pioneers from Odessa”; “the pioneer [sic, no *sofit* in the Hebrew] Ze’ev Alerek from Białystok”, who visited on 1 April 1921 (or 1924?); “Kaganovich and family from Łódź”, who visited on 16 August 1920 (including the Roman characters HEH, which are unclear to me); or the Roman-character rendering of “L. LASK”, who visited on 19 September 1920. These signatures are interspersed with other, random etchings such as a *Magen David* and the alone-standing name “Israel”. Figure 5 reveals similar graffiti etched on the bollards at the front of the memorial, since then erased, in a mix of Hebrew and Roman script, including the comparatively early date 1916. I discovered this photograph on the English-language Wikipedia entry for Theodor Herzl, and managed to track it down to its owners in Tel Aviv.¹⁰³ Aviva Rosset explained that the picture portrays her mother Drora, born in Warsaw in May 1920, and grandparents Miriam (Mania) and Avraham (Albert), the couple with the baby seated to the left (Avraham is standing in the middle behind Miriam). The family was en route to Palestine in 1921, when they were delayed in Vienna for three months due to the Arab revolts then taking place in Palestine and the dangerous situation on the ground as a result. The identities of the other individuals in the photograph are unknown, while the approximate date of the

101 Credit is due to Béla Rásky for this discovery, who had the imagination to take a peek in the dark recess behind the gravestone. I also thank Thyago Ohana for his technical wizardry at photography in this tight space.

102 *Dror*, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Dror> (28 July 2015).

103 The image was available at the time of writing under Herzl’s grave in 1921, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_Herzl#/media/File:Herzl_grave_1921.jpeg, (14 September 2015).

image – spring 1921 – is estimable due to the age of Aviva's mother.¹⁰⁴ I conducted a sample survey of some Viennese newspapers for the dates mentioned, which broadly coalesce around the years 1920–1921, such as the Jewish *Wahrheit* and *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, as well as the non-Jewish *Wiener Zeitung*, to see whether any major Zionist activities or events were mentioned, but with no results. What the graffiti, and the photograph supplied by Aviva Rosset, demonstrate, in any case, is the attraction of Herzl's grave-memorial in the interwar period as a magnet of Zionist pilgrimage, predominantly of the *chalutzim* – early pioneers – from Eastern Europe making the difficult journey to start a new life in British Mandatory Palestine. The gravesite evidently effused a meaningful aura, combining the legacy of Theodor Herzl and the influence of his memory with the burgeoning attraction of the Zionist cause in the interwar period. This parallels in a striking manner the Chassidic practice of pilgrimage to the *ohelim* or grave-houses of *tzadikim*, the 'righteous' wonder-rabbis, constituting a powerful political counterpoint to a deeply religious-orthodox practice, with further parallels in the modern State of Israel.¹⁰⁵



Figure 5. קבר הרצל 1921. © Aviva Rosset

¹⁰⁴ Personal correspondence between Aviva Rosset and Tim Corbett, 14 August 2015.

¹⁰⁵ The Chassidic practice is discussed in David Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*, Stanford 2002, 321–324, while pilgrimage to sites of Jewish and/or Zionist memory in Israel are discussed throughout in Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago 1995.

Herzl's Reinterment and the (Re-)Birth of his Myth in Israel

Like much of the factual history of the gravestone, there is little documentary evidence of its relevance and/or influence as a site of memory during the Shoah, aside from the above-cited continuation of annual visits by the leaders of Vienna's rapidly dwindling Jewish community. In fact, there is little documentary evidence altogether of the fate of the Döbling cemetery, which after all represented the breadth and depth of communal and cultural enmeshment of Viennese society before the Shoah, to a significant degree made up of individuals of Jewish origin. Tina Walzer, cataloguing Austria's Jewish sepulchral heritage to survive the Shoah, listed the Döbling cemetery as "partially" destroyed.¹⁰⁶ However, the Jewish graves in Döbling were subject to Austrian civil law and not Jewish religious law, meaning that both before and after the Shoah they could be and were in the event of expiration of contracts liquidated. Moreover, many of the Jewish graves, including that of Theodor Herzl, survived, suggesting that there was no official policy within the National Socialist city government targeting the Döbling cemetery as other Jewish cemeteries in Vienna were targeted. It may appear strange that such an iconic and evidently internationally renowned (Jewish) site of memory survived the cultural genocide of the Nazis unscathed, and yet this coalesces with the overall piecemeal destructions of Jewish heritage occurring in this relatively short-lived era of Vienna's history, during which the Nazis and their helpers, despite their murderous intent and the breath-taking scale of their genocide, were not entirely successful in excising Vienna's Jewish heritage from the face of the city.¹⁰⁷ Without a doubt, however, and given more time, the Döbling cemetery and Herzl's grave would also have fallen victim to their machinations.

Vienna, despite the almost total destruction of its indigenous Jewish community, became a way-station in the aftermath of the Shoah for hundreds of thousands of predominantly Jewish Displaced Persons making their way west from the shattered lands of Central and Eastern Europe, for the most part hoping to end up in Palestine or the United States.¹⁰⁸ The Zionist ambition of emigration to Palestine reached its greatest momentum amongst the remaining Jews of Vienna following the cataclysmic destruction of Jewish life in Europe and the perceived hopelessness of a future for Jews on the broken continent.¹⁰⁹ In this context, the "Herzl grave-walks" resumed immediately after the end of the Shoah, as depicted in Figure 3, and in September 1948 ownership of Theodor Herzl's grave was formally relinquished from the city cemetery office to the IKG to ensure its "worthy preservation".¹¹⁰ Finally, following the uneasy truce at the end of the First Arab-Israeli War, Israel's War of Independence, in the summer of 1949, one of the new state's first acts was the fulfilment of Herzl's dying wish to transfer his remains and the remains of his parents to the new Jewish State. This was to be the last major event concentrated on Herzl's gravesite in Vienna, after which the site largely disappeared from popular memory and was eclipsed by the new gravesite on Har Herzl in Jerusalem.

106 Tina Walzer, *Jüdische Friedhöfe in Österreich und den europäischen Ländern*, in: Claudia Theune/Tina Walzer (eds.), *Jüdische Friedhöfe: Kultstätte, Erinnerungsort, Denkmal*, Vienna 2011, 10.

107 On Nazi policies towards Jewish cemeteries in Vienna, see for example Elizabeth Anthony/Dirk Rupnow, *Wien IX, Seegasse 9: Ein österreichisch-jüdischer Geschichtsort*, in: Jim Tobias/Peter Zinke (eds.), *Beiträge zur Deutschen und Jüdischen Geschichte 5*, Nürnberg 2010, and Tina Walzer, *Der jüdische Friedhof Währing in Wien: Historische Entwicklung, Zerstörungen der NS-Zeit, Status Quo*, Vienna 2011.

108 Evelyn Adunka, *Die vierte Gemeinde: Die Wiener Juden in der Zeit von 1945 bis heute*, Vienna 2000, 159.

109 As remarked by Robert Knight, *Neutrality, not Sympathy: Jews in Post-war Austria*, in: Robert Wistrich (ed.), *Austrians and Jews in the twentieth century: from Franz Joseph to Waldheim*, London 1992, 220.

110 *Das Grab Herzls in der Obhut der Gemeinde*, in: *Die Gemeinde*, September 1948, 4.

In his seminal 1896 work *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl had remarked: “We have cradles, we have graves, and it is well-known what the graves are to the Jewish heart. The cradle we shall take with us – therein slumbers rosily and smiling our future. Our dear graves we shall have to leave behind – I believe that we acquisitive people will have the hardest time separating ourselves from them.”¹¹¹ Herzl thus succinctly highlighted the centrality of the *met mitzvah*, the commandment for the eternal and respectful preservation of the peace of the dead, to Jewish, even secular Jewish, culture. The profundity of the eternal grave underlay Herzl’s wish to be reinterred in Israel, as did, quite possibly, his ambition to be remembered in posterity in the state which he had no doubt would eventually arise after his death. Herzl was exhumed on 14 August 1949 in a ceremony that, like his funeral 45 years before, was entirely organised and conditioned by the IKG.¹¹² His coffin, cast in metal in accordance with his wishes for eventual reinterment, lay in state for two days in the synagogue in the Seitenstetengasse in Vienna, the only one of the city’s major synagogues to survive the November Pogrom, where it was visited by an estimated 150,000 people.¹¹³ During the final ceremony before Herzl’s remains were collected by a special delegation from Israel, Vienna’s new Chief Rabbi Akiba Eisenberg, an adherent of the Religious Zionist *Mizrachi* movement, compared Herzl’s reinterment with the Biblical story of Moses bringing the bones of Jacob from Egypt to the Land of Israel, and compared the 45 years without Herzl following his death, including the years of the Shoah, to the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert.¹¹⁴ Significantly, he referred to Herzl not by his civic name Theodor, but by his synagogal name Benjamin Seew (in German-language rendering).¹¹⁵ Herzl’s life, work and memory were thus mobilised for and subsumed under a Biblical narrative of survival and peoplehood while Herzl the man, as he himself had done in his diaries, was elevated into a pantheon of deliverers of the Jewish people from captivity and exile into the Promised Land. Among the numerous articles published by the IKG in the wake of the exhumation ceremony, one statement was directed at Herzl personally: “It happens according to your will, to your honour, to the honour of Israel and for the praise of the Almighty, so that your precious remains may find their eternal peace in the hallowed soil of the dreamed-of state.”¹¹⁶

Herzl’s remains, and those of his parents, were transferred from Vienna to Israel aboard the specially named El Al aircraft *Herzl* on 16 August 1949, and were buried the following day in a grand ceremony attended by tens of thousands of people in what was to become the national memorial site at Har Herzl in Jerusalem, also known as *Har HaZicharon*, the Mount of Remembrance. The choice of burial site in Jerusalem, after all the location of Mount Zion and the centre of the Jewish faith and of the mythical Jewish historical narrative, was indicative of the appropriation of Herzl’s memory to legitimate the Zionist narrative of the new state.¹¹⁷ Israel today maintains Jerusalem as its undivided national capital, much to the chagrin of the Palestinians, who seek to establish their own state with Jerusalem, or at least a part of Jerusalem, as its capital, underlining the political capital of locating Israel’s national memorial complex there. Of course, the symbolic gravitas of Jerusalem to Jewish

111 Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 72.

112 Herzls Abschied von Wien, in: *Die Gemeinde*, September 1949, 12–13.

113 Photographs of the event, including Isidor Schalit’s visit as Israel’s special envoy for the exhumation of Herzl and his parents, are reproduced in Adunka, *Die vierte Gemeinde*, inlay between 240 f.

114 Theodor Herzls allerletzter Weg, in: *Die Gemeinde*, September 1949, 4.

115 Abschied von Herzl in unserem Tempel, in: *Die Gemeinde*, September 1949, 2.

116 Herzls Abschied von Wien, in: *Die Gemeinde*, September 1949, 12 f.

117 See Idith Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge 2005.

culture is so profound that it hardly needs justifying. At Herzl's funeral in 1904, for example, David Wolffsohn, Herzl's friend and successor to the presidency of the Zionist Congress, recited Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."¹¹⁸ Yet, as happened so frequently in the activities commemorating Herzl after his death, Herzl's own wishes were not taken into account. He had actually wanted to be buried in Haifa, the city he envisaged as the capital of a cosmopolitan, inclusive and – perhaps most importantly – secular state.¹¹⁹ Herzl's attitude to Jerusalem tallied with his lukewarm attitudes towards Jewish tradition in general, and his hostile attitudes towards Jewish religion in particular, as he remarked in his diary on 31 October 1898, in a sardonic twist on Psalm 137: "When I henceforth remember you, Jerusalem, it will not be with pleasure", referring in part to the pestilence of the city at the turn of the last century, but also to his experience of the "inhumanity" and "hatred" of the place,¹²⁰ and of the pervasive religious "superstition from all sides", which were anathema to Herzl.¹²¹

Katherine Verdery, in her work on reburial in post-socialist societies, remarked that the enterprise of reburial involves "treating former heads of state as quasi-religious relics. These cases almost invariably indicated struggles over the form of the polity: how much territory it should have, whether it should be a monarchy or a republic."¹²² The religiosity of the commemorative events surrounding Herzl's burial and reburial are indicative not only of the synthesis – or at times conflicts – of religious and political agendas amongst his followers, first in Vienna's Jewish community and later in the young Jewish State, but further reflect the kind of sacralisation of politics which became a widespread trademark of political movements in the twentieth century. Herzl's canonisation as a Founding Father figure, moreover, and especially the stage-setting of his memory at the national military and memorial complex in Jerusalem, furthermore reveal the perennial contestation of the boundaries, physical and political, of this new state, much as the creation of this memorial site was designed to assert certain boundaries and inculcate a sense of permanence and security in the shaky decades following independence. Finally, Herzl's reburial and the sacralisation of the new national cemetery embodied the Zionist belief in the conclusion of the Jewish exile and life in the diaspora with the return to Israel, Herzl's remains serving viscerally as legitimation of his vision and of the new Jewish State. *Har Herzl/Har HaZicharon*, designed around the memory of this man whose grave forms its focal point, has become the principle burial site for the nation's leaders as well as for the thousands of soldiers and civilians killed in the numerous and ongoing conflicts following the foundation of the state. As Maoz Azaryahu concluded: "Infused with the Zionist myth of national revival and restoration, and embedded into the symbolic fabric of Israeli independence, Mount Herzl assumed a distinguished place in the emerging sacred topography of Israeli nationhood."¹²³ Herzl's myth has been entirely reinvented in Israel – and thereby totally dislocated from its origins in suburban Vienna.

Herzl's new tomb atop *Har Herzl* is a sleek, black marble affair, incised in golden lettering with an exclusively Hebrew-language inscription which reads: "Binyamin

¹¹⁸ Keil, Floridsdorf, Döbling, Simmering, 62.

¹¹⁹ Theodor Herzl's allerletzter Weg, in: Die Gemeinde, September 1949, 4. Haifa was posited as the future capital in Herzl, *Altneuland*, 63. Robert Wistrich commented that Herzl's vision in *Altneuland* was essentially "carried over from Austro-liberalism to find a new mode of expression in humanistic Zionism", *Laboratory*, 231.

¹²⁰ Herzl, *Theodor Herzl's Tagebücher*, Volume 2, 212.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹²² Verdery, *Dead Bodies*, 17.

¹²³ Maoz Azaryahu, *Mount Herzl: The Creation of Israel's National Cemetery*, in: *Israel Studies* 1 (1996) 2, 47.

Ze'ev Theodor Herzl / son of / Yaqov and Janet / 10 Iyar 620 – 20 Tamuz 664 / He was brought from Vienna to Jerusalem / for eternal rest / on 22 Av 709.” The absence of the German language, the foregrounding of Herzl’s synagogal over his civic name, the spelling of his surname in modern Hebrew fashion ה-ר-צ-ל, the use of the traditional patronymic *ben* (son of), and the exclusive rendering of dates in the Hebrew calendar, all represent the complete absorption of Herzl’s persona into a Hebrew culture and Israeli national narrative, while eschewing the more religiously connoted epigraphy of his former Viennese grave, such as the common eulogy of Biblical origin תנצב"ה and the honorific of rabbinical origin הר"ר. Amos Elon remarked that “much of what has been achieved by Herzl and his successors – and the price paid for it – is actually visible from the vantage point of Mount Herzl”.¹²⁴ Herzl’s new gravesite enjoys views ranging from the hills of Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, beyond to the Mediterranean and off into the desert, while all around lie the lands cultivated by the Zionist pioneers. Yet the site also stands directly adjacent to Yad Vashem, commemorating the cataclysm of Europe’s Judeocide, and the graves of those who fell in Israel’s bitter conflicts with its Arab neighbours. As Jackie Feldman remarked, on *Har Herzl* “the link constructed by Zionism between the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, and her struggle with her Arab neighbors/enemies is lived as embodied experience”.¹²⁵ This narrative etched in the hills of Jerusalem is a far cry indeed from the future that Herzl imagined for his people and his state. However, this narrative also holds true for Herzl’s family, which collectively had a tragic end: two of his children and his only grandchild committed suicide, while his remaining daughter was murdered in the Shoah. None of his family ever made it to Palestine/Israel, though today his entire family has been reunited in death on *Har Herzl*.¹²⁶

Concluding Remarks: Differing Memories, or Dislocated Memories, Between Vienna and Israel?

Herzl’s grave in Jerusalem is today a focal point for enacting Israel’s Zionist narrative of the modern Jewish experience, a fact that made documenting the gravestone for this research problematic.¹²⁷ Aside from the internal, national commemorative events that so frequently take place there, the site was also visited, for example, by US President Barack Obama accompanied by Israeli President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March 2013.¹²⁸ This was a powerful affirmation of the successes of the Zionist cause by one of the world’s most powerful leaders, and a striking example of the perennial efficacy of the gravesites of political leaders as magnets for the enactment and affirmation of discourses of political power. Meanwhile, the original gravesite in Vienna, though well-preserved, has been almost totally

¹²⁴ Elon, Herzl, 410.

¹²⁵ Jackie Feldman, Between Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl: Changing Inscriptions of Sacrifice on Jerusalem’s „Mountain of Memory“, in: *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007) 4, 1148.

¹²⁶ Herzl Family Finds a Final Resting Place, in: Ha’aretz, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/this-day-in-jewish-history/this-day-in-jewish-history-herzl-family-finds-a-final-resting-place.premium-1.482550> (6 December 2012).

¹²⁷ I could not gain access to the site due to on-going military parades when I visited in 2012, and my friend Shai Cotler ran into a similar problem when he drove to Jerusalem to photograph the site for the purposes of this article – he was not allowed access, either, but one of the IDF soldiers on guard did take some photographs on his behalf. Credit is therefore due to Shai – as to that soldier.

¹²⁸ President Obama, President Peres and Prime Minister Netanyahu Visiting Herzl’s Grave, Har Herzl, Jerusalem, March 2013, in: Ha’aretz, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/obama-visits-israel-live-blog-obama-visits-israel-day-three.premium-1.511254> (22 March 2013).

eclipsed from popular and historical memory, the small number of occasional visitors to the site notwithstanding.¹²⁹ Although the grave has since 1948 been the property of the IKG in Vienna, it is maintained as an honorary grave of the City of Vienna, which handles both the financing and execution of conservationist and restorative measures for the graves in its care. I noticed in writing this article that a correction had been made to the inscription sometime in the period between May 2012 and August 2014, as evident from the date signatures on two of my own photographs. During this period, the incorrect date of birth – 7 May – had been amended to read, correctly, 2 May, through a simple extension of the incision at the base of the number “7” to read “2”. Figure 1 depicts the more recent view of the grave. The Hebrew date, 15 Iyar, remains incorrect. Considering the mystery surrounding the origins of the gravestone and the inscription, including these glaring mistakes, I was intrigued about who had made this correction, and why, so I enquired at the administrative office of the Döbling cemetery, who redirected me to the central office of the city cemetery authorities. There I was informed that no record of the change had been logged, which suggests that, following a ‘routine inspection’ of the honorary graves, the error was reported directly to the municipal stonemason who was then commissioned to make the necessary correction.¹³⁰ Did some private visitor to Herzl’s grave – perhaps an admirer or history enthusiast – notice the error and notify the city cemetery authorities? In any case, this latest mystery at Herzl’s original gravesite underlines the obscurity into which his humbler Viennese origins have fallen, and the enigma surrounding the man’s origins vis-à-vis the pervasiveness of his posthumous myth in Israel.

Amos Elon commented that Herzl’s memory is “a lengthening shadow that diffuses as the years go by”, though his shadow continues to cast a “spell” over Israelis today.¹³¹ A.M. Klein more elaborately commented:

“He left a legacy greater than the millions of the Rothschilds; he had left a heritage that was Palestine. His monument is more lasting than bronze, and it is not situated in the cemetery of Vienna. In the conscience of his people is it engraved; and in the tombstone standing in the heart of Israel is written this message, a message that is at one and the same time an inheritance and a last will and testament, a legacy of words – *Wenn ihr wolt, ist es kein marchen* [sic] – if you will it this is no fable.”¹³²

Although writing this before the Shoah, the establishment of the State of Israel and Herzl’s reinterment in Jerusalem, Klein succinctly highlighted the ephemerality of Herzl’s ‘tombstone’ as a metaphor of his legacy, while we can retrospectively also understand this ‘ephemeralisation’, to coin a term, as analogous to the relocation of Herzl’s memory to Israel, and the consequent dislocation of his memory at its source in Vienna. Katherine Verdery explained that “a dead body’s symbolic effectiveness does not depend on its standing for one particular thing, however, for among the most important properties of bodies, especially dead ones, is their ambiguity, multivocality, or polysemy”, continuing:

129 A photographic exhibition on Jewish life in Vienna today, for example, includes an image of the grave in Döbling being visited by a handful of older individuals. Josef Polleross, *Heute in Wien 2012: Fotografien zur jüdischen Gegenwart* von Josef Polleros, Vienna 2012, 69. In my numerous visits to the grave in recent years, by contrast, I have never once seen it visited by another person.

130 Personal correspondence between Städtische Friedhöfe and Tim Corbett, 12 August 2015.

131 Elon, Herzl, 410.

132 Klein, *Beyond Sambation*, 20.

“Dead bodies have another great advantage as symbols: they don’t talk much on their own (though they did once). Words can be put into their mouths – often quite ambiguous words – or their own actual words can be ambiguated by quoting them out of context. It is thus easier to rewrite history with dead people than with other kinds of symbols that are speechless. Yet because they have a single name and a single body, they present the illusion of having only one significance. Fortifying that illusion is their materiality, which implies their having a single meaning that is solidly ‘grounded,’ even though in fact they have no single such meaning.”¹³³

Herzl’s tomb in Jerusalem represents precisely such a singularity of narrative meaning, despite the evident polysemy of Herzl’s memory, serving both left and right, secular and religious agendas in Israel today. As a tomb for a ‘founding father’, functioning simultaneously as a potent political site of memory, it is thus thoroughly comparable to similar sites of memory such as Lenin’s mausoleum in Moscow or Atatürk’s in Ankara, both of which, moreover, were sites of reburial of deep political significance. Meanwhile, Herzl’s empty tomb in Vienna stands as an oddity, a historical anomaly, a memorial to the ‘founding father’ of Israel located in a most unlikely location, in a modest and most importantly non-Jewish cemetery dating from the *fin-de-siècle*, in a quiet and little visited suburb of this quaint Central-European capital. Its early-twentieth-century usage as a site of Zionist pilgrimage and agitation offers a pertinent case study of the practices through which Herzl’s myth was forged following his death, while its passage into obscurity – as a site of non-memory, perhaps – following the foundation of the State of Israel and the transferral of Herzl’s remains to Jerusalem in 1949 invites consideration on the incongruity between Herzl’s myth today and the origins of the man in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

133 Verdery, *Dead Bodies*, 28 f.

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Quotation: Tim Corbett, Was ich den Juden war, wird eine kommende Zeit besser beurteilen ...
Myth and Memory at Theodor Herzl's Original Gravesite in Vienna, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah:
Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 64-88.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Corbett/
ART_Corbett01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Corbett/ART_Corbett01.pdf)

Article

Sari J. Siegel

The Past and Promise of Jewish Prisoner-Physicians' Accounts

A Case Study of Auschwitz-Birkenau's Multiple Functions

Abstract

Seeking to demonstrate how the unique perspectives of Jewish prisoner-physicians can yield valuable insight into Nazi camps, this article first examines how scholars have used these medical functionaries' accounts to inform their portrayal of Auschwitz-Birkenau's exterminatory capacity and horrific conditions. It subsequently explores how these individuals' memoirs and legal statements can also speak to the camp's functions as a labour camp and transit camp. The article reinforces the significance of this relatively obscure prisoner group through an examination of Nazi documents, and it indicates that the prisoner-physicians' parallel assignments to and experiences in Birkenau and concentration camp subcamps reveal that both institutions were simultaneously engaged in the Nazis' dual missions of exploiting Jewish labour and annihilating European Jewry.

Introduction

Beginning with the publication of the first authoritative monograph on the Holocaust – Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* – in 1961, Olga Lengyel's *Five Chimneys: The Story of Auschwitz* and Gisella Perl's *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* have served as valuable sources in historians' attempts to understand and, in turn, convey the horrors of Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹ The camp, also known as Auschwitz II, claimed the lives of nearly one million Jews from its opening in March 1942 until its liberation in January 1945.² Initially comprising two farmhouses converted into gas chambers, its killing infrastructure later included four large crematoria, each of which housed an undressing room, gas chamber, and high-capacity ovens, thereby greatly accelerating the 'processing' of European Jews.³ As its large area and multiple

1 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago 1961, 582 note (hereafter: 'n') 39–40, 584n53, n56, n57, 607n35, 614n26, 616n33, 626n30–4, n36, 626n37, n38, 628n52, 629n65, n66, n68, 613n12, 633n26; Olga Lengyel, *Five chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*, Chicago 1947; Gisella Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, New York 1948. Hilberg also uses the memoir of non-Jewish prisoner-physician Ella Lingens (Ella Lingens, *Prisoners of Fear*, London, 1948). I do not discuss the accounts of Lingens or those of other non-Jewish prisoner-physicians here, as this article is an outgrowth of my dissertation "Between Coercion and Resistance: Jewish Prisoner-Physicians in Nazi Camps, 1940–1945" (in progress), which focuses on Jewish doctors and thus primarily calls upon source material of and about these individuals.

2 This figure is the most recent cited by historians of the Auschwitz State Museum. See <http://auschwitz.org/en/history/auschwitz-ii/> (30 November 2015). Birkenau was also the epicentre of the Nazis' effort to exterminate the Sinti and Roma – a process to which Jewish prisoner-physicians have also testified in great detail. See, for example, the memoir of a doctor in the 'Gypsy' Camp: Lucie Adelsberger, *Auschwitz. A Doctor's Story*, Boston 1995. Privation, illness, and violence at Birkenau also took a lethal toll on several other persecuted groups.

3 The two farmhouses or 'Bunkers' – the 'Red House' and the 'White House' – were first utilised as gas chambers in early 1942 and the summer of 1942, respectively. The first of the four new crematoria began operating on 22 March 1943, and all four were operating in concert by the end of June 1943 (Franciszek Piper, *Gas Chambers and Crematoria*, in: Yisrael Gutman/Michael Berenbaum [eds.], *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, Bloomington 1994, 161 and 163.)

subdivisions indicate, Birkenau was not solely an extermination camp (*Vernichtungslager*) in which the Nazis automatically sent entire transports of Jews to be gassed.⁴ It also served as a labour camp (*Arbeitslager*)⁵, which housed, at its peak, nearly 60,000 inmates – a steadily increasing portion of whom were Jews – who performed arduous tasks inside the electrified fence or at outside worksites.⁶ Furthermore, as of September 1943, Birkenau functioned as a transit camp (*Durchgangslager*) for Jews, where prisoners waited for varying periods of time before they were dispatched to other camps in response to labour shortages – first in small numbers to the General Government and, after mid-May 1944, by the masses to the Reich's interior.⁷

While scholarship tends to focus most on Auschwitz-Birkenau's identity as a killing centre, the camp's functions as a site of slave labour and as a key transit point, although not absent from historiography, receive considerably less attention.⁸ This article demonstrates that Jewish prisoner-physicians' accounts are particularly valuable not only in illustrating the camp's role in the genocide of European Jewry, but also in shedding light on Auschwitz-Birkenau's other functions. After all, their med-

4 There were four such camps: Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibór, and Treblinka. See Patrick Montague, *Chelmno and the Holocaust. The History of Hitler's First Death Camp*, Chapel Hill 2012; Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Bloomington 1987. Majdanek was a hybrid between extermination camp and concentration camp: Barbara Schwindt, *Das Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager Majdanek. Funktionswandel im Kontext der "Endlösung"*, Würzburg 2005.

5 I have decided to use the term 'labour camp' as opposed to 'concentration camp' (*Konzentrationslager*) because the latter is too vague and may call to mind its earlier phase during which most concentration camp inmates fell under the title of 'protective custody' (*Schutzhaft*) and were prisoners for 'political,' not 'racial' reasons. The former, in contrast, draws attention to the labour element. After all, the Jews who were not selected for the gas chamber upon arrival were selected specifically for labour. Furthermore, this designation sets it apart from the Main Camp (Auschwitz I), which was a concentration camp from its inception on 14 June 1940: Franciszek Piper, *The Origins of the Camp*, in: Waclaw Długoborski/Franciszek Piper (eds.), *Auschwitz 1940–1945. Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, Vol. 1, Oświęcim 2000, 56. My reference to Birkenau as a 'labour camp,' however, is not a claim that it was a 'forced labour camp' (*Zwangsarbeitslager*), as the latter is a category unto itself. For a detailed discussion of this category, refer to Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis. Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944*, New York 2006. For a concise discussion of categorising camps, including the challenges therein, see Aharon Weiss, *Categories of Camps – Their Character and Role in the Execution of the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question,"* in: Yisrael Gutman/Avital Saf (eds.), *The Nazi Concentration Camps. Structure and Aims – the Image of the Prisoner – the Jews in the Camps* (=Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference), Jerusalem 1984, 115–132. For a study that probes the topic much further, see Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL. A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, New York 2015.

6 Franciszek Piper, *Auschwitz Prisoner Labor. The Organisation and Exploitation of Auschwitz Concentration Camp Prisoners as Laborers*, Oświęcim 2002, 75. The figure appears in Table 3 "Number of prisoners in Auschwitz Concentration Camp (1940–1945)" (located between pages 64 and 65) and corresponds with the date 22 August 1944. The total does not include the approximately 30,000 non-registered Hungarian Jews in Birkenau at that time. Piper points out that, as a result of the large numbers of people in quarantine and the hospitals, there was a significant disparity between Birkenau's prisoner population and the number of inmates who had labour assignments (73).

7 Piper, *Auschwitz Prisoner Labor*, 70–72. In contrast to the significant body of literature on death camps and concentration camps, scholarship on the broad category of transit camps is severely lacking. Perhaps the best discussion of these camps can be found in Angelika Königseder, *Polizeihaftlager*, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Distel (eds.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Band 9, Munich 2009. Given the focus of the article, I will be discussing neither Camp BIb – the 'Theresienstadt Family Camp' (*Familienlager*) nor Camp BIc – the 'Gypsy' Camp (*Zigeunerlager*). For insight into Jewish prisoner-physicians' work in the former, see Gottfried R. Bloch, *Unfree Associations. A Psychoanalyst Recollects the Holocaust*, Los Angeles 1999. Regarding the latter, see Lucie Adelsberger, *Auschwitz. A Doctor's Story*, Boston 1995.

8 For example: Peter Longerich, *Holocaust. The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews*, Oxford/New York 2010; Debórah Dwork/Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust. A History*, New York/London 2002. Longerich discusses Birkenau as a site of extermination (e.g., 282), and the closest he comes to discussing it as a site for labour is the initial attempt to establish a forced labour camp for prisoners of war (315). Dwork and van Pelt refer to Birkenau's capacity as a transit camp, in referring to it as "the gateway [through which] Jewish slaves be shipped to concentration camps attached to industrial plants" (306) and, of course, to the camp's exterminatory function (e.g., 305 f.). There is no mention, however, of Birkenau as a site for labour.

ical training enabled the Jewish prisoner-physicians to assess the labour capacity, or lack thereof, of their fellow inmates and, when possible, to help their patients return to a state of relative fitness for work inside or outside the camp, thus placing these individuals in a unique position.

Jewish Prisoner-Physicians as Witnesses

Before proceeding, it is important to establish how and why historians have tended to use these sources thus far. As Hilberg did so frequently in his discussion of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we will return to Lengyel and Perl, both of whom worked as doctors in the medical block in camp BIIC, the Hungarian Women's Camp.⁹ The former was a trained surgical assistant who worked in her husband's hospital in Cluj, Romania, prior to her 1944 deportation to Birkenau, and the latter was an obstetrician-gynaecologist who practiced in Sighet, Romania before her deportation the same year.¹⁰ Their memoirs, published in 1947 and 1948, respectively, provide such significant insight precisely *because* of their positions as prisoner-physicians in the camp. The nature and location of their work enabled them to live longer than the average Jewish inmate in Birkenau.¹¹ After all, they worked indoors in clinics (*Reviere*) or inmate hospitals (*Häftlingskrankenbauten*) and were thus protected from harsh weather conditions and brutal Kapos trying to achieve daily production quotas – two factors that contributed significantly to inmate morbidity and mortality.¹² Over their relatively long periods in the camp, they witnessed much and met patients who informed them of much that they could not observe first-hand. Furthermore, their patients' physical conditions spoke to the camp's copious brutality, woefully inadequate rations, and abhorrent sanitation. Aware of the prisoner-physicians' accumulated knowledge, scholars have turned to their accounts for source material. For example, as someone expected to tend to the painful breast wounds SS guard Irma Grese's whip inflicted, Perl offered Hilberg insight into guards' sadistic behaviour.¹³

Given their regular interaction with Nazi doctors, prisoner-physicians have also offered scholars unique and important glimpses into these criminal figures and their activities. For information on the infamous Josef Mengele, historian Martin Gilbert called upon another Jewish prisoner-physician's memoir: Miklós Nyiszli's *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*.¹⁴ Nyiszli's position as the Nazi doctor's

9 Although she did not receive a medical degree, this article will count Lengyel as a Jewish prisoner-physician, because she served as a de facto prisoner-physician in the BIIC prisoner hospital.

10 Both cities belonged to Hungary at the time of the doctors' respective deportations.

11 Ross Halpin, *The Essence of Survival. How Jewish Doctors Survived Auschwitz*, Darlington 2014, 4. Halpin calculates that Jewish prisoner-doctors had a camp lifespan of 20 months in Auschwitz. In contrast, the average Birkenau prisoner's life expectancy could be measured in weeks or months. It is unrealistic to provide greater specificity, given that the determining factors, such as extreme weather conditions and physical condition, varied significantly from month to month, transport to transport. Unfortunately, Halpin's figure, which emerges from a sample of "approximately 48" individuals, is not specific to those who worked in Birkenau (Auschwitz II), as he factors in data from prisoner-physicians who worked in the Main Camp (Auschwitz I), Buna-Monowitz (Auschwitz III), and the subcamps. Furthermore, the figure is skewed, since it counts not only the period spent in Auschwitz, but also the length of time spent in any subsequent camps up until the individual registered in a DP camp, signifying that Halpin considered only the prisoner-physicians who survived. Of course, many did not.

12 The four terms signifying where they worked are used synonymously, as they are in Birkenau survivors' testimonies.

13 Hilberg, *Destruction*, 577. It appears that Perl's description of Grese also informed Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, Chapel Hill 2004, 400.

14 Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz. A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, New York 1960.

forensic pathologist afforded him direct knowledge of Mengele's specific interest in, and experiments on, physically deformed Jews – information which Gilbert subsequently included in his 1985 monograph *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War*.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, studies of Nazi medical conduct in Auschwitz, including Robert Jay Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors* and Ernst Klee's *Auschwitz, die NS-Medizin und ihre Opfer*, are especially dependent on Jewish prisoner-physicians' accounts.¹⁶ Revealing the variety of formats for such testimonies, the former leans heavily on personal interviews, and the latter turns to statements collected in investigations into Nazi crimes. Klee was the beneficiary of so much material, because Allied war crimes investigators quickly recognised in the immediate post-war period that prisoner-physicians could offer a wealth of relevant information and subsequently made a concerted effort to collect testimony from these individuals.¹⁷

Particularly incriminating statements connected the Nazi doctors to the selections performed in the camp hospital. The prisoner-physicians witnessed, and sometimes unwillingly participated in, these practices by which SS doctors condemned dozens, if not hundreds, of Jewish inmates to death during regular visits to the prisoner medical facilities.¹⁸ They thus possessed an acute awareness of the murderous fates that awaited the patients whose illnesses or injuries would require a prolonged hospital stay. Perl's memoir, for instance, describes how the activity brought one or several Nazi medical officers to the clinic, where they "walked through the wards, inquired as to the diagnosis in each case, then called [the] guards, ordered them to strip the patients and after beating, kicking, whipping them to within an inch of their lives, loaded the entire hospital on a truck and sent them to be cremated".¹⁹ In turn, Perl's recollections, as well as those of Lengyel, informed Hilberg's discussion of these lethal events in the hospital.²⁰ Prisoner-physicians' accounts thus became critical sources for researchers writing about Auschwitz-Birkenau's function as an extermination camp (*Vernichtungslager*).

15 Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust. A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*, New York 1985, 719-721.

16 Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York 2000 [1986]; Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz, die NS-Medizin und ihre Opfer*, Frankfurt am Main 1997. Lifton's Birkenau Jewish prisoner-physician sources included Adelsberger (190-192), Aharon Beilin (e.g. 526n61), Lengyel (e.g. 344-345), Nyiszli (e.g. 350-351), Perl (e.g. 345) and Otto Wolken (e.g. 181); and there are also those who go unidentified behind pseudonyms. Among Klee's sources were Odette Abadi (402), Aron Beilin (alternate spelling of Aharon Beilin) (397), Nyiszli (e.g. 481-482), Perl (e.g. 460), Margita Schwalbová (e.g. 298), Marie Stoppelmann (472), Wolken (e.g. 406).

17 For example, in a letter dated 20 May 1946, Major A.K. Mant of the Royal Army Medical Corps' War Crimes Investigation Unit instructed colleagues to collect statements from prisoner-physicians, see The National Archives of the UK, War Office 309/1652 Medical Experiments.

18 In April 1943, Himmler ordered a reprieve for hospital selections for non-Jews. From that point forward, only Jewish patients were subjected to selections, see e.g. Piper, *Auschwitz Prisoner Labor*, 64.

19 Perl, *I Was*, 108 f.

20 Hilberg, *Destruction*, 626. It is interesting to note that neither Hilberg nor Gilbert addressed the prisoner-physicians' coerced involvement in hospital selections. For further discussion about the topic's absence, see Sari J. Siegel, *Treating an Auschwitz Prisoner-Physician. The Case of Dr. Maximilian Samuel*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 28 (2014) 3, 451-453. Not all scholars omitted this important information, however. For example, Lifton includes a chapter entitled "Prisoner Doctors: The Agony of Selections" (*The Nazi Doctors*, 214-225), and Klee addresses the topic in a section called "Häftlingsärzte als Täter und Opfer", *Auschwitz*, 424-432.

Birkenau as an Extermination Camp

Auschwitz-Birkenau has deservedly come to symbolise the Nazis' genocidal project. It was the deadliest site of the Holocaust, and its gas chambers were the final destination for Jews on transports from all across Europe – a fact to which Jewish prisoner-physicians of so many nationalities attest.²¹ While Hilberg could turn to Lengyel's and Perl's memoirs for insight into fatal selections, the women's first-hand knowledge could inform Hilberg of the lethal process only until they lost sight of the trucks that carried the doomed patients to the crematoria. For details as to what happened within these buildings, Hilberg called upon Nyiszli's and Charles Sigismund Bendel's affidavits that war crimes investigations collected in the months and years after liberation.²² As doctors attached to the *Sonderkommando*, the Special Squad of inmates who worked in the crematoria, Nyiszli and Bendel were privy to the killing procedure in the gas chamber and witnessed the aftermath of a gassing. Given that the SS executed *Sonderkommando* units at regular intervals to prevent the spread of such delicate information, relatively few eyewitnesses survived, making Nyiszli's and Bendel's observations particularly valuable.²³

Gilbert also relied on Nyiszli's proximity to the mass murder as a vantage point from which he could report on the complete destruction of the Jewish community of Corfu, Greece.²⁴

In addition to the affidavits gathered in preparation for the Nuremberg trials, scholars could rely on witness statements assembled in the context of criminal investigations in the decades thereafter. As with earlier stages, prosecutors sought the testimony of prisoner-physicians who possessed information that could eventually lead to conviction of Nazi doctors. For insight into the SS physicians' involvement in Birkenau's killing capacity, Klee turned to statements gathered in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, the statement of Slovakian Jewish prisoner-physician Margita Schwalbová, recorded on 7 February 1967, informed him of the camp practice of sending new mothers and their newborns to the gas.²⁵ Through Lengyel's memoir and his own interviews with prisoner-physicians, Lifton learned that the medical functionaries responded to such measures by performing covert abortions or secretly killing newborns in order to save the mother's life.²⁶

Schwalbová's testimony also enabled Klee to address a deadly 'medical' custom by which Nazi camp doctor Hellmuth Vetter ordered all Jewish patients in the *Revier*, even the severely ill, to go to work; anyone who no longer had the strength and therefore chose to remain in the block was sent to the gas chamber.²⁷ In the same collec-

21 To name a few with their memoirs: for the Czech Republic (previously the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia): Gottfried R. Bloch, *Unfree Associations. A Psychoanalyst Recollects the Holocaust*, Los Angeles 1999; for France: Odette Abadi, *Terre de détresse [Land of Distress]*, Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen/Paris 1995; for Germany: Adelsberger, *Auschwitz*; for Greece: Marco Nahon, *Birkenau. The Camp of Death*, Steven Bowman (ed.), Tuscaloosa 1989; for Hungary/Romania: Perl; for Slovakia: Margita Schwalbová, *Elf Frauen. Leben in Wahrheit. Eine Ärztin berichtet aus Auschwitz-Birkenau 1942–1945*, Annweiler/Essen 1994.

22 Affidavit by Dr. Nikolae Nyiszli, 8 October 1947, Nuernberg Military Tribunals Document NI-11710 cited in Hilberg, *Destruction*, 627n42, n43, n45, n48; Affidavit by Dr. Charles Sigismund Bendel, 21 October 1945, Nuernberg Military Tribunals Document NI-11390 cited in Hilberg, *Destruction*, 627n43.

23 For more information on the *Sonderkommando* and discussion of their accounts, see Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears. Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz*, New Haven 2005.

24 Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, 698–699.

25 Statement of Margita Schwalbová, 7 February 1967, Mengele-Verfahren, Band 26, 75 cited in Klee, *Auschwitz*, 298.

26 Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*, 99–101; Lifton's interview with 'Dr. Gerda N.' (a pseudonym), no date provided. Both cited in Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, 224–225. Gisella Perl's memoir also informed Langbein of her involvement in the same practice (Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, 235).

27 Statement of Margita Schwalbová, 7 February 1967.

tion of documents, Klee found French Jewish prisoner-physician Odette Abadi's statement regarding a third 'medical' practice. Abadi (née Rosenstock) revealed that the SS protocol for combatting contagious diseases such as scabies dictated that, when an inmate was found to be infected, the ill person's entire block was emptied and all its occupants sent to the crematoria.²⁸

Birkenau as a Labour Camp

While the camp's deadly gas chambers and its regime of violence understandably attract significant scholarly interest, it is also important to discuss Birkenau's function as a labour camp. Prisoner-physicians offer an effective way to bridge the two dialogues, as these individuals functioned at the boundary between an inmate's life and death, health and sickness, productivity and futility. They worked in the prisoner hospitals from which inmates were sent to their deaths *and* from which other inmates emerged to return to work. Not all *Häftlingskrankenbau* patients received a lethal injection or a trip to the gas chamber.²⁹ Hospital barracks were also places for medical and surgical treatment of the ill and injured (albeit of a decidedly limited nature), and there were even blocks designated for a variety of medical specialties.³⁰ Although conditions often did not promote healing, and, in some cases, actually led to patients contracting new illnesses, these facilities and the prisoner-physicians who staffed them helped return some inmates to labour assignments.³¹

As we have seen, Lengyel and Perl described in horrific detail the brutal treatment, cruel regulations, and tragic fate of their patients selected for the gas chamber from the hospital in BIIC. At the same time, however, their texts yield insight into the importance of labour in Birkenau. For example, focusing only on the prisoners condemned to death in a selection neglects the fates of the women who remained in the hospital. One also needs to consider what happened to women after Perl's aforementioned interventions, namely terminating pregnancies or killing newborns, about which Perl wrote: "After the child had been delivered, I quickly bandaged the mother's abdomen and sent her back to work."³² Perl thus reminds us of the purpose for the women's continued existence in Birkenau – to work. As long as the birth remained secret from the SS, the new mothers had a chance at survival, since they could return to their labour detail, either inside Birkenau or in the surrounding fields, construction sites, or factories. Asking any doctors who read her memoir to suspend their disbelief, Perl declared, "Every one of these women recovered and was able to work, which, at least for a while, saved her life."³³ Productive labour was the key. As soon as a woman's physical condition significantly hampered her ability to work, she lost her value and was thus in great danger of selection for the gas chamber.

Regarding the hospital patients who were initially spared from the gas chamber, some fell victim to subsequent hospital selections; others were able to heal and recu-

28 Statement of Odette Abadi, 9 June 1972, Mengele-Verfahren, Band 10, 101.

29 This statement refers to the years 1943 and 1944. In prior years, the camp hospitals were accurately known as "waiting rooms for the crematoria" (Irena Strzelecka, *The Hospitals at Auschwitz Concentration Camp*, in: Długoborski/Piper [eds.], *Auschwitz*, Vol. 2, 328).

30 Strzelecka, *The Hospitals*, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.), *Auschwitz*, Vol. 2, 310 f.

31 Regarding exposure to other patients' diseases, Lengyel wrote, "Instead of being cured, a patient might contract a new disease in the hospital. Because of the close quarters it was impossible to fight contagion" (122). After the spring of 1943, the Birkenau medical staff was in a better position to help the sick and injured return to a state of productivity (Piper, *Auschwitz Prisoner Labor*, 166).

32 Perl, I was, 81.

33 Ibid., 82.

perate. Given the absence of most avenues of therapy, Perl reasoned that those who recovered from illness or injury in the hospital did so “more by being excused from roll call than through treatment”.³⁴ As Perl indicated, a temporary reprieve from roll call (*Zählappell*) could make a substantial difference, since the procedure, conducted in the early morning and in the evening, typically involved hours of standing outside, regardless of the weather or the inmates’ physical condition.³⁵ Either way, the system the administration had in place provided the formerly incapacitated prisoners with the opportunity to convalesce – a prospect that would be inconceivable at a site designated solely as a death camp. Instead, at least some of the inmates whose health improved could resume their tasks in a camp that concentrated an ever-growing population of Jewish labourers, while its staff simultaneously dispatched hundreds of thousands of Jews to their deaths.

As Abadi revealed above, among that doomed population were inmates who fell victim to the Auschwitz medical officers’ policy that condemned inmates with certain highly contagious diseases (and, at times, those who had been in close proximity to the diseased) to the gas chamber. Lengyel and Perl informed their readers of this decree through their discussion of their successful attempts to undermine it. Both recalled how they cheated this policy by submitting their own blood for testing in place of the blood of those who were to be tested for diseases the doctors already knew the patients had. This practice prevented Mengele’s detection of the typhoid or malaria in these patients and at least delayed deaths that the SS doctor would have ordered immediately, had he known the truth.³⁶ Lengyel subsequently boasted, “[h]ow happy we were when we could deceive him”.³⁷ It is evident that the Nazis’ brutal strategy was meant to prevent the outbreak of epidemics that could spread to the remainder of the prisoners – a population purposely kept alive in order to work.³⁸

Just as there were diagnoses that came with death sentences, there were also ‘safe’ ones. The ailments in this category were not communicable and thus posed no threat of an epidemic that would decimate labour capacity. As a result, camp policy allowed those suffering from such illnesses to remain in the hospital, at least for a short time, so they might have the chance to recover and return to work. Aware of this, Lengyel and Perl purposely entered fake diagnoses on their patients’ charts, so they could stay in the hospital to recuperate from a condition that would have otherwise led to their immediate selection for the gas chamber. For example, Perl wrote of a woman who had just gone through a particularly strenuous labour: “I put her into the hospital, saying that she had pneumonia – an illness not punishable by death.”³⁹

Although the hospital was the hub of medical activities in the Hungarian Women’s Camp, it was not the only location to which prisoner-physicians were assigned. In a 1946 report, Jewish prisoner-physician Dr. Ella Böhm indicated that each block had its own doctor (*Blockärztin*). She recalled how, shortly after she arrived at Birkenau in the spring of 1944, SS physician Dr. Josef Mengele recruited doctors to staff all the barracks in section BIIC, where they were under orders to examine the block’s prisoners for scabies and other infectious conditions.⁴⁰ Böhm, who was appointed as

34 Ibid., 61.

35 For a description of morning and evening roll calls, see Irena Strzelecka, The working day for Auschwitz prisoners, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.), Auschwitz, Vol. 2, 66–69.

36 Ibid., 94; Lengyel, Five Chimneys, 146.

37 Lengyel, Five Chimneys, 146.

38 Also of concern was the spread of the illness from the prisoner population to the SS.

39 Perl, I was, 83.

40 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (OeStA), Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA) E/1797:48 Weisze [sic] Ordner ‘Zeugen’ – Korrespondenz: A-F, Handwritten copy of report by Ella Böhm from 1946, 8.

the *Blockärztin* for Block 17, and her colleagues were then responsible for sending those deemed ill to the hospital block. This initiative to separate the sick from the healthy demonstrates Mengele's desire to curb any further spread of infections and to keep at least some women fit enough for work. The (relative) health of the women who remained in the blocks evidently mattered, as they would likely return to their labour details shortly.

For further discussion of Jewish prisoner-physician sources and their ability to shed light on Birkenau's capacity as a labour camp, we can move beyond Lengyel and Perl and Section BIIC to include Birkenau's entire population of Jewish prisoner-physicians.⁴¹ The largest collection of them was to be found in the men's prisoner hospital camp (*Häftlingskrankenbaulager*). This section, also known as BIIf, was founded in July 1943 for the purpose of reinforcing Birkenau's workforce.⁴² The hospital section held, on average, 2,000 patients and initially contained 15 barracks (with three added later).⁴³ Its medical staff had the responsibility of curing and mending ill and injured inmates from various sections of Birkenau as well as those from Auschwitz satellite camps who were transferred to undergo treatment and then ordered to return to their labor assignments to resume their work in mines, quarries, and factories and on construction sites.⁴⁴ It was split into several departments, and Jewish prisoner-physician Gottfried Bloch, for example, found himself assigned to duty in the surgical department in July 1944.⁴⁵ He worked in the block for minor surgeries, and the one for major surgeries stood adjacent.

Like the *Häftlingskrankenbaulager* (BIIf), the *Quarantänelager* (BIIa) had a named function yet served multiple purposes. The Quarantine Camp did, in fact, operate as indicated, but its central task was to introduce male newcomers to the brutal realities of being Birkenau inmates before they were transferred to the Men's Camp (BIId) or elsewhere.⁴⁶ Jewish prisoner-physician Otto Wolken, who served as a clerk in BIIa, indicates yet a third role, reporting that for 3,824 Jews between 29 August 1943 and 29 October 1944, BIIa functioned merely as a temporary stopover on the way to the gas chamber.⁴⁷ It is only this last facet that identifies Birkenau as a death camp; the first two point to Birkenau's labour camp function. After all, quarantine and behavioural training both imply that the camp administration intended to introduce prisoners to the general camp population, provided that the quarantine period elapsed without the new arrivals' exhibiting symptoms of a feared disease and that they assimilated the brutally inflicted lessons. Not surprisingly, Wolken's numerical records, which he amassed surreptitiously through his position as a clerk, also speak to the medical and disciplinary aspects of the Quarantine Camp. For instance, the approximately 4,000 Jews who were sent from BIIa to BIIf for in-patient

41 The size of this population is currently unknown and will likely remain so for a number of reasons. These include the fact that Nazi documentation of the inmate medical staff is incomplete and that many did not survive and were thus unable to record – either textually or orally – their experiences as Jewish prisoner-physicians. I expect that my (inevitably incomplete) future survey of extant camp files and survivor accounts (e.g., memoirs and legal depositions) will yield a total ranging between 100 and 200.

42 Interview with Waclaw Długoborski, 3 June 2015, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Oświęcim, Poland. He said, "Es mangelte an Arbeitskräften, und deswegen wurde dieses Krankenhaus gegründet." Długoborski worked in BIIf from the summer of 1944 through the camp's evacuation in January 1945.

43 The figure is found in Strzelecka/Petkiewicz, Construction, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.) Auschwitz, Vol. 1, 93. The information on the blocks appears in Danuta Czech, Die Rolle des Häftlingskrankenbaulagers im KL Auschwitz II, in: Hefte von Auschwitz, Band 20, Oświęcim 1997.

44 Długoborski interview.

45 Bloch, Unfree Associations, 153.

46 Strzelecka/Petkiewicz, Construction, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.) Auschwitz, Vol. 1, 94.

47 Figure and dates provided by Otto Wolken, a Clerk in the Quarantine Camp, and cited in Irena Strzelecka, Das Quarantänelager (BIIa), in: Hefte von Auschwitz, Band 20, Oświęcim 1997, 106.

treatment inevitably comprised both individuals who were separated via routine triage and those who required medical attention as a direct result of their ‘introduction’ to Birkenau.⁴⁸

In contrast to their male counterparts, female inmates of Birkenau did not have their own *Häftlingskrankenbaulager*; their hospital was, instead, a collection of blocks within the Women’s Concentration Camp (*Frauenkonzentrationslager* abbreviated *FKL*), which comprised sections BIa and BIb as of July 1943. As former Jewish prisoner-physician Sima Vaisman informs us, by February 1944, the hospital had grown to a size of fifteen barracks – eleven of which formed wards devoted to particular ailments such as dysentery and tuberculosis, as well as to medical specialties like surgery or general medicine.⁴⁹ The presence of such facilities and the trained staff assigned to them seem to indicate that Birkenau was thus not designed entirely to kill Jews. Vaisman, however, challenges this conclusion, as she draws attention to what she and her colleagues lacked: “We have a hospital, we have medical personnel, but [the SS] do not give us any medicine; no cotton, no gauze, nothing with which to make a bandage. What they do give us is so minimal that we can consider it almost nonexistent.”⁵⁰ Here we must recall Perl’s observation that Birkenau’s prisoner-hospital policy, which provided patients with exposure to healers and at least a reprieve from the exhausting and deadly roll calls, could contribute to the recuperation of at least a few sick or injured inmates, even in the face of grossly insufficient supplies and adverse conditions.

Dr. Schwalbová’s account of her experiences in the Women’s Camp hospital reveals that patients did recover from pneumonia and typhus, “as if by some miracle,” and conditions such as severe frostbite improved slowly.⁵¹ She recalls, “These successes give us strength and courage to continue working through the greatest difficulties and almost deadly fatigue.”⁵² Given Birkenau’s central role in the Final Solution, such victories were frequently short-lived and overshadowed by Birkenau’s function as a death camp, where the next hospital selection condemned 105 out of 120 Jewish patients to die in the gas chamber.⁵³ To focus on the 105, though, would be to reinforce Birkenau’s identity as a site for killing. The opposite approach would be to draw attention to the fact that 15 women survived the selection due, at least in part, to the efforts of Jewish prisoner-physicians, whom the camp administration installed to help support Birkenau’s capacity as a labour camp.

While this article is advocating the latter tack, we must not lose perspective on the proportions. The figures from this selection are consistent with the Birkenau SS physicians’ practice of designating significantly more Jews for the gas chamber than for labour exploitation. This pattern was particularly pronounced during the selections conducted at the ramp immediately after a Jewish transport’s arrival, at which point an average of 80 per cent of a transport would be sent to the gas chamber.⁵⁴ Under the

48 Ibid., 114.

49 Sima Vaisman, *A Jewish Doctor in Auschwitz. The Testimony of Sima Vaisman*, Hoboken 2005, 38.

50 Vaisman, *A Jewish Doctor*, 38.

51 Schwalbová, *Elf Frauen*, 10. Original German text: “Und es geschehen fast Wunder in unserem Krankenbau: es genesen ‘Lungenentzündungen’, ‘Fleckfieber’, manchmal auch ‘Dysenterien’, ‘Sepsis’, ‘schwere Frostschäden’, ‘amputierte Zehen’ heilen langsam.”

52 Ibid., Original German text: “Diese Erfolge geben uns Kraft und Mut auch bei größten Schwierigkeiten und fast Todesmüdigkeit weiterzuarbeiten.”

53 Ibid., 11.

54 Piper, *Auschwitz Prisoner Labor*, 58. This figure is specific to transports of Jews. Birkenau administrators were under different orders for “Gypsy” transports, whose members were to be held in the camp, not murdered upon arrival (Piper, *Auschwitz in the Nazi Policy of Enslavement and Mass Murder*, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.) *Auschwitz*, Vol. 3, 55.

influence of severe coercion,⁵⁵ individuals like prisoner-hospital chief doctor Enna Weiß tragically found themselves in the middle of a murderous process. Vaisman writes:

“A commission made up of the head S.S. doctor of the hospital, a few S.S. officers, and our main doctor (woman director), who was a detainee, went into one block after another. Everyone already knew what was going to happen. An enormous panic spread among the Jewish patients. [...] Cold and impassive, with an expression of disgust, the S.S. doctor makes a slight sign of the hand: to the left or to the right. To the left, the numbers are recorded, the death warrant is signed, no hope for a reprieve.”⁵⁶

After her initial assignment as a prisoner-physician in the Women's Camp, where she witnessed such ghastly scenes, Vaisman received orders to work in the *Revier* of *Kanada* (BIIG), which presented her with a completely different juxtaposition of Birkenau's labour and exterminatory functions. Vaisman herself calls BIIG a “work camp,” as the section housed vast storehouses in which the possessions stolen from hundreds of thousands of new arrivals to Birkenau – most of whom were sent straight to the gas chamber – were gathered and sorted.⁵⁷ Here the camp administration required Vaisman's medical skills specifically to maintain a workforce whose tasks stemmed from the fact that Birkenau was the biggest hub of the Final Solution. Through an examination of their accounts, we see that, from one section to the next, Birkenau Jewish prisoner-physicians encountered different dynamics between the camp's pursuit of both exploiting a Jewish workforce and murdering Europe's Jews.

Birkenau as a Transit Camp

In addition to serving as a site for killing and forced labour, Birkenau functioned as a transit camp.⁵⁸ Its location in annexed Eastern Upper Silesia near the border of the General Government and its immense size made Birkenau a logical collection point from which to distribute prisoners from all over Europe to forced labour camps in the Greater German Reich. As with Birkenau's labour facet, prisoner-physicians' relationship to health, and thus individuals' working capacity, made them relevant to the transit function, which was actually also a matter of labour – the only difference being that the worksite was not associated with Birkenau. In turn, historians can find at least traces of this third Birkenau identity in Jewish prisoner-physicians' accounts.

Given that Germany by 1944 desperately required labourers to supplement its own decimated workforce and to turn the tide of the war back in Germany's favour with increased munitions and other industrial output, prisoner-physicians were

55 While the consequences of disobeying orders may not have automatically been immediate execution, the prisoner-physicians could have easily faced the loss of their ‘privileged’ position, which gave them protection from the elements and access to greater food rations. Such a demotion could have meant death. In addition, they would no longer be in a position to utilise their medical knowledge and the meagre supplies at hand in order to aid their fellow prisoners.

56 Vaisman, *A Jewish Doctor*, 42–43.

57 *Ibid.*, 51.

58 Several sections (or parts of sections) in Birkenau functioned as transit camps. For example, in May 1944, several barracks in BIIE (the ‘Gypsy Camp’) were allocated for use by ‘transit Jews’ who had recently arrived from Hungary and the last ghettos in Poland and were awaiting transport to forced labour camps in Germany. Irena Strzelecka/Piotr Setkiewicz, *The Construction, Expansion and Development of the Camp and its Branches*, in: Długoborski/Piper (eds.) *Auschwitz*, Vol. 1, 91. The arrival of massive transports from Hungary and the subsequent strain on the exterminatory process also led to the use of camp BIH (‘Mexico’) as a transit camp, *ibid.*, 99–100.

needed to tend to and assess the health of these crucial workers, either before their departure from Birkenau or after their arrival at their subsequent camp. The former rationale likely motivated Otto Wolken's ongoing work as a prisoner-physician and clerk in BIIa, even after the Quarantine Camp became a transit camp to accommodate the unprecedented influx of Hungarian Jews in the spring and summer of 1944. The section's new occupants were the thousands of Hungarian Jews whom Nazi doctors had deemed 'capable of work' (*arbeitsfähig*) during selections.⁵⁹ There they awaited transfer to forced labour camps in Germany.

The latter reasoning led to prisoner-physician Olga Schwartz's transfer from Birkenau. Schwartz was Perl's best friend and medical colleague. Perl wrote of their painful separation in her memoir; she explained, "In 1944, Olga was appointed to accompany a big transport of workers to Germany as their physician."⁶⁰

A similar reference to the departure of labour transports from Birkenau appears in Jewish prisoner-physician Miklós Nyiszli's memoir. Although it does not speak to the connection between prisoner-physicians and the health of the labourers, Nyiszli's discussion of the fates of his own wife and daughter reveals that Schwartz's transport was just one of many to leave the Hungarian Women's Camp. Officially labelled as a transit camp (*Durchgangslager*), BIIc was a "section [from which] convoys were chosen to be sent to camps farther away".⁶¹ Hoping to save his wife and daughter from the section's pending liquidation, Nyiszli encouraged them to volunteer for one of the "two convoys of 3,000 prisoners [who] were due to be sent from C Camp to western Germany's war plants".⁶² The reference represents another way prisoner-physicians' accounts can provide insight into Birkenau's transit camp function.

Undoubtedly, further evidence exists in Jewish prisoner-physicians' accounts, and such sources would be particularly useful, because their authors were likely to have been involved – directly or peripherally – in the selections that assessed the fitness of potential forced labourers. Such testimony unfortunately remains evasive. There is no reason, however, to limit further investigation of this topic to prisoner-physicians' post-war accounts, especially when the historian must compensate for narrative thrusts that privilege Birkenau's exterminatory capacity. An entirely separate body of sources requires our attention, if we aim to examine Birkenau's alternate identities through prisoner-physician-related documentation.

Directions for Further Research

Working with Contemporaneous Sources

Contemporaneous documents, such as Nazi administrative records and communications, can also shed light on how Birkenau was not necessarily the final terminus for all those who were transported there. For example, a transport list written on 12 December 1944 records the 27 November 1944 arrival of a group of three Jewish women prisoners – Slovakian physician (*Ärztin*) Irene Janowitz and two Hungarian nurses (*Pflegerinnen*) – at 'F.K.L Mauthausen' from 'F.K.L. Auschwitz' and thus indicates that the latter camp, the women's camp in Birkenau functioned as a transit

59 Otto Wolken, *Chronik des Quarantänelagers Birkenau*, in: H.G. Adler/Hermann Langbein/Ella Lingens-Reiner (eds.), *Auschwitz. Zeugnisse und Berichte*, Köln/Frankfurt am Main 1979 [1962], 119–120.

60 Perl, *I was*, 95.

61 Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz. A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, New York 1960, 141.

62 *Ibid.*, 146.

camp.⁶³ These women were not the only ones on the list, however, as the document also announces the simultaneous arrival of eight non-Jewish female prisoners from Ravensbrück. The separate points of origin and the absence of the latter group's professions from the list appear to indicate that the *Ärztin* and the *Pflegerinnen* were dispatched to Hirtenberg – the Mauthausen subcamp listed as their destination – specifically because of their medical training.

One may also draw conclusions about Birkenau's function as a forced labour camp through an examination of various lists from the camp. Two possibilities are lists for the distribution of prisoner-functionaries' bonus vouchers (*Prämienscheine*) and personnel lists. The former often indicate the role of each functionary and thus help us establish the presence of prisoner-physicians in a particular section.⁶⁴ The latter could offer further information, as some of these lists reveal the blocks, or even rooms, to which specific prisoner-physicians, including Otto Wolken, were assigned.⁶⁵

Ideally, the contemporaneous sources should be used in tandem with post-war accounts, because the combination allows the historian to present a more complete picture – an 'integrated history,' of sorts. The vast majority of extant prisoner-physician-related documents from Birkenau were written by or on the orders of the Nazi administration, and it was usually for their own eyes and for the purpose of communication or record keeping. Not surprisingly, survivors' accounts offer a significantly different point of view, as they present the experiences of the intended victims and address the events through a retrospective narrative. Bringing the two types of sources together thus aids the historian in bridging a gap between the Nazis' present and the survivors' past, the (supposed) objectivity of lists and reports and the subjectivity of remembered occurrences.

Moving Beyond Birkenau

Fortunately, both contemporary and post-war sources facilitate the expansion of the Birkenau conversation for the purpose of comparison with subcamps (*Nebenlager* or *Aussenlager*), which fell under the administration of one of several major concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager*) in the Greater German Reich. Examining documents concerned with Jewish prisoner-physicians in such camps reveals that they confronted situations and sometimes engaged in practices similar to those of their counterparts in Birkenau.

The main purpose of these labour camps was to provide a workforce largely for assignments to construction sites, mines, quarries, and factories that would help the German economy, provide raw materials and finished products necessary for the home front and even more so at the battlefield, and pad the pockets of industrialists and factory owners. In light of such goals, the presence of Jewish prisoner-physicians in these locations is not surprising, as they helped to maintain the labour force, even though they more often than not lacked the necessary medications and facilities for the task at hand. For example, in a deposition taken on 9-10 November 1978, former prisoner-physician Dr. Walter Loebner recalls how Auschwitz Chief Garrison Physician (*Standortarzt*) Eduard Wirths recognised him from his prior posts in the Auschwitz Main Hospital and the hospital of the Auschwitz subcamp Budy and

63 Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen, K/4c/1. F.K.L. Mauthausen Schutzhaftlager, Liste der Zugänge vom 27. November 1944 für Aussenkdo. Hirtenberg, 12 December 1944

64 Archivum Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau (APMA-B), D-AuII-3a/1849 (Inventory Number 72532), *Prämienscheine* erhalten, 5 June 1944.

65 APMA-B, D-AuII-5/1a (Inv. 154372), *Pfleger*-Personal BIIa, 15 May 1944.

ordered his transfer from Dora-Mittelbau to its subcamp Ellrich im Harz “to lower the mortality rate there” in March 1945.⁶⁶ And, to ensure Loebner’s success, Wirths promised that he would have the necessary medical equipment on hand; it is unclear, though, whether Wirths kept his word.

Although the subcamps were supposed to achieve productive, as opposed to destructive aims, the prisoner-physicians who staffed their clinics faced situations that mirrored ones that Lengyel and Perl encountered in Birkenau. In an early post-war piece entitled *Der Tod ist keine Strafe*, Loebner discusses his experience in Auschwitz subcamp Budy, to which an SS doctor from the Main Camp would travel to perform selections during which the visitor would condemn to the gas chamber all the inmates with communicable diseases and those whose recovery would require too much time. The dreadful scene that subsequently unfolded featured naked and screaming prisoners dragged onto trucks, whose destinations were the crematoria of Birkenau – a tableau similar to what Lengyel, Perl, and their colleagues witnessed all too frequently in direct view of the killing installations. Faced with this practice, Loebner turned to a strategy the two women also employed: falsifying diagnoses when the truth would have been lethal. He reports that his efforts saved the lives of hundreds of malaria patients.⁶⁷

Another tragic parallel between Birkenau and the subcamps was the practice of infanticide. As we saw above, the delivery of a healthy baby in Birkenau was a death sentence for both mother and new-born. While the subcamps appear not to have implemented an identical policy that mandated the mothers’ deaths, at least in some camps over particular periods, the leadership pursued the newborns’ deaths. Since labour capacity was of the utmost importance, these administrators concluded that the infants, who were likely to undermine the mothers’ productivity, needed to be killed; and, in at least one case (although several more are expected to be found during the examination of further documents), they turned to a prisoner-physician to perform this gruesome task. In a deposition recorded on 25 February 1970, Ela D., formerly a prisoner-physician in the Gross-Rosen subcamp Kratzau, recalls that a camp official told her to make arrangements so that a French woman would not deliver a live baby; she simply refused.⁶⁸ The baby survived in this instance, but Dr. D. mentions that the same official, with the help of a Polish prisoner, poisoned another baby born in the camp.⁶⁹ This serves as a reminder that Birkenau was far from the only camp in which the Nazis pursued the active killing of Jewish babies.

Furthermore, Ela D.’s testimony draws attention to the Nazi practice of ‘medicalised’ killing across the camps.⁷⁰ Jewish prisoner-physicians were in prime position to witness, if not to participate in, this murder of prisoners within the confines of the *Revier* typically utilising medical means (i.e., injections of lethal doses of various

66 OeStA, AVA, E/1797:48, Walter Loebner, Gedächtnisprotokoll von meiner Zeugenaussage am 9. und 10. Nov. 1978 beim Schwurgericht in Hannover gegen den SS-Mann Niemeier aus Hannover, undated, 3.

67 OeStA, AVA, E/1797:48, Walter Löbner, *Der Tod ist keine Strafe*, undated, 3.

68 Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasi-Unterlagen, Archiv der Zentralstelle, MfS – HA IX/11, RHE 124/70 T.2, Deposition of Dr. med. Ela D. (official translation from Czech into German), 25 February 1970, 107. Original German text: “Betreffs dieser Französin sagte mir die Kommandoführerin, ich solle es so einrichten, daß das Kind nicht lebend zur Welt kommt. Ich lehnte dies ab.” The doctor’s name has been anonymised according to the archive’s regulations.

69 Ibid.

70 Note that this overlaps with, but remains distinct from, Robert Jay Lifton’s concept of the “medicalization of killing,” which he defines as “the imagery of killing in the name of healing” in *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York 2000 [1986], 14. It does not imply, in contrast to Lifton’s formulation, that the perpetrators believed their actions to have been in line specifically with healing. Instead, it refers to murders whose motivations were framed in a health- or science-related context.

substances) and justifying the killing along medical grounds (i.e., stating that the victim was *too sick* to perform a necessary task). Or, as Nyiszli describes, Mengele ordered the murders of prisoners for the sake of medical science.⁷¹ Beyond Birkenau, we encounter at least one alleged example of a Jewish prisoner-physician administering the lethal injection himself: Dr. Leon F. in the Neuengamme subcamp of Hannover-Ahlem.⁷² Dr. F.'s case, just like that of Dr. D., reminds us that, presumably under coercion in one form or another, Jewish prisoner-physicians also killed in medical settings; murder was not solely the terrain of the Nazis, nor were these killings limited to places designated as death camps.

Conclusion

Given their close observation of, if not direct participation in, the various aspects of Birkenau in each of its sections, Jewish prisoner-physicians yield tremendous – and largely untapped – insight into the camp. As demonstrated here, their accounts are to be found in memoirs and legal documents spanning from the end of the Second World War to recent decades. Also revealing is the appearance of Jewish prisoner-physicians in Nazi documents, where their presence offers further evidence of their importance to the camp's administration, which harnessed their medical training to aid Nazi aims. As we have seen, an investigation of both types of sources reveals the manifold purposes of Birkenau, and an expansion of our scope to include materials related to Jewish prisoner-physicians in other camps indicates that there were more similarities than differences between these functionaries' activities across many camps. This, in turn, indicates that historians should put Birkenau into conversation with other camps. Through the experiences and assignments of Jewish prisoner-physicians, we can recognize how multiple facets operating simultaneously in Birkenau and concentration camp subcamps catalysed the Nazis' dual missions of exploiting Jewish labour and annihilating European Jewry.

While this article has demonstrated how Jewish prisoner-physicians can contribute to a multidimensional representation of Birkenau and several concentration camp subcamps between 1942/1943 and 1945, the study of this group can extend further back to their assignment to and activities in forced labour camps for Jews in the Warthegau, Upper and Lower Silesia, and the Sudetenland from 1940 until 1943/1944. Furthermore, it can operate on multiple scales, as these expert functionaries' assignments were intimately tied to macro-scale factors, such as the war effort and demand for Jewish labour, which, in turn, influenced micro-scale variables, like the availability of medical supplies and the extent of oversight, which then dictated the Jewish prisoner-physicians' room for manoeuvre. The accounts of the prisoner-physicians, as well as those of inmates who witnessed their activities, can also reveal what transpired within that often severely restrictive space, thus shedding light on a whole spectrum of medical conduct under extreme conditions. The promise of these sources is indeed great.

⁷¹ Nyiszli, *Auschwitz*, 54.

⁷² Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover, Acc. 90/99 Nr. 196/3, Nds. 721 Hannover, Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Dr. med. Leon F. wegen Beihilfe zum Mord, Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Hannover, Verfügung, 18. November 1975.

This article was made possible thanks to the author's tenure as a 2015 VWI Junior Fellow and as a 2015–2016 Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance Fellow at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Quotation: Sari J. Siegel, The Past and Promise of Jewish Prisoner-Physicians' Accounts,
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 89-103.

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ART_Siegel01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Siegel/ART_Siegel01.pdf)

Article

Copy Editor: Carson Phillips

David Lebovitch Dahl

Antisemitism and Catholicism in the Interwar Period

The Jesuits in Austria, 1918–1938

Abstract

The paper examines the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to antisemitism in the interwar period. This question is highly relevant for the study of antisemitism and the Holocaust, because of the strong influence of Catholicism within Austrian society and the prominent role played by Austrians in the Holocaust. The scientific literature has argued that the Austrian context was of central importance to the formation of both antisemitic and anti-antisemitic views among Catholics. However, the dynamics and internal nuances within high ecclesiastical circles have remained understudied. The present research indicates the permanence of an entrenched anti-Jewish tradition as well as the start of a novel reconsideration of this very tradition within the Jesuit Order in Austria. By analyzing tensions in the positions of the Austrian Jesuits, this research contributes to a better understanding of the continuity and rupture in antisemitism in Austria in the period immediately prior to the Holocaust.

This paper addresses the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to antisemitism in the interwar period. This problem is highly relevant for the history of both the Roman Catholic Church and Austria, as well as for the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust, because of the significance of Austrian politics for the Church, because of the strong influence of Catholicism within Austrian society and politics, and because of the prominent role played by Austrians in the Holocaust. The positions of the Austrian Jesuits towards antisemitism in the interwar period must be interpreted within the broader perspective of the relations of the Catholic Church to racism and fascism. The literature on these topics, which has expanded after the opening in 2006 of the Vatican archives of the pontificate of Pius XI (1916–1939), has opened a window on the complex, ambiguous and far from uniform spectre of positions contained under the auspices of Catholicism.¹

No other place better than Austria exemplifies the complexity of the factors influencing the Catholics' positions towards Jews and the ambiguity of the resulting attitudes. In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century, it has been argued, antisemitism was stronger in Austria than anywhere else in Western and Central Europe. Amongst the reasons for this primacy, a particular combination of archaic socio-economic attitudes, cultural conservatism and modern mass political agitation has been cited.² Vienna, with its large, influential Jewish population and its

1 For a recent overview of some of the current debates, see e.g. Robert A. Ventresca, War without End: The Popes and the Jews between Polemic and History, in: Harvard Theological Review, 105 (October 2012) 4, 466–490.

2 Peter Pulzer, The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, in: Patterns of Prejudice 27 (1993) 1, 31–46.

position between Western and Eastern Europe, had a special place in the picture.³ As the eminent historian of antisemitism, Peter Pulzer, has put it: "If any city in the world may claim to be the cradle of modern political antisemitism it is Vienna."⁴ If this is true, it is probably even more certain that in the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twentieth century Austria was among the Catholic Church's most important testing grounds for the modern political exploitation of antisemitism as a means of popular mobilisation.⁵ This is how the Austrian correspondent explained the situation in Hungary and Austria for a broader Catholic audience in the influential Roman Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, in 1884:

"[...] the antisemitic citizen and worker, who before would not know either of mass or preaches or sacraments, and shunned the priest like the plague, now, out of hatred to Jews, attends the Church, shows the Catholic priest his veneration, willingly listens to his admonitions, and ends by becoming a good Christian and caring that his sons are brought up religiously."⁶

Pulzer has underlined Austria's and especially Vienna's homegrown, Catholic, demagogic antisemitic tradition. The *volksrednerische Wiener Stil*, the popular Vienna style, can be traced back to Hans Ulrich Megerle, better known as Abraham a Sancta Clara, who preached against the Jews at the time of the Ottoman wars in the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century, its heirs included Sebastian Brunner, August Rohling, Josef Deckert, and the Jesuits Heinrich Abel (1843–1926) and Viktor Kolb (1856–1928), who carried the tradition into the twentieth century. It was an anti-intellectual way of preaching and speaking that proved successful in gaining the commercial middle classes and the peasants for the Church throughout the social battles against liberals and social democrats in the late nineteenth century.⁷

The Catholic teaching against the Jews had thus formed into a particular culture in Austria, characterised by popular mobilisation, extreme diffusion, and a strong socio-economic element.⁸ In a sense, during the late nineteenth century, Catholicism

3 Bruce F. Pauley, Politischer Antisemitismus im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit, in: Gerhard Botz/Ivar Oxaal/Michael Pollak (eds.), *Eine zerstörte Kultur: Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Buchloe 1990, 221–246; Bruce F. Pauley, German and Austrian Antisemitism in the Interwar Years: Which was the More Extreme?, in: Ingrid Böhler and Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Österreichischer Zeitgeschichtetag 1993. 24. bis 27. Mai 1993 in Innsbruck*, Innsbruck/Vienna 1995, 272–278.

4 Peter Pulzer, The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria, in: Josef Fraenkel (ed.), *The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History and Destruction*, London 1967, 429–443.

5 Giovanni Miccoli, Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo fra Otto e Novecento [The Holy See, the Jewish Question and Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries] in: Corrado Vivanti (ed.), *Storia d'Italia, Gli ebrei in Italia, II Dall'emancipazione a oggi [History of Italy, The Jews in Italy, II From Emancipation until Today]*, Turin 1997, 1369–1574; Enzo Collotti, Antisemitismo e legislazione antiebraica in Austria [Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Legislation in Austria], in: *La legislazione antiebraica in Italia e in Europa. Atti del convegno nel cinquantenario delle leggi razziali [The Anti-Jewish Legislation in Italy and Europe. Proceedings of the Conference on the Occasion of Fiftieth Anniversary of the Racial Laws (Rome, November 17–18, 1988)]*, Rome 1989, 293–318.

6 Unnamed correspondent, Cose Straniere, Austria (Nostra Corrispondenza) 3. Notizie d'Ungheria. La legge sui matrimoni fra cristiani ed ebrei andata in fumo. L'opposizione moderata e il partito conservatore. La nuova legge sulle arti e mestieri. L'antisemitismo [Foreign Affairs, Austria (Our Correspondent) 3. Hungarian News. The Law on Marriages between Christians and Jews Went up in Smoke. The Moderate Opposition and the Conservative Party. The New Law on Arts and Crafts. Antisemitism, in: *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2 (1884), 639–640.

7 Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, New York 1964; Pulzer, *The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria*; Pulzer, *The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism*; Peter Pulzer, Spezifische Momente und Spielarten des österreichischen und des Wiener Antisemitismus, in: Botz/Oxaal/Pollak (eds.), *Eine zerstörte Kultur*, 121–140.

8 Pulzer, *Spezifische Momente*; Peter Eppel, *Zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Die Haltung der Zeitschrift "Schönere Zukunft" zum Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland 1934–1938*, Vienna/Cologne/Graz 1980; Nina Scholz/Heiko Heinisch, *Alles werden sich die Christen nicht gefallen lassen. Wiener Pfarrer und die Juden in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Vienna 2001.

had become synonymous with antisemitism in Austria. Maybe it was only in Austria that it was not an abnormal incident when Deckert ended one of his talks with the statement: "Jeder Christ ist ein geborner Antisemit und jeder Jude ein geborner Antichrist. Amen."⁹ And maybe it was only in Austria that by the 1920s an organisation with the word Christian in its name could be assumed to be antisemitic.¹⁰

The success of the antisemitic Christian Social Party, which won the majority in the Viennese communal elections of the late nineteenth century, divided opinions within the Austrian Catholic Church. It drew support from the lower clergy but was opposed to the Austrian Episcopacy.¹¹ However, despite official complaints from the Austrian bishops, the Vatican decided not to indict the antisemitic line of the party. The Jesuit Cardinal Andreas Steinhuber played a significant role in this decision. His judgment was clear: "To break the force of the Jews, the union of all Christians was necessary. The Holy See cannot enter in merely political questions."¹²

While the socio-economic dimension of Catholic antisemitism was remarkably strong, nationalism had particularly ambiguous effects in Austria. Austria was about 90 per cent Catholic until after the Second World War.¹³ The Catholic Church had a very strong grip of society through the *Amtskirche*, the important Catholic organizations and associations and the Christian social party.¹⁴ The very construction of the corporate state, the Austrofascist *Ständestaat* from 1934 until the *Anschluss* in 1938 and its ideological basis was presumably very much guided by the Vatican, just as the Vatican's ideology of a corporate social order expressed in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* of 1931 was defined in view of its implementation in Austria.¹⁵ However, there was no consensus about what it meant to be a nationalist Austrian or what the Austrian nation state should be like. In the Empire, pan-Germanism had been anti-Catholic and Austrian Catholics had been reluctant concerning German nationalism. With the collapse of the monarchy, the Christian Socials could appear more German without offending other minorities, but the ambivalence remained between allegiance to Habsburgism and pan-Germanism, and this tension acquired new overtones with the emergence of Nazism in Germany.¹⁶

Nazism and Nazi Germany did not have a univocal effect on the attitudes of Austrian Catholics towards antisemitism. Some researchers have even argued that the attitudes of the Catholics were independent from their attitudes towards Nazism. This is supported by the fact that parish presses did not criticise Nazi antisemitism and that individuals and institutions were capable of harbouring both anti-Nazi and

9 Scholz/Heinisch, Alles werden sich die Christen: "Every Christian is a born antisemite and every Jew is a born anti-Christian. Amen."

10 Scholz/Heinisch, Alles werden sich die Christen; Pulzer, The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria.

11 John W. Boyer, Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897, Chicago 1981, 122–183.

12 Giovanni Miccoli, Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo, 1447–1449 [The Holy See, the Jewish Question and Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]; Enzo Collotti, Antisemitismo e legislazione antiebraica in Austria [Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Legislation in Austria].

13 Erika Weinzierl, Zu wenig Gerechte. Österreicher und Judenverfolgung 1948–1945, Graz/Vienna/Cologne 1969.

14 Anton Staudinger, Katholischer Antisemitismus in der Ersten Republik, in: Botz/Oxaal/Pollak (eds.), Eine zerstörte Kultur, 247–270.

15 Rupert Klieber, Quadragesimo anno e lo "Ständestaat" d'Austria Nuova (1934–1938) [‘Quadragesimo anno’ and the ‘Ständestaat’ of the New Austria (1934–1938)], in: Cosimo Semeraro (ed.), La sollecitudine ecclesiale di Pio XI. Alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studio Città del Vaticano, 26–28 febbraio 2009 [Ecclesial Concerns of Pius XI. in the Light of New Archival Sources. Proceedings of the International Study Conference Vatican City, 26–28 February 2009], Vatican City 2010, 347–362.

16 Pulzer, The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria; Pulzer, The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism.

antisemitic or pro-Nazi and anti-antisemitic views at the same time. For instance, in 1939 an Austrian Catholic resistance group declared its opposition to Bolshevism, Nazism and the Jews.¹⁷ Other scholars have argued that Catholics in Austria felt an increased need to compete with Nazism in the 1930s and that this competition gave rise to the promotion of a 'Christian antisemitism'.¹⁸ The distinction introduced by circles within the Church between an 'extreme' and regrettable nationalism and antisemitism and a 'permitted' form of antisemitism gained acceptance not only in Austria, but in Germany and Italy as well.¹⁹ If this type of approach may be called competitive in kind, the hypothesis of a more profound symbiosis between Nazism and Catholicism has been advanced in the case of Germany and Austria. This symbiosis or Catholic racist "syndrome" was distinguished by a series of key values: *Volk*, *Blut*, *Reich*, and *Erbsünde*, which constituted a sacralised language common to both Nazism and German Catholicism.²⁰ A fourth category of reaction is that of profound rejection of racism. From having been the cradle of political antisemitism, Vienna, during the *Ständestaat*, with its widespread discrimination and social exclusion of Jews, became the centre of the most radical criticism from a Catholic perspective of antisemitism in Europe. Such counteraction was expressed in a series of journals edited by devout Catholics, but was not diffused by the clerical hierarchy.²¹

Austria in the 1930s thus gave rise to extreme contrasts in Catholic stances to antisemitism. There is little doubt that the majority of the Catholics, including the ecclesiastical hierarchy, were not among those expressing radical rejection of antisemitism. The radical opponents seem to have been rather a quite marginal minority. The following sections will analyse how these differences and tensions were reflected within the Jesuit Order. The Society of Jesus, by tradition closely connected to the Pope, and relatively independent from the hierarchy, represents a learned elite within the Roman Catholic Church which has been very influential politically and ideologically, less through direct political action than through other scholarly and intellectual channels. The analysis is based on comprehensive research of three main sets of Jesuit sources. The first is the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Together with the German *Stimmen der Zeit*, it was the most important Jesuit journal, and one of the most important Catholic journals, in the German language. The journal was edited by members of the theological faculty of the University of Innsbruck, which was directed by the Jesuit Order, and it was subject to the authority of the Order Superiors. It was written almost exclusively by Jesuits from the Austrian and German provinces of the Society. The second is the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz S.J.*, a quarterly publication edited in Vienna for internal use by the Austrian Jesuits only. The third set of sources is *Das Archiv der österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu*.

Compared to some other important Jesuit periodicals, such as the Italian *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the German *Stimmen der Zeit*, and the French *Études*, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* concentrated on theology and dealt much less with contemporary social and political matters. Observations of immediate relevance to contemporary views on the 'Jewish question' are seldom found in the leading background

17 Scholz and Heinisch, *Alles Werden sich die Christen*.

18 Friedrich Heer, *Gottes erste Liebe. 2000 Jahre Judentum und Christentum; Genesis des österreichischen Katholiken Adolf Hitler*, München 1967; Pulzer, *The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism*.

19 Giovanni Miccoli, *Santa Sede e Chiesa italiana di fronte alle leggi antiebraiche del 1938* [The Holy See and the Italian Church in the Face of the Anti-Jewish Laws of 1938], in: *Studi storici* 29, (1990) 2, 821-902.

20 John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, Cambridge/London 2012.

21 Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*.

articles, but rather – and sparsely – in the literary reviews and short notices, i.e. the rubrics *Literaturberichte* and *Kleine Mitteilungen*. Judging from the printed journal alone, it is improbable that the editors of the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* defined strategies with regard to the ‘Jewish question’. The journal shows considerable variation and contradiction both synchronically and diachronically. The only constant characteristic may be the ambiguity, caution and vagueness with which Judaism, race and antisemitism were treated. Nevertheless, the analysis of the twenty years of publications from 1918 to 1938 does point at some trends and developments.

The presence of a local tradition is palpable from 1918 to 1933. Viktor Kolb was praised for his rhetorical skills and Freiherr Karl von Vogelsang, one of the most prominent exponents of nineteenth century Austrian Catholic antisemitism, was lauded as one of the greatest Catholic social thinkers of all times.²² The survival of nineteenth-century Catholic attitudes towards Jews is apparent for instance in an article on demography in which Jews are described as “hypermodern” because of their alleged support of socially corrosive sexual policies.²³ The general vein of the publication in the years following the First World War is firmly anti-liberal and consistent with a dominant conservative Catholic outlook formed through the latter part of the nineteenth century, of which antisemitism seems to have been an almost self-evident part.²⁴

German nationalism does not emerge conspicuously. In 1920 Father Friedrich Klimke praises Ernst Horneffer’s *Erkenntnis die Tragödie des deutschen Volkes* for its “glowing patriotism” (*Vaterlandsliebe*), while warning that the author might have contributed to tearing Christianity out of the German soul “and thereby robbed it of its deepest vitality” (*Lebenskräfte*).²⁵ A very positive review in 1919 of Eberle, the fervent promoter of Austrian pan-German nationalism, and his sociological ideas about the re-Christianisation of society and politics is another indication of what was acceptable to the editors of *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* after the First World War.²⁶

The pressure from modern racist antisemitism elicited sporadic responses in the journal from the beginning of the period analysed here. Franz Krus, in the same breath as he is labelling the Jews as a corrosive, hypermodern “race”, distances himself from the “fanatical antisemites” who concluded that the Jews’ social and moral destructiveness was aimed deliberately against the “*goyim*”. In fact, Krus argues that the Jews were primarily destroying themselves.²⁷ In 1923, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* replies to criticisms of Saint Ignatius for having been an “almost fanatical friend of the Jews” (*Judenfreund*). In his response, Father Kneller defends Ignatius’ rejection of the “far too exaggerated hatred of Jews” (*Judenhaß*) of the Spaniards of his time. Since the Jews as a people had been “temporarily rejected” (*zeitweise*

22 Karl Pfistermeister, *Ausgewählte Gelegenheitspredigten und Gelegenheitsreden von P. Viktor Kolb S.J.*, Graz 1923, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1924, 131; Rochus Rimml, *Die Gottesbeweise mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die neuesten Ergebnisse der Naturforschung*, von Viktor Kolb S.J., in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1924, 264-265; Josef Biederlack, “Karl von Vogelsang. Zeitwichtige Gedanken aus seinen Schriften. Von A. Lesowsky. 8° (96 S.) Wien 1927, Typograph. Anstalt. S 2.50, geb. S 3.50,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1927, 440.

23 Franz Krus, “Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten. Zur Bevölkerungsfrage,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1918, 392.

24 David Lebovitch Dahl, *Normalization of Antisemitism, 1880–1900: The Case of a Jesuit Community in Rome*, in: *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48 (2014) 1, 46–66.

25 Friedrich Klimke, *Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten, Aus Weltanschauung, Religion und Philosophie, I. Weltanschauung und Religion*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1920, 279.

26 Author unknown, *Kleine Mitteilungen* 2, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1919, 191.

27 Franz Krus, “Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten. Zur Bevölkerungsfrage,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1918, 392.

verstoßen), individual converts had so much more reason to be grateful for being saved from the general shipwreck, and to obliterate the “blemish of their descent” (*Makel der Abstammung*) with particular eagerness. Kneller concludes that Ignatius’ thoughts about the New Christians shows that he had “overcome the national pride of the Spaniards and the pride of the nobility. He used the connection to the Saviour [*Weltheiland*] as the measure in everything.”²⁸ Kneller, in other words, defending the founder of the Order against attacks for having been too friendly towards the Jews, distanced himself from “exaggerated” antisemitism and nationalism while, under the pressure of the attacks, informed by racism, he recognised the permanence of a *Makel der Abstammung* in converts to Christianity.

After Hitler’s rise to power in Germany in January 1933 and the July Putsch in Austria in 1934, the editors’ defence of Church doctrine against “fanatical” or “exaggerated” antisemites intensified. This is evident in three reviews of 1934. In the first, Josef Linder supports the New Testament’s connection to the Old Testament from attacks by antisemites, without however engaging in the slightest criticism of antisemitism itself.²⁹ In the second, Paul Gächter defends the “Semitic” component of the New Testament against attempts by the German Deißmann school to demonstrate the marginal influence of Hebrew. “Nur die semitische Substanz zusammen mit dem griechischen Gewand machen die ganze Fülle und Schönheit des Neuen Testaments aus,” Gächter advocates.³⁰ Thirdly, and most significantly, Gächter reviews Erik Peterson’s *Die Kirchen aus Juden und Heiden*. Gächter praises the book’s reaction to critique raised against the Church for its “original” (ursprünglichen) connection with Judaism. Gächter points out in particular that Peterson in his argument had emphasised “the fact that the salvation and the Apostles came to the Heathens from the Jews”. On the other hand, Gächter expresses reservations concerning Peterson’s treatment of Jews as chosen. Peterson, he argues, could have clarified the concept of “chosenness” (*Auswahl*) better. It was not, Gächter continues, part of the idea in the Old Testament that the Jewish people, “because of its lack of a spiritual attitude made the physical into the only measure of its greatness and thereby became wholly ‘carnal’” (*fleischlich*). Had Peterson explicated this, it would have appeared more understandable to the readers why the Jews had once been considered suitable for the role of God’s people, a role, we may assume Gächter implies, they were no longer fit for. In sum, Gächter supported the “original” connection between Christianity and Judaism, but it appears that he did not display the same approval of such a connection in the present.³¹

After 1934, the Jesuits also concerned themselves more directly with race, and with the problem of eugenics. In 1935, Artur Schönegger reviews Hermann Pfatschbacher’s *Eugenische Ehehindernisse? Eine kirchenrechtliche Studie*. The book discusses

28 Carl Alois Kneller, “Neue Kunde von alten Bibeln. Mit zahlreichen Beiträgen zur Kultur- u. Literaturgeschichte am Ausgange des 16. Jahrh.s. Von Paul Maria Baumgarten. Rom, Via del Olmata. Im Selbstverlage des Verfassers 1922. Franz Aker, Buchdruckerei, Kommissionsverlag Krumbach (Schwabern) Bayern. XXII u. 402 S.,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1923, 585–593.

29 Josef Linder, “Die antisemitische Bekämpfung des Alten Testaments vom Standpunkt katholischer Bibelbeachtung beleuchtet. Von H. Kaupel. Kl. 8° (48 S.) Hamburg 1933, Lettenbauer,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 279–80.

30 “Only the Semitic substance in combination with the Greek vestment makes up the richness and beauty of the New Testament.,” Paul Gächter, “Primi Saggi di Filologia Neotestamentaria. Letture scelte dal Nuovo testamento Greco con introduzione e commento. Von Giuseppe Bonaccorsi M. S. C. Vol. I: Introduzione – Vangeli – Atti degli Apostoli. 8° (CLXVII u. 640 S.) Torino 1933, Società Editrice Internazionale. Lire 25,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 445–446.

31 Paul Gächter, “Die Kirchen aus Juden und Heiden. Von Erik Peterson. 8° (72 S.) Salzburg (1933), Pustet. S. 3, 90, geb. S 5,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 446–447.

whether the Church should support, or actively work to introduce, “eugenic rules preventing marriages” if these were based on modern scientific eugenic studies and would protect the “common good of a people” (*Allgemeinwohl eines Volkes*) from the detrimental influence of marriages with “inferior individuals or the racially different” (*Minderwertiger oder rassistisch Verschiedener*). Pfatschbacher’s conclusion is that the Church could support attempts by the state to segregate *Minderwertige*, provide marriage advice, and “prevent racially mixed marriages” (*Ehehindernissen, auch für Rassenmischehen*). Schönegger’s judgment is characteristically vague and neutral. Pfatschbacher’s treatment was a “first, not yet quite successful account” of how to regulate the difficult questions proposed by “serious eugenics” (*ernste Eugenik*).³² However, this was not in fact the first time the journal referred to the question of eugenics. As early as 1924 the Jesuits had considered the possibility of “a eugenics which is not materialistic, but which is sensible [vernünftigen] and in accordance with Christian morality”.³³

The most explicit discussion of the contemporary ideas of race is laid forth in 1936 by the young Karl Rahner, who was to become one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. In a review of Christel Matthias Schröder’s *Rasse und Religion*, Rahner assumes that “intellectual and spiritual qualities” (*geistiger und seelischer Eigenschaften*) are hereditary, in the sense that “a human being has determinate intellectual qualities because he descends from determinate parents”. However, humans are not univocally determined by their “genes” (*Erbanlage*). Therefore, although there are different races, a fact tacitly acknowledged by Rahner, and different religions, there is no causal connection between race and religion. As a consequence, the idea of a clash between an “Indo-Germanic” and a “Near-Eastern-Semitic” “world of belief” (*Glaubenswelt*), is “completely untenable” (*völlig unhaltbar*).³⁴

Simultaneously, however, with the acceptance of some of the lessons of contemporary ‘racial science’ (*Rassenkunde*) apparent in both Schönegger and Rahner, other Jesuits, addressing current debates in the field of linguistics, underlined the unity of humankind. In two articles of 1926 and 1936, Fathers Dorsch and Perzl both argued that although modern linguistics had described some larger linguistic families, they had not denied the interconnectedness between these families. Race was not a factor in linguistics, they argued, emphasising that following the Catholic dogma of “original sin” (*Erbsünde*) and “salvation” (*Erlösung*) the unity of humankind was indisputable.³⁵

In the second half of the 1930s, the surge of Nazi antisemitism seems to have caused the editors of the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* to approach the ‘Jewish question’ in unprecedentedly vague terms. Within the general cloud of ambiguity however, two contradictory tendencies may be hypothesised, one more accommodating towards racism, the other reacting in defence of Jews.

32 Artur Schönegger, “Eugenische Ehehindernisse? Eine kirchenrechtliche Studie. Von Hermann Pfatschbacher. 8° (143 S.) Wien 1933, Mayer, M. 4.” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1935, 492-493.

33 See the review of Hermann Muckermann, *Kind und Volk; Der biologische Wert der Treue zu den Lebensgesetzen beim Aufbau der Familie*, Freiburg 1921, in: Albert Schmitt, *Literaturberichte, A Übersichten, Moralthologie*, 5, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 1924, 96-97.

34 Karl Rahner, Christel Matthias Schröder, *Rasse und Religion*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 1936, 282-287.

35 Emil Dorsch, Alb. Drexel, *Die Frage nach der Einheit der Menschengeschlechtes im Lichte der Sprachforschung*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1926, 290-292; Johann Perzl, *Die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes im Lichte der neueren sprachwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1936, 120-122.

Representative of the first tendency is Josef A. Jungmann's review of the booklet *Kirche im Kampf*, published in 1936 by the Austrian Catholic Action. Included in that publication was a contribution by Father Georg Bichlmair of the Austrian province of the Society of Jesus. His article, *Der Christ und der Jude*, a reprint of a lecture arranged by the Viennese Catholic Action, is widely cited for its accommodation of racist antisemitism.³⁶ Among other things, Bichlmair, who later became the leader of the Austrian Jesuit Province, had proclaimed that Jews belonged to a different race than the German people and, with a formulation that brought him unwanted fame, that the Jews' "apostasy" might have rendered the improvement of their "bad genes" (*schlimmen Erbanlagen*) more difficult.³⁷ Jungmann, who directed the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* almost uninterruptedly from 1927 until 1963, defends his fellow Jesuit's essay as a "speech which is clear in its principles and which has already been the subject of numerous considerations" (*prinzipienklaren Rede, die schon mehrfach Gegenstand von Erörterungen geworden ist*).³⁸

Token of the second tendency are three articles written by Peter Browe on persecutions of Jews in the Middle Ages. The first, published in 1937, is a short review of a book written in English by Arthur Lukyn Williams on the Christian *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. Although the review is rather formalistic, it appears that Browe shows considerable tolerance towards Williams' critical approach. Browe does not approve of Williams' statement that Peter the Venerable's treatment of Jews had been "ignorant". However, Father Browe concedes that this great Church reformer had been "no friend of the Jews" and had had "no understanding of the Talmud".³⁹ In 1938, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* published Browe's seventy-page essay, *Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter*, which was divided into two parts. The article was a serious scholarly treatment of pioneering quality. Browe is not free from apologetic notions and contamination of racist terminology. In the introduction, he states that it was only with the establishment of Christian rule that Jews were reduced to second class citizens in European societies.⁴⁰ Yet later he writes that counteraction and persecutions had not started until the Jews became rich and powerful and endangered the Christians.⁴¹ Describing the rules introduced by German cities against Jews, he writes that the city councils used plague epidemics and other events as pretexts for ridding themselves of "rassefremden und verhaßten Gäste".⁴² Nevertheless, his analysis of the materialistic and indefensible motives of Christian persecutors is remarkably radical. In particular, Browe's discussion of the conduct of the clergy and papacy amounts to a perhaps unprecedented reconsideration at this level of the persecutions of Jews by the Christian church hierarchy. Thus, Browe states that, although the clerics had not wanted to instigate pogroms, their continuous politics of segregation of Jews, of presenting Jews as a danger to Christians and as persecutors of Christ and of the Church, "at the moment when Jew beaters (*Judenschläger*) went through the country or a heated atmosphere prevailed, must have aroused the spirits even more and encouraged to excesses".⁴³ Browe ends his discussion by judging that

36 Heer, Gottes erste Liebe; Weinzierl, Zu wenig Gerechte; Eppel, Zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz; Connelly, From Enemy to Brother.

37 Clemens Holzmeister (ed.), *Kirche im Kampf*, Vienna 1936, 157, 165.

38 Josef A. Jungmann, *Kirche im Kampf*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1937, 156-157.

39 Peter Browe, "A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*. A Bird's-eye view of christian [sic] Apologiae until the Renaissance, 8° (XVII u. 428 S.) Cambridge 1935, University Press. Sh. 25," in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1937, 124-126.

40 Peter Browe, *Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1938, 197.

41 Ibid., 198.

42 Ibid., 207-208.

43 Ibid., 230-231.

the persecutions had strengthened the Jews and their collective spirit and separated the Jews even more from the Christians and thereby obtained the opposite effect to the one desired.⁴⁴ Be it veiled and indirect, there is little doubt that the choice of writing and publishing these articles at this historical moment was meant as a message to be interpreted against the background of the contemporary political situation, a message to the Catholics not only not to support violent persecutions but also not to preach contempt.

The *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* and the *Archiv der Österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* provide perhaps quantitatively less material illustrating the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to the 'Jewish question' in the interwar period than the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Nonetheless, these two other sets of sources complement the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, qualifying the lines of analysis laid forth above.

The *Nachrichten* maneuvered on quite a different level compared to the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. While the latter was published by the elite of Jesuit scholars in Austria and Germany, the *Nachrichten*, although the authorship is mostly not specified, seems to have been written by a broad variety of fathers of the Austrian province. The topics treated were of a much more practical nature, and it very seldom touches upon ideological or political issues. The sparse remarks of direct relevance, however, confirm two points: the persistence of a conservative anti-liberal tradition throughout the period and the shock within the Austrian province induced by the July Putsch in 1934.

The anti-liberal tradition is revealed by occasional remarks concerning what were considered the main political concerns of the time, namely Bolshevism, Nazism and Freemasonry, as well as by references to Heinrich Abel. Abel's monument was erected on 3 October 1937 in the square in front of the *Universitätskirche* with the participation of outstanding representatives of the City of Vienna, the Viennese Church hierarchy, and Austrian President Miklas, who personally attended the inauguration and held the commemorative speech.⁴⁵ A direct indication of the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuit community towards the 'Jewish question' is to be found in the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ*'s reaction to Bichlmair's speech of 1936. In a report of recent Jesuit activities in Vienna, the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* states:

"Meanwhile, the great stir over the speech, *Der Christ und der Jude*, has settled again. However, P. Bichlmair had to leave the position of President of the *Wiener Pauluswerk*, since the cashier, a baptised Jew and rich factory owner, declared that he did not want to work together with a disguised National Socialist any longer. Interestingly, the stir was greater among some converts than among unbaptised Jews. After the speech, the registrations for baptism fell somewhat, but since November they have started to rise again."⁴⁶

The *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* does not go into detail concerning the contents of the speech, nor does it support it in explicit terms. However, the editors could have chosen to keep silent regarding the controversy or to take a more defensive stance. The offensive remarks concerning the reaction of baptised Jews is a

44 Peter Browe, Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter (Fortsetzung u. Schluß), in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1938, 384.

45 Author unknown, P. Abel-Denkmal in Wien, in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (September-October 1937), 42-43.

46 Author unknown, Aus unseren Häusern, Wien, I (Universitätskirche), in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (June-December 1936), 9.

sign that the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* did not distance itself from the most controversial points in Bichlmair's speech.

Nevertheless, it is clear from two long reports from 1934 that the Austrian Jesuit Province suffered a severe shock during the July Putsch and that opposition towards National Socialism was strong within the Province.⁴⁷ Research of the *Archiv der österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* confirms the coexistence within the Austrian Jesuit community of ingrained anti-Jewish attitudes and strong anti-Nazi sentiment. The example of Georg Bichlmair epitomises the complexity of the positions of the Jesuits in Austria. Scholarly literature has not been at ease explaining Bichlmair's actions. It is well known that the same Bichlmair who had talked about the Jews' "schlimmen Erbanlagen", "bad genes", in 1936, later promoted the *Erzbischöfliche Hilfsstelle für nichtarische Katholiken* in Vienna, running a personal risk in order to save 'non-Aryan' converts to Catholicism from persecution. He was arrested by the Gestapo in 1939 and confined to Beuthen.⁴⁸ But Bichlmair had defended Jews much earlier. On Christmas day 1931 Bichlmair held a radio talk, discussing how injustice, silence and defamation were destroying peace in society. The solution he proposed was the preaching of love and the example he gave was the denunciation of hatred against the Jewish people.⁴⁹

The examples of Bichlmair and other Austrian Jesuits suggest that attitudes towards Jews and attitudes towards Nazism were not correlated in any unequivocal way. However, for a better understanding of the tensions between the Jesuits' positions, more research is needed. This study indicates the presence of a well-established anti-Jewish practice among the Jesuits in Austria and the occurrence of a shock in 1934, after which Jesuit voices began questioning traditional Catholic attitudes towards Jews. It might be that the attitude of the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* was more representative of the rank and file of the Austrian Jesuit community than the elaborations of Browe and a few other intellectual Jesuits in the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Only a minority might have shared Browe's urge to reconsider the entrenched anti-Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, the reactions of this minority are crucial for the understanding of the shifts in attitudes towards Judaism that occurred within the Roman Catholic Church in the 1930s and which foreshadowed the new doctrinal approaches of the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁰

47 Author unknown, Der Juliputsch 1934 in St. Andrä i. Lav., in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (January-March 1935), 8-11; Author unknown, Der Juliputsch 1934 in St. Andrä i. Lav. (Schluß), in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (April-June 1935), 4-7.

48 Connelly, From Enemy to Brother.

49 Archiv der Österreichischen Provinz SJ, Nachlass Bichlmair, Kleine Schriften, Friedenstimmen I. Friede auf Erden. Rundfunk-Weihnachtsrede von P. Georg Bichlmair S.J. Wien, 19 January 1932.

50 Connelly, From Enemy to Brother.

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Quotation: David Lebovitch Dahl, Antisemitism and Catholicism in the Interwar Period.
The Jesuits in Austria, 1918–1938, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods,
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ART_Lebovitch-Dahl01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2016-1/2016-1_ART_Lebovitch-Dahl/ART_Lebovitch-Dahl01.pdf)

Article

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Unheimliche Heimat

Triest als Erinnerungsraum

Abstract

The region around Trieste forms a microcosm of the contradictory impulses that have defined Italian memory culture since 1945. The tension between commemoration and a rehabilitation of fascism is especially visible in two rival sites of memory: the Risiera di San Sabba, a former concentration camp, and the Foiba di Basovizza, which commemorates the victims of Yugoslav partisans. Both sites present an exculpatory version of Italian history that casts Italians as innocent victims of external aggression and glosses over the issues of collaboration and enforced Italianisation as well as the fascist policies of racial hygiene. A counterpoint to this dominant narrative may be found in the literary works of regional authors with Slovenian, Croatian and Jewish backgrounds. They bring repressed aspects of the region's history and memory to light and recover the biographies of those who have been forgotten or excluded. Trieste is a paradigm case of „the historical uncanny“: a palimpsest of repressed memories that persistently reappear to disrupt and disturb the city and its historical self-image.

Zum ersten Mal bin ich im Sommer 2007 nach Triest gefahren. Ich war mit meinen Eltern in Italien unterwegs, eigentlich eine Urlaubsreise, aber für mich war es eine erste Sondierung für mein Dissertationsprojekt, in dem ich mich mit der Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg und den Holocaust in Deutschland und Italien beschäftigen wollte. Wir besuchten zunächst Ferrara, und ich machte mich auf die Suche nach Spuren der traumatischen Geschichte der Juden von Ferrara, die der Schriftsteller Giorgio Bassani in seinen Romanen und Kurzgeschichten so eindrücklich beschrieben hat. Viel fand ich nicht. Die einzige noch existierende Synagoge, die nun auch ein Museum ist, war geschlossen. Zu beiden Seiten des Einganges sind marmorne Gedenktafeln angebracht, mit den 96 Namen der Ferrareser Juden, die in deutschen Konzentrationslagern umkamen. Dann besichtigte ich auch die Gedenkstätte im ehemaligen Konzentrationslager Fossoli bei Carpi, ein beklemmender Ort mit Wandzeichnungen in schwarz und blutrot, die alptraumhafte Szenen aus den Lagern überlebensgroß darstellten. Als ich mich bei einer Mitarbeiterin der Gedenkstätte etwas näher nach der Erinnerungsarbeit und Gedenkstättenpädagogik erkundigen wollte, wurde mir nahegelegt, mich als Deutsche in Deutschland über Erinnerungsarbeit zu informieren. Offensichtlich betrachtete sie den Holocaust und die Erinnerung daran als ein hauptsächlich deutsches ‚Problem‘. Schon fast auf dem Heimweg beschlossen wir, noch einen Abstecher nach Triest zu machen. Dieser erste kurze Besuch hat einen tiefen Eindruck bei mir hinterlassen, und wären wir nicht nach Triest abgezweigt, hätte ich dieses Projekt wohl aufgegeben. Erst durch den Besuch in Triest begann ich zu verstehen, warum das was ich suchte so schwer zu finden war, und dass genau diese Schwierigkeit zum Gegenstand meiner Forschung werden musste.

Es fällt mir schwer, in Worte zu fassen, was genau mich an Triest so faszinierte. In meinem Buch¹ habe ich versucht, es mit dem Bild der „unheimlichen Heimat“ zu erfassen: Eine Gleichzeitigkeit von Vertrautem und Fremdem, Sichtbarem und Unsichtbarem. Während die glanzvolle Vergangenheit von Triest mit antiken Ruinen, dem mittelalterlichen Schloss, der beeindruckenden Uferpromenade und der Piazza Unità d'Italia in ihrer habsburgischen Pracht geradezu überpräsent war (zumindest, wenn man den Wegweisern um und in der Stadt Glauben schenkte), war die Geschichte des Faschismus, der deutschen Besatzung, und des Kalten Krieges, welche die Stadt mindestens genauso geprägt haben, auf den ersten Blick völlig unsichtbar. Zwei Orte wollte ich unbedingt besichtigen, die Risiera di San Sabba, ein ehemaliges Konzentrationslager, und die Foiba di Basovizza, die an die Opfer jugoslawischer Partisanen erinnert. In der Risiera di San Sabba, einer ehemaligen Reismühle, wurden zwischen 1943 und 1945 tausende Juden, Slowenen, Kroaten und italienische Antifaschisten gefangen gehalten und von dort in Vernichtungslager deportiert. Die Risiera war das einzige Konzentrationslager in Italien mit einem Krematorium, und es fanden dort auch Erschießungen und Vergasungen statt.² Ein beträchtlicher Teil des Gebäudes ist erhalten geblieben und fungiert heute als Gedenkstätte. Man könnte sie durchaus als einen der wichtigsten Orte der Erinnerung in Italien bezeichnen. Nur gab es für die Risiera weder Wegweiser noch sonstige Informationen oder Orientierungshilfen. Im trostlosen und labyrinthartigen Industriegebiet im Süden der Stadt angekommen, fiel auch noch unser Navigationsgerät aus und zeigte nur noch ein undefinierbares grünes Niemandsland an. Wir fragten mehrere Passanten nach dem Weg zur Risiera, aber keiner wusste wo oder was das war. Erst nach einigen Versuchen konnte es uns jemand erklären. Ähnlich erging es uns bei der Foiba di Basovizza. Die Gedenkstätte befindet sich nur wenige Kilometer außerhalb von Triest, mitten in den wildromantischen Karsthügeln. Der Abzweiger von der Landstraße zur Gedenkstätte ist jedoch so klein und unscheinbar, dass wir zunächst daran vorbeifuhren. Im Jahr 2007 waren diese Erinnerungsorte also geradezu buchstäblich nicht auf der Landkarte: Weder auf der touristischen oder geografischen, noch auf jener der italienischen Erinnerungslandschaft. Aber diese scheinbare Verborgenheit verbarg ihrerseits wieder etwas: Einen tiefgreifenden Kultur- und Erinnerungskampf, der in den neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhundert begonnen hatte und gerade in dieser Zeit seinen Höhepunkt erreichte, und in dem es um zwei unterschiedliche, von diesen beiden Gedenkstätten verkörperte Versionen der italienischen Geschichte, Erinnerung und Identität geht.

Wie ich im Folgenden zeigen werde, verbergen diese beiden konkurrierenden Versionen ihrerseits wieder eine dritte Erinnerung. Beide präsentieren nämlich ein entlastendes Geschichtsbild, das Italiener einerseits als Opfer des Nationalsozialismus und andererseits des Tito-Kommunismus darstellt, sich jedoch über die Politik der Rassenhygiene des italienischen Faschismus und die Zwangsitälianisierung der Slowenen und Kroaten genauso ausschweigt wie über die Kollaboration mit den deutschen Besatzern. Spuren dieser dritten Erinnerung, in der es um Fragen der Schuld, Verantwortung und Täterschaft geht, sind in der Literatur, dem Theater, oder der Kunst zu finden. Zum Schluss werde ich daher literarische Werke von slowenischen, kroatischen oder jüdischen Autoren vorstellen, die ein Gegengewicht zum offiziellen Diskurs bilden.

1 Susanne C. Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny. Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory*, New York 2015.

2 Vgl. Ferruccio Fölkel/Frediano Sessi, *La Risiera di San Sabba* [Die Risiera di San Sabba], Milano 2001.

Unheimliche Heimat

Die eben beschriebene Wechselwirkung zwischen dem Heimlichen und dem Offenbaren, dem Bekannten oder Bewussten und dem Verdrängten, macht Triest zu einem Paradebeispiel der „unheimlichen Heimat“. Das Unheimliche wurde bekanntlich von Sigmund Freud in seinem gleichnamigen Aufsatz von 1919 konzeptualisiert. „Unheimlich“ ist hier das Gegenteil von „heimlich“ (heimelig, heimisch), und man könnte somit annehmen, dass etwas unheimlich ist weil es fremd und unbekannt ist. Diese Erklärung ist jedoch zu einfach, denn, wie Freud mit Hilfe einer etymologischen Untersuchung zeigt, kann das Wort „heimlich“ auch die entgegengesetzte Bedeutung haben, im Sinne von „geheim“, was es wiederum gleichbedeutend mit dem Wort „unheimlich“ macht. Das Wort „heimlich“ enthält also bereits sein eigenes Gegenteil. Und genau diese unauflösbare Verwicklung von „heimlich“ und „unheimlich“, vom Offenbaren und Verborgenen, bezeichnet Freud als den eigentlichen Kern des Unheimlichen. Es ist „wirklich nichts neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozess der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist“.³ Freuds Begriff bezieht sich in erster Linie auf die individuelle Psyche, aber man kann die Struktur des „Unheimlichen“ auch auf Gruppen ausweiten, besonders wenn es um Fragen der Erinnerung und Identität geht. Die Worte „heimlich“ und „unheimlich“ enthalten außerdem das Wort „Heim“, die Wurzel des Wortes „Heimat“. Die Heimat ist ein Ort, an dem man sich zu Hause fühlt, an dem man verwurzelt ist und wo man dazugehört. Die Heimat ist somit ein Orientierungspunkt für die eigene Identität. Letztendlich ein utopischer Ort, wird die Heimat zur Projektionsfläche für Sehnsüchte und Bedürfnisse (zum Beispiel die Sehnsucht nach der Kindheit, nach Geborgenheit, Sicherheit, Vollkommenheit, Homogenität). Um dies zu ermöglichen, muss alles was dieses Idealbild der Heimat stört, alles Fremde und Unangenehme, ausgeblendet und verdrängt werden.⁴ Weil dem Begriff der Heimat ein Akt der Verdrängung zu Grunde liegt, hat sie das Potenzial, unheimlich zu werden wann immer das Verdrängte wiederkehrt.

Besonders wenn wir uns die tumultuöse Geschichte von Triest im 20. Jahrhundert ansehen wird die Idee einer idyllischen, homogenen und unwandelbaren Heimat unhaltbar. Die Stadt und ihre Region sind gezeichnet von der Nähe zur Grenze, von unüberbrückbaren Gegensätzen, von historischen Brüchen und ethnischen Konflikten. Zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts befand sich Triest im Herzen des Österreich-Ungarischen Kaiserreiches, in den 1920er-Jahren wurde es eine Bastion des faschistischen Italiens. Danach wurde es vom Deutschen Reich annektiert, bis es zuerst von der jugoslawischen Armee und dann von den Alliierten befreit wurde. Nach 1945 wurde Triest zu einem Brennpunkt des Kalten Krieges, bis es 1975 endgültig Italien zugesprochen wurde. Selbst diejenigen Einwohner der Stadt und Region, die nie von dort weggegangen waren, hätten im Laufe ihres Lebens also möglicherweise drei oder gar vier verschiedene Staatsangehörigkeiten haben können. Wegen seiner Lage an der Grenze wurde die italienische Identität von Triest immer wieder in Frage gestellt. Genau deshalb ermöglicht uns Triest einen einzigartigen Einblick in die italienische Erinnerungs- und Identitätspolitik. Jeder Versuch, die Menschen dieser Grenzregion in homogene Gruppen wie beispielsweise ‚Italiener‘ und ‚Slawen‘ einzuteilen, wäre eine Verleugnung, oder besser eine Verdrängung ihrer Komplexi-

3 Sigmund Freud, Das Unheimliche, in: Anna Freud (Hg.), Gesammelte Werke: chronologisch geordnet, Band 12, London 1947, 229-268, hier 243.

4 Vgl. Peter Blickle, Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland, Rochester, New York 2002 und Knittel, Historical Uncanny, 250-252.

tät. Genau deshalb ist die Frage nach der Erinnerung in Triest und Umgebung eine zutiefst politische. Das lässt sich an den beiden Gedenkstätten veranschaulichen, die zwar unterschiedliche Aspekte der Vergangenheit betonen, aber gleichzeitig eine rein italienische Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Region erzählen.

Orte und Tage der Erinnerung

Die Risiera di San Sabba wurde im Jahr 1965 zum Nationaldenkmal erklärt und 1975 nach einem Design des Triestinischen Architekten Romano Boico zur Gedenkstätte umgebaut.⁵ Jährlich kommen mehr als 100.000 Besucher, hauptsächlich Italiener, von denen mehr als die Hälfte Schulklassen sind. Die Einheimischen besuchen die Risiera meist nur am 25. April, dem Jahrestag der Befreiung Italiens, um das Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges zu feiern, und am 27. Januar, dem *Giorno della memoria*, dem Internationalen Holocaustgedenktag, um der Opfer des Holocaust, aber auch der politischen Häftlinge und Kriegsgefangenen in deutschen Konzentrationslagern zu gedenken.⁶ Von den Orten, welche die jüngere Geschichte Triests erzählen, war die Risiera lange der mit den meisten Besuchern. In den vergangenen 20 Jahren, und besonders seit 2007 hat sich das geändert. Die Foiba di Basovizza, nur einige Kilometer von der Risiera entfernt, lockt nun auch tausende Besucher pro Jahr an. Basovizza ist das Nationaldenkmal für die Opfer der Massentötungen, die im und unmittelbar nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg durch jugoslawische Partisanen in Istrien und in der Gegend um Triest ausgeführt wurden. Die Opfer, hauptsächlich, aber nicht ausschließlich Italiener, wurden dabei in Karsthöhlen, *foibe* genannt, geworfen. Das Wort *foiba* (Plural *foibe*) war ursprünglich ein geologischer Begriff für unzugängliche, durch Wassererosion entstandene Senklöcher oder Karsttrichter. 1943 wurde der Begriff durch die faschistische Presse übernommen und im Zusammenhang mit den jugoslawischen Massentötungen verbreitet. Seither sind diese unter dem Sammelbegriff *le foibe* bekannt. Während die historischen Quellen die Zahl der Opfer auf 1.500 bis 2.000 schätzen, sind die Zahlen, die in den Massenmedien zirkulieren, viel höher; sie liegen zwischen 10.000 und 30.000.⁷ Die Foiba di Basovizza wurde 1992 zum Nationaldenkmal erklärt und 2006 bis 2007 zur Gedenkstätte ausgebaut. Die triestinische Tageszeitung *Il Piccolo* hat für den Zeitraum April 2008 bis März 2014 mehr als 500.000 Besucher vermeldet.⁸ Wie bei der Risiera sind die meisten Besucher Italiener, und oft gehen die Schulklassen, die die Risiera besuchen, am gleichen Tag auch nach Basovizza. Dennoch hat Basovizza seit einigen Jahren mehr Besucher als die Risiera.

Die Foiba di Basovizza ist auch der zentrale Ort für die Gedenkfeierlichkeiten am *Giorno del ricordo*, dem 10. Februar, einem unlängst eingeführten nationalen Gedenktag, der den Opfern der *foibe* und den sogenannten *esuli* gewidmet ist, den hun-

⁵ Vgl. Massimo Mucci, *La Risiera di San Sabba. Un'architettura per la memoria* [Die Risiera di San Sabba. Eine Erinnerungs-Architektur], Gorizia 1999.

⁶ Für das Jahr 2015 wurde eine Rekordzahl von 112.000 Besuchern vermeldet. Vgl. <http://www.risierasansabba.it/giorno-della-memoria-2016/> (24. Februar 2016). Für eine ausführliche Besprechung des *Giorno della memoria*, seines Ursprungs und der Medienberichterstattung in den Anfangsjahren vgl. Robert S. C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Collective Memory: Il Giorno della memoria*, 27 January 2001, in: *Modern Italy* 11 (2006) 2, 167-188 und ders., *The Holocaust in Italian Culture. 1944-2010*, Stanford 2012, 188-206.

⁷ Vgl. Marta Verginella, *Geschichte und Gedächtnis. Die Foibe in der Praxis der Aushandlung der Grenzen zwischen Italien und Slowenien*, in: Luisa Accati/Renate Cogoy (Hg.), *Das Unheimliche in der Geschichte. Die Foibe. Beiträge zur Psychopathologie historischer Rezeption*. Berlin 2007, 25-76, hier 56-57.

⁸ *Il Piccolo*, 23. April 2014.

derttausenden Italienern, die nach 1945 aus Istrien und Dalmatien ausgewandert sind.⁹ Die Nähe des *Giorno del ricordo* zum nur einige Tage vorher stattfindenden *Giorno della memoria*, sowie die starke Ähnlichkeit der Namen ist ganz offensichtlich beabsichtigt und von entscheidender Bedeutung. Dem Modell des internationalen *Giorno della memoria* nachempfunden, ist der *Giorno del ricordo* ein spezifisch italienischer Gedenktag, der die Italiener, die in den *foibe* umgekommen sind, als Opfer eines Genozids präsentiert. Der populäre Slogan „Infoibati perché italiani“ macht dies deutlich: Das Verb *infoibare* bedeutet jemanden in eine *foiba* werfen, übersetzt heißt der Slogan also „In die *foibe* geworfen weil sie Italiener waren“. In diesem Zusammenhang wird von den Opfern der *foibe* auch oft von Märtyrern gesprochen, und viele italienische Städte, einschließlich Triest, haben eine Via Martiri delle Foibe. Es wird also nicht nur die Unschuld der Opfer betont, sondern auch die stark religiöse Dimension des *foibe* Erinnerungsdiskurses. Nach Silvio Berlusconi Wahlsieg im Jahr 1994 begann eine Kampagne, die *foibe* als den ‚italienischen Holocaust‘ zu etablieren, als einen Genozid an den Italienern, den die italienische Linke bisher verschwiegen und verdrängt hatte.¹⁰ Dieses Opfernarrativ wird von Darstellungen in den Massenmedien, in Büchern, im Film und im Fernsehen verstärkt, die sich offensichtlich an die Ikonografie des Holocaust anlehnen: Zum Beispiel das alljährlich wiederkehrende Poster für den *Giorno del ricordo*, das ein kleines Mädchen mit einem Koffer zeigt. Ein weiteres Element dieser Poster ist eine Landkarte von Norditalien, auf der die verlorenen Gebiete Istriens und Dalmatiens in roter Farbe eingezeichnet sind. Dies unterstreicht den Anspruch Italiens auf diese Gebiete, und in der Tat schwingt dieser als Unrecht empfundene territoriale Verlust immer in den Gedenkveranstaltungen mit: Der 10. Februar, das Datum des *Giorno del ricordo*, ist der Tag, an dem im Jahr 1947 Italien diese Gebiete offiziell an Jugoslawien abtreten musste.

Solch eine Darstellung der *foibe*-Tötungen als Genozid ist jedoch in vielerlei Hinsicht äußerst problematisch. Erstens blendet sie die historischen Ereignisse aus, die den Tötungen vorangingen, nämlich die Verfolgung der Slowenen und Kroaten durch den italienischen Faschismus und die Kriegsverbrechen der Italiener in Jugoslawien.¹¹ Zweitens wird die Tatsache ignoriert, dass sowohl italienische Partisanen als auch deutsche Truppen die *foibe* zur „Entsorgung“ von Feinden benutzten, und dass auch die sterblichen Überreste von deutschen Soldaten in einigen *foibe* gefunden wurden.¹² Drittens ist es in der multiethnischen Region um Triest und vor allem nach den Maßnahmen zur Zwangsitilianisierung der Slowenen und Kroaten durch die Faschisten keineswegs offensichtlich, wer Italiener war und wer nicht.¹³ Die Gedenkstätte in Basovizza und der *Giorno del ricordo* sind das Ergebnis eines anhaltenden Bemühens von Seiten der mitte-rechts Regierung, der nationalen Erinnerungs-

9 Parlamento Italiano. Legge 30 marzo 2004, n. 92, Gazzetta Ufficiale 86 (2004). Vgl. auch Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 188–206.

10 Vgl. Aram Mattioli, „Viva Mussolini!“ Die Aufwertung des Faschismus im Italien Berlusconi, Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich 2010 und Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 188–206.

11 Vgl. Glenda Sluga, *Italian National Identity and Fascism: Aliend, Allogenes and Assimilation on Italy's North-Eastern Border*, in: Gino Bedani/Bruce Haddock (Hg.), *The Politics of Italian National Identity*, Swansea 2000, 163–190 und Brunello Mantelli, *Die Italiener auf dem Balkan 1941–1943*, in: Christof Dipper/Lutz Klinkhammer/Alexander Nützenadel (Hg.), *Europäische Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift für Wolfgang Schieder*, Berlin 2000, 57–74.

12 Vgl. Accati/Cogoy, *Das Unheimliche*, 17–18.

13 Vgl. Vanni D'Alessio, *Dynamics of Identity and Remembrance in Trieste: Esodo, Foibe, and the Complex Memory of Italy's Oriental Border*, in: Davor Pauković/Vjeran Pvalaković/Višeslav Raos (Hg.), *Confronting the Past. European Experiences*, Zagreb 2012, 285–315, hier 302–303.

landschaft einen neuen Erinnerungsort hinzuzufügen.¹⁴ Die geographische und zeitliche Nähe dieser beiden Erinnerungsprojekte ist daher keineswegs nur historisch bedingt, sondern erinnerungspolitisch motiviert: Die Koordinaten der nationalen Erinnerung sollen zugunsten einer Betonung der Opferrolle verschoben werden.¹⁵ Überdies ist dieser Opferstatus ein exklusiver; das heißt, es ist kein Platz für das Leid und die Verfolgung Anderer.¹⁶

Die Risiera di San Sabba

Die turbulente Geschichte der Gedenkstätte in der Risiera nach 1945 setzt sich aus einer ganzen Reihe von Erinnerungs- und Verdrängungsprozessen zusammen, die über die Jahrzehnte hin verschiedene Opfergruppen betrafen. Die Risiera ist somit ein gutes Beispiel für die immer wieder neu verhandelte Erinnerungskultur in Italien nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges.

Die Alliierten, die Triest zwischen 1945 und 1954 verwalteten, zeigten keinerlei Interesse daran, die Verbrechen in der Risiera zu erforschen und juristisch zu ahnden, obwohl bei Kriegsende genügend Beweismaterial in den Trümmern gefunden worden war. Ihnen war es wichtiger, die Ausbreitung des Kommunismus in Italien zu verhindern, und sie verfolgten eine Strategie der Normalisierung, die ehemaligen Faschisten und Nationalsozialisten gegenüber große Nachsicht übte. Konrad Geng beispielsweise, ein Mitglied des Einsatzkommando Reinhard, das die Risiera verwaltete, ließ sich in Triest nieder und heiratete eine Italienerin. Er arbeitete zunächst für die Alliierten in Triest und machte sich danach als Campingplatzbesitzer in Opicina selbständig. Später wurde er vom deutschen Auswärtigen Amt als Mitarbeiter des Generalkonsuls nach Mailand geschickt. Als seine Mittäterschaft bei den Verbrechen der Aktion Reinhard aufflog, wurde er zwar verhaftet und verhört, dann aber wieder frei gelassen und an das deutsche Konsulat in Nancy versetzt.¹⁷ Faschistische Verbrechen und Kollaboration der Italiener wurden ebenso minimiert. Es gab zwar einige Gerichtsverfahren gegen Kollaborateure, diese endeten aber zu 50 Prozent mit Freisprüchen.¹⁸

Erst im Jahr 1976 wurde ein Prozess zur Aufklärung der Risiera-Verbrechen angestrengt. Dieser war jedoch eine Farce. Sergio Serbo, der vorsitzende Richter, hielt sich nicht an die Richtlinien zur Ahndung von Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit, die bei den Nürnberger Prozessen festgelegt worden waren. Stattdessen stellte er zwei Kategorien auf: Die Partisanen wurden als ‚nicht-unschuldige Opfer‘ bezeichnet und von den Verhandlungen ausgeschlossen, weil sie an politischen- oder Kriegshandlungen beteiligt gewesen waren und daher, so Serbo, dem Kriegsrecht unterstanden. Somit wurden nur die Verbrechen gegen die jüdischen Opfer, die ‚un-

14 Vgl. Pamela Ballinger, Who Defines and Remembers Genocide after the Cold War? Contested Memories of Partisan Massacre in Venezia Giulia in 1943–1945, in: *Journal of Genocide Research* 2 (2000) 1, 11–30.

15 Vgl. Giovanni de Luna, *La repubblica del dolore. Le memorie di un'Italia divisa* [Die Republik des Schmerzes. Die Erinnerungen eines geteilten Italiens], Milano 2011.

16 Vgl. Pamela Ballinger, Exhumed Histories: Trieste and the Politics of (Exclusive) Victimhood, in: *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 6 (2004) 2, 145–159.

17 Vgl. Galliano Fogar, *L'occupazione nazista del Litorale Adriatico e lo sterminio della Risiera* [Die nationalsozialistische Besatzung der Adria-Küste und die Vernichtung in der Risiera], in: Adolfo Scalpelli (Hg.), *San Sabba: Istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera* [Ermittlungsverfahren und Prozess bezüglich des Lagers Risiera], Milano 1988, 3–138, hier 100–102.

18 Vgl. Cesare Vetter, *I processi a carico di fascisti e collaborazionisti* [Die Gerichtsprozesse gegen Faschisten und Kollaborateure], in: IRSML (Hg.), *Nazionalismo e neofascismo nella lotta politica al confine orientale 1945–1975* [Nationalismus und Neofaschismus im politischen Kampf an der Ostgrenze 1945–1975], Trieste 1977, 164–222.

schuldigen Opfer‘, verhandelt.¹⁹ Eine große Menge Beweismaterial wurde gesammelt: Listen von Opfern, Überlebenden, Tätern und Mittätern (zum Beispiel die Namen von 122 italienischen SS-Männern, die in der Risiera gearbeitet hatten), und 210 Zeugen, darunter Überlebende der Risiera und der KZs, wurden befragt. Dennoch wurden die Frage der Kollaboration, oder die Verbrechen des italienischen Faschismus gegen Slowenen und Kroaten, nie thematisiert. Der Ausschluss der Mehrheit der Opfer der Risiera – der Partisanen – vom Verfahren hatte zur Folge, dass die Risiera nur als Transitlager und nicht als Tötungslager behandelt wurde.

Wie bereits erwähnt, wurde die Risiera im Jahr 1965 zum Nationaldenkmal erklärt. In der offiziellen Anordnung heißt es, die Risiera wird als erhaltenswert erachtet, weil sie „das einzige Beispiel eines nationalsozialistischen Lagers in Italien“ ist.²⁰ Diese Formulierung übergeht jedoch, dass es zwischen 1943 und 1945 mehrere NS-Konzentrationslager in Italien gab und dass es mehr als 40 Konzentrationslager gab, die bereits viel früher von den Faschisten eingerichtet worden waren und später von den Nationalsozialisten übernommen wurden.²¹ Indem man also irrtümlich auf der Einzigartigkeit der Risiera bestand, bekräftigte man stillschweigend die Idee, dass die Verfolgung der Italienischen Juden und Partisanen ausschließlich von den Nationalsozialisten durchgeführt wurde, und dass die Risiera als Ort der Aufopferung der Italiener bewahrt werden sollte.

Als die Gedenkstätte dann zehn Jahre später, im April 1975, feierlich eingeweiht wurde, lud Triests Tageszeitung *Il Piccolo* die Besucher ein, „zur Risiera zu pilgern und dem Martyrium der Opfer der Nationalsozialisten Ehre zu erweisen“.²² Und tatsächlich präsentiert Romano Boicos Design die Risiera als einen Heiligschrein. Boico wollte die Gebäude selbst sprechen lassen. Der Innenhof war als eine Art offene Basilika konzipiert, deren Heiligtum eine Urne mit der Asche der in der Risiera Verbrannten war. Die Risiera sollte als Ort der Stille und Trauer verstanden werden. Deshalb gab es auch ursprünglich in der gesamten Gedenkstätte kein einziges Schild und keine Erklärung. „Die in der Risiera Ermordeten“, so der damalige italienische Staatspräsident Giovanni Leone in seiner Eröffnungsrede, „waren für Italien gestorben“. „Mit ihrem Opfer hatten sie die Republik mit begründet.“²³ Eine solche Interpretation der Geschichte der Risiera schließt all diejenigen Opfer aus, die nicht Partisanen waren. Der Unterschied zwischen politischer und religiöser Verfolgung wurde ausgelöscht, und alle Opfer, auch die jüdischen, wurden einer heldenhaften Befreiungsgeschichte einverleibt. Die Tatsache, dass auch Frauen und Kinder, sowie Alte und Kranke unter den Opfern der Risiera waren, wurde völlig ignoriert. Außerdem wurde die Rolle der kommunistischen Partisanen im Befreiungskampf völlig ausgeklammert.

In den 30 Jahren, die seit der Eröffnung vergangen sind, hat sich einiges verändert: Eine Dokumentations-Ausstellung, ein kleines Museum (das Civico Museo), eine Vielzahl von Gedenktafeln und Erklärungstafeln wurden in den neunziger Jahren

¹⁹ Vgl. Fogar, *L'occupazione*, 115.

²⁰ <http://www.risierasansabba.it/la-storia/> (24. Februar 2016), siehe auch Fabio Galluccio, *Il lager in Italia. La memoria sepolta nei duecento luoghi di deportazione fascisti* [Die Lager in Italien. Die begrabene Erinnerung in den zweihundert Deportationsorten des Faschismus], Civezzano 2002, 136-54. Die genaue Formulierung lautet „unico esempio di Lager nazista in Italia“ – dies ist zweideutig, weil der bestimmte Artikel fehlt. Es wäre möglich, es als „ein einzigartiges Beispiel“ zu interpretieren anstatt als „das einzige Beispiel“. Die Risiera war sicherlich ein einzigartiges Beispiel, aber sie war nicht das einzige Beispiel eines NS-Konzentrationslagers in Italien.

²¹ Ebd.

²² Gaia Viola, *Dalla rimozione alla riscoperta. La Risiera di San Sabba nella stampa locale (1965–1995)* [Von der Verdrängung bis zur Wiederentdeckung. Die Risiera di San Sabba in der lokalen Presse (1965–1995)], (Magisterarbeit), Trieste 1998, 37.

²³ Vgl. Mucci, *La Risiera di San Sabba* [Die Risiera di San Sabba], 1999.

des 20. Jahrhunderts hinzugefügt. Die Dokumentations-Ausstellung wurde 1982 von dem Triestiner Historiker Elio Apih kuratiert und 1998 überarbeitet und erweitert. Sie besteht aus 50 Schautafeln, die einen Überblick über den historischen Hintergrund der Ereignisse in der Risiera geben, beginnend mit dem Aufstieg des Faschismus in Italien und des Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland, gefolgt von einer Beschreibung des Holocaust, der deutschen Besatzung und der Widerstandsbewegung in der Region. Das faschistische Regime wird zwar als gefährlich, letztendlich jedoch als chaotisch und unbeholfen dargestellt. Es hat Triests Wirtschaft ruiniert und konnte die „Frage der Minderheiten“ in der Region nicht lösen.²⁴ In Deutschland sei der Nationalsozialismus hingegen eine Massenbewegung gewesen, die auf breite Resonanz stieß und sich über ganz Europa ausbreitete.²⁵ Eine Reihe von Schautafeln ist Fotos von SS-Offizieren und deren Verbrechen gewidmet. Der Widerstandsbewegung, die in der Region besonders gut organisiert war, ist ebenfalls viel Platz eingeräumt. Mit keinem Wort wird jedoch die Kollaboration der Triestiner Behörden, Polizei und Industrie erwähnt. Das Krematorium wurde bei einer Firma in Triest bestellt; diese, so heißt es, war aber angeblich nicht über den konkreten Verwendungszweck informiert. Wer half den Nationalsozialisten, das Lager und die gesamte Region zu verwalten? Wer hat für sie übersetzt? Auf diese Fragen habe ich in der Risiera keine Antwort gefunden. Erst als ich das Istituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia (Regionales Institut für die Geschichte der Befreiungsbewegung im Friaul-Julisch Venetien, IRSML) in der Innenstadt besuchte, habe ich mehr darüber erfahren.

Wenn man die neueren historiographischen Studien zur Risiera liest, wird klar, dass hunderte Triestiner – Volksdeutsche, Italiener, Slowenen und Kroaten – für die Besatzer als Fahrer, Übersetzer, Sekretärinnen, Telefonisten und Verwalter arbeiteten. Das Ispettorato Speciale di Pubblica Sicurezza per la Venezia Giulia, eine faschistische Sicherheitspolizei, die 1942 von Mussolini speziell zur Partisanenbekämpfung in der Region gegründet worden war, hatte Listen über Partisanen, Anti-Faschisten und Juden zusammengetragen. Diese wurden, zusammen mit Gefängnissen, Folterzellen, Polizeipersonal und einem gut strukturierten Netzwerk von Informanten, den deutschen Besatzern zur Verfügung gestellt.²⁶

Im Zeitraum zwischen Oktober 1943 und April 1945 wurden ca. 20.000 Juden und slowenische und kroatische Partisanen aus Friaul-Julisch Venetien, Görz, Fiume, Ljubljana und Dalmatien, aber auch aus dem Veneto und aus Udine in der Risiera gefangen gehalten und von dort in Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager deportiert. Die Juden wurden direkt von zu Hause abgeholt, entweder weil ihre Namen und Adressen bereits bei der faschistischen Polizei registriert worden waren oder weil sie von pflichtbewussten Nachbarn und Informanten angezeigt wurden. Mauro Grün (auch Grini genannt), ein Triestiner Jude, half beispielsweise, hunderte Juden zu verhaften, und erhielt für jede Denunziationen 7.000 Lire Belohnung.²⁷ Eine beachtliche Anzahl Juden wurde auch aus Krankenhäusern, psychiatrischen Einrichtungen und Seniorenheimen in Triest, Fiume, Venedig und anderen Städten

24 Elio Apih (Hg.), *Risiera di San Sabba. Guida alla mostra storica* [Die Risiera di San Sabba. Führer durch die historische Ausstellung], Trieste 2000, 80.

25 Ebd.

26 Fogar, *L'occupazione*, 31–58; Enzo Collotti, *Il Litorale adriatico nel nuovo ordine europeo 1943–45* [Die Adriaküste in der neuen europäischen Ordnung 1943–45], Milano 1974, 21–22.

27 Fölkel/Sessi, *La Risiera*, 116.

geholt.²⁸ Diese waren allesamt auf Listen zu finden, welche die faschistischen Behörden bereits 1938 erstellt hatten. Die Ermordung von Patienten ist ein bisher wenig erforschtes Kapitel in der Geschichte der deutschen Besatzung Italiens und zeigt die Kontinuitäten zwischen dem Euthanasieprogramm und dem Holocaust auf.²⁹ Als ich 2010 meine Forschungen in Triest betrieb, konnte man darüber in der Dokumentationsausstellung Risiera, aber auch nichts erfahren.

Letztes Jahr wurde nach über 40 Jahren das Civico Museo neu gestaltet, ein kleiner Ausstellungsraum mit Objekten, die in der Risiera gefunden worden waren, mit Objekten, die dem Museum von Überlebenden zur Verfügung gestellt wurden, und mit Kunstwerken, die sich mit der Geschichte der Risiera beschäftigen. Die Neueröffnung fand erst zum *Giorno della memoria* 2016 statt, und ich habe die Ausstellung noch nicht besichtigen können. Laut der Beschreibung auf der Homepage und Zeitungsberichten über die Eröffnung enthält die neue Ausstellung ausführlichere Informationen über die Zeit nach 1945, den Gerichtsprozess und die Geschichte der Memorialisierung der Risiera. Aussagen und Biographien von Überlebenden der Risiera spielen dabei eine zentrale Rolle.³⁰ Ich bin gespannt, in wie weit diese Neukonzeption die Leerstellen in der Geschichte, die in der Gedenkstätte erzählt wird, füllen kann.

Die Foiba di Basovizza

Die Risiera ist in gewisser Hinsicht ein Denkmal ihrer eigenen Erinnerungsgeschichte, indem der lange und mühsame Aushandlungsprozess und die verschiedenen Phasen der Erinnerung am Ort selbst spürbar und sichtbar sind. Die Gedenkstätte an der Foiba di Basovizza verkörpert ebenfalls die eigene Erinnerungsgeschichte, allerdings auf andere Weise, vor allem weil ihr, als viel jüngere Gedenkstätte, eine einheitlichere Konzeption zu Grunde liegt. Die Foiba di Basovizza liegt ca. fünf Autominuten von Triest entfernt, am Rande des kleinen Ortes Basovizza, inmitten der mit Büschen und Bäumen übersäten Karstlandschaft. Anders als die meisten *foibe*, die natürlichen Ursprungs sind, ist Basovizza der aufgelassene Schacht eines ehemaligen Kohlebergwerks. Von der ursprünglichen Konstruktion ist nichts mehr übrig geblieben. Eine bedrückende schwarze Eisenskulptur und eine große Metallplatte markieren die Öffnung des Schachtes. Eine Vielzahl von Gedenksteinen und ein kleines Dokumentationszentrum sind um den Schacht herum gruppiert. Im Zentrum des Gedenkortes ist also etwas Unsichtbares, eine Abwesenheit, die ebenfalls die *foibe*-Erinnerung als Ganzes prägt. Es ist kein Zufall, dass die Befürworter der *foibe*-Erinnerung sich bei der Sprache der Psychoanalyse bedienen: Die *foibe* werden als verdrängtes, traumatisches Ereignis präsentiert, dessen Wiederentdeckung und Verarbeitung eine Art Heilungsprozess für die italienische Psyche darstellt.³¹ Ein anderes Bild, das auf die *foibe*-Erinnerung zutrifft, ist das des schwar-

28 Angelo Lallo/Lorenzo Toresini, *Psichiatria e nazismo. La deportazione ebraica dagli ospedali psichiatrici di Venezia nell'ottobre 1944* [Psychiatrie und Nationalsozialismus. Die Deportation der Juden aus den psychiatrischen Spitälern Venedigs im Oktober 1944], Portogruaro 2001, 33-61.

29 Vgl. Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 137-151.

30 <http://www.risierasansabba.it/nuovo-allestimento-della-sala-museo-della-risiera-di-san-sabba/> (24. Februar 2016).

31 Zum Beispiel der ehemalige italienische Minister für Kommunikation unter Berlusconi, Maurizio Gasparri, der in einem Interview erklärte, dass *foibe*-Tötungen eine von der italienischen Linken verdrängte Erinnerung darstellten. Vgl. *La Stampa*, 18. April 2002, 5.

zen Lochs.³² Ein schwarzes Loch kann man nicht direkt beobachten, es kann nur wahrgenommen werden, indem man die Wirkung betrachtet, die es auf seine Umgebung ausübt, seine Symptome also (und wieder sind wir bei der Sprache der Psychoanalyse). Die Frage ist jedoch, ob es sich beim Diskurs über die *foibe* um die Wiedererlangung einer verdrängten Erinnerung handelt oder eher um eines der Symptome eines Verdrängungsprozesses.

Lassen Sie mich dies anhand der Dokumentations-Ausstellung in Basovizza genauer erklären. Die Geschichte beginnt im Jahr 1945, in den letzten Tagen des Krieges, als Basovizza im Zentrum der Gefechte zwischen der jugoslawischen Befreiungsarmee und den sich zurückziehenden deutschen Truppen stand.³³ Nach dem Ende des Krieges entsorgten angeblich die Einwohner von Basovizza Trümmer, Munition und die sterblichen Überreste von Soldaten beider Seiten im Minenschacht. Vierzig Tage lang besetzte die jugoslawische Befreiungsarmee Triest und die Region, eine Zeit, die sich als die „vierzig Tage des Terrors“ im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Triestiner eingebrannt hat. Was genau in dieser Zeit passierte ist bis heute unklar. Laut der Dokumentations-Ausstellung wurden Anfang Mai 1945 hunderte von italienischen Zivilisten in Basovizza exekutiert und in den Minenschacht geworfen. Große Fotos auf den Schautafeln zeigen Leichen und Särge; liest man die Bildunterschriften jedoch genauer, stellt sich heraus, dass alle abgebildeten Opfer aus anderen *foibe* und nicht aus Basovizza stammen. Der Minenschacht in Basovizza wurde nie genauer untersucht und keine Exhumierungen fanden statt.³⁴ Interessant ist auch die Beschreibung der *foibe*-Tötungen selbst: Einerseits werden die Taten der jugoslawischen Armee als eine Art prämoderner, barbarischer Urgewalt charakterisiert, die sich im Niederbrennen von Dörfern und Gebäuden, Lynchungen, Vergewaltigungen und *infoibamenti* Ausdruck verschaffte. Andererseits wird aber auch das Vokabular des Holocaust verwendet: Die Jugoslawen hätten die Region von allen sogenannten Volksfeinden säubern wollen, zigtausende seien deportiert worden und auf „Todesmärschen“ und in „Konzentrationslagern“ bei Ljubljana gestorben.³⁵

Der öffentliche Diskurs um die *foibe* konzentriert sich fast ausschließlich auf die Opferzahlen, denn auf ihnen beruht nicht nur die historische Relevanz der Tötungen (und natürlich die Genozid-Theorie), sondern auch der Grad der Aufmerksamkeit der Medien und der Öffentlichkeit. Bis heute gibt es keine offizielle Liste oder Opferzahl.³⁶ Neuere Forschungen lassen Zweifel verlauten, ob Basovizza überhaupt jemals Ort von Massenexekutionen war.³⁷ Die Journalistin Claudia Cernigoi zeigt außerdem wie sich in den Medien die geschätzten Opferzahlen von Basovizza zwischen 1945 und 1995 exponentiell vervielfachten: von 18 auf über 3.000.³⁸ Dies lässt wiederum Zweifel am Denkmal selbst aufkeimen: Warum wurde gerade dieser Ort als das zentrale Denkmal für die *foibe*-Massaker gewählt, wenn es erstens keine eigentlich *foiba* ist und zweitens es hier vielleicht gar keine *infoibamenti* gegeben hat?

32 Vgl. Accati/Cogoy, Das Unheimliche; Katia Pizzi, 'Silentes loquimur'. Foibe and Border Anxiety in Post-War Literature from Trieste, in: Journal of European Studies 28 (1998) 3, 217-229.

33 Giuseppe Parlato/Raoul Pupo/Roberto Spazzali, Foiba di Basovizza. Monumento Nazionale [Das Foiba di Basovizza. Nationaldenkmal], Trieste 2008, 11.

34 Ebd.

35 Ebd., 44-51. Die Charakterisierung der jugoslawischen Armee als barbarisch und unzivilisiert ist ein zentraler Bestandteil des *foibe*-Diskurses. Es ist kein Zufall, dass besonders dieser Aspekt Mitte der 1990er-Jahre, im Kontext des Jugoslawien-Krieges, in den italienischen Medien betont wurde.

36 Verginella, Geschichte und Gedächtnis, 70.

37 Jože Pirjevec, Foibe. Una storia d'Italia [Foibe. Eine italienische Geschichte], Torino 2009, 110-124, 131, 285-291, 309-315.

38 Claudia Cernigoi, Operazione „foibe“ tra storia e mito [Operation „foibe“ zwischen Geschichte und Mythos], Udine 1999, 190.

Es scheint, dass die Nähe zu Triest und zur Risiera ein entscheidender Faktor war, denn die Dokumentationsausstellung bezieht sich explizit auf die Risiera. Die letzte Schautafel der Ausstellung schildert den historischen Kontext der *foibe*-Tötungen. Die Region wird hier zum „Laboratorium“ der traumatischen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, gekennzeichnet von:

„Krieg; den unvorhersehbaren Effekten der Auflösung von multinationalen Imperien; dem Erstarken antidemokratischer Regimes, die ihre totalitären Ansprüche bei einer zutiefst gespaltenen lokalen Bevölkerung geltend machten; rassistische Verfolgung und das Entstehen des ‚univers concentrationnaire‘; Deportationen, die den Nationalcharakter der Region unwiderruflich verändert haben; der Verfolgung religiöser Minderheiten im Namen des Staatsatheismus; Ost-West-Konflikte an einer der Frontlinien des Kalten Krieges. Kurzum, eine Synthese der großen Tragödien des vergangenen Jahrhunderts.“³⁹

Auf den ersten Blick erscheinen all diese Aussagen einleuchtend. Aber das Bild, das hier gezeichnet wird, ist das einer italienischen Bevölkerung, die eine Reihe von fremden Besatzungen ertragen musste – einschließlich die des Faschismus, je nachdem, wie man die „antidemokratischen Regimes“ versteht. Die Litanei der Katastrophen des 20. Jahrhunderts schließt nun auch die *foibe* mit ein. Es scheint, dass es hier weder um eine nuanciertere historische Rekonstruktion geht, noch darum, Gewissheit über die Zahl der Opfer zu erlangen, sondern darum, eine bestimmte Version der italienischen Nationalidentität in Szene zu setzen und zwar die der Unschuld und der Opferrolle. So muss man die Bezeichnung der *foibe* als den „italienischen Holocaust“ verstehen. Die *foibe*-Erinnerung wurde in den neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts von den Rechtspopulisten stark gemacht, als Gegengewicht zum Widerstandsmythos der Linken, welcher die gesamte Nachkriegszeit in Italien geprägt hatte. Der Widerstandsmythos diente seinerseits auch dazu, den italienischen Faschismus auszublenden, indem behauptet wurde, die eigentliche italienische Geschichte sei die des antifaschistischen Widerstandes. Als Alternative blieb der Rechten also nur eine Opferrolle übrig, wenn sie es nicht wagen wollte, den Faschismus zu rehabilitieren. Auch das hat man versucht, aber das ist ein anderes Thema. Um die *foibe* als eine „italienische Tragödie“ darzustellen, wie es im Gesetz zur Einführung des *Giorno del ricordo* heisst, ist es notwendig, jeden Bezug auf den italienischen Faschismus und seine Verbrechen auszublenden.⁴⁰ Es ist bemerkenswert, dass auch in Basovizza kein Wort über die hunderttausende jugoslawischen Zivilisten verloren wird, die während der italienischen Besatzung deportiert, getötet, in Konzentrationslager gesperrt, und ausgehungert wurden.

Unheimliche Heimat: Triest in der Literatur

Der Journalist Paolo Rumiz hat angesichts der „seltsamen Symmetrie“ des Erinnerungskampfes zwischen Risiera und Foiba darauf hingewiesen, dass Italien das einzige europäische Land ist, das ganze zwei Tage der Erinnerung hat, die beide nicht dazu dienen, sich zu entschuldigen, sondern vielmehr, von anderen Entschuldigungen zu verlangen.⁴¹ Die Risiera war die Schuld der Deutschen und die *foibe* die der Jugosla-

³⁹ Parlato/Pupo/Spazzali, Foiba di Basovizza, 65-67.

⁴⁰ Parlamento italiano, Legge 30 marzo 2004.

⁴¹ Il Piccolo, 10. Februar 2009.

wen. Indem der gesamte offizielle Erinnerungsdiskurs den Faschismus und die eigene Schuld vermeidet, werden die beiden Tage zu leeren Manifestationen der Selbstentlastung. Während der offizielle Diskurs um diese beiden Orte kreist, gibt es jedoch einen Ort, an dem alternative Geschichten und Erinnerungen erzählt und lebendig gehalten werden. Dieser Ort ist die Literatur. Vor allem Triestiner Autoren mit slowenischem oder kroatischem Hintergrund, aber auch istriatische und italienische Schriftsteller, Dichter und Dramatiker nehmen sich vergessener und verdrängter Geschichten und Geschehnissen an. Fulvio Tomizza, Boris Pahor und Carolus L. Cergoly beispielsweise stellen das Schema des „guten Italieners“ und des „bösen Nazi oder Slawen“ in Frage und bieten eine komplexere und vielstimmige Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Region. Das Schreiben wird für alle drei Autoren ein Akt des Widerstandes und der Erinnerungspolitik: Indem sie auf Slowenisch, Kroatisch oder im Triestiner Dialekt schreiben, fordern sie die rein italienische Version der Vergangenheit und regionalen Identität heraus. Mehr noch, sie positionieren sich absichtlich zwischen den verschiedenen Kulturen der Region, geben keiner den Vorrang und bauen Brücken. Somit wird eine alternative, multikulturelle Erinnerungsgeschichte möglich. In diesen Texten wird Triest als unheimliche Heimat dargestellt; Widersprüche und Brüche werden betont. Das Unheimliche ist hier jedoch nichts Negatives, im Gegenteil, es wird von den Autoren als effektives Stilmittel benutzt, um die dominante und bequeme Version der italienischen Opfergeschichte zu stören.

Ich möchte nun einen dieser Autoren, nämlich Boris Pahor, herausgreifen.⁴² Er schreibt seine Bücher auf Slowenisch, und sie sind in viele Sprachen übersetzt worden. Am Bekanntesten ist wohl sein autobiographischer Roman *Nekropolis*, in dem er von seinen Erfahrungen in deutschen Konzentrationslagern berichtet. Er wurde 1913 in Triest geboren und hat fast die ganze Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts miterlebt. Mit seinem Buch *Piazza Oberdan* aus dem Jahr 2005 hat er der Erinnerungslandschaft in der Region einen dritten, alternativen Gedächtnisort hinzugefügt: den gleichnamigen Platz in Triest.⁴³ Das Buch erzählt die Verbrechen des italienischen Faschismus in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts und ist somit ein Versuch, das Vergessen und Verschweigen zu durchbrechen. Die Piazza Oberdan, auf der die Geschichte beginnt, und zu der sie immer wieder zurückkehrt, ist Dreh- und Angelpunkt für einen virtuellen Spaziergang durch das Triest der slowenischen Minderheit. Pahor rekonstruiert diese vergessene Geschichte anhand eines komplexen Geflechts aus Kurzgeschichten, historiografischem und dokumentarischem Material und autobiografischen Erzählungen. Der Platz wurde nach Guglielmo Oberdan benannt, dem Triestiner Irredentisten (wörtlich „Erlösungskämpfer“ für die Unabhängigkeit der Region von Österreich-Ungarn), der 1882 nach einem versuchten Mordanschlag auf Kaiser Franz Joseph hingerichtet wurde. In den zwanziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts wurde Oberdan von den italienischen Faschisten als Held gefeiert und der Platz nach ihm benannt. Die Geschichte von Oberdan als italienischem Helden hat jedoch einen Haken: Wie Pahor andeutet, war Oberdans ursprünglicher Name Viljem Oberdank, und er war der uneheliche Sohn einer Slowenin aus Görz. Für Pahor ist Oberdan deshalb eher ein Vertreter der langen Tradition des slowenischen Widerstandes gegen die Obrigkeit.

Pahors eigene Geschichte ist durch eine Reihe traumatischer Ereignisse mit der der Piazza Oberdan verbunden. Diese beginnt 1920, als der siebenjährige Pahor

42 Für eine ausführliche Besprechung der Werke Pahors, Tomizzas, Cergolys und anderen siehe Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 217-281.

43 Boris Pahor, *Trg Oberdan*, Ljubljana 2006. Die italienische Übersetzung des Buches, *Piazza Oberdan*, kam erst 2010 heraus.

Zeuge des faschistischen Brandanschlages auf das slowenische Kulturzentrum wird – ein Ereignis, das er wiederholt als Ur-Trauma beschrieben hat. Das Verbot der slowenischen Sprache und die brutale Bestrafung wenn man dabei erwischt wurde, Slowenisch zu sprechen, sind das Thema der Kurzgeschichten. So erzählt er beispielsweise von einem Mädchen, das von ihrem Lehrer an den Zöpfen am Kleiderhaken aufgehängt wurde, nur weil sie ein paar Worte Slowenisch gesprochen hatte. In den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts wurde die Piazza Oberdan zum Ort der faschistischen und später nationalsozialistischen Unterdrückung: Das Tribunale speciale per la difesa dello Stato (das Sondergericht zum Schutz des Staates) hatte seinen Sitz im dortigen Gerichtsgebäude, und viele von Pahors slowenischen Kameraden wurden dort zu Gefängnisstrafen und zum Tode verurteilt. 1944 wurde Pahor von der pro-nationalsozialistischen slowenischen Heimatfront verhaftet und an die Deutschen ausgeliefert. Diese hielten ihn im Polizeigefängnis unter der Piazza Oberdan gefangen und deportierten ihn schließlich nach Dachau. 1946 kehrte er nach einer Odyssee durch verschiedene KZs wieder nach Triest zurück.

Heute ist Piazza Oberdan ein geschäftiger Verkehrsknotenpunkt. Nur eine kleine Steintafel in italienischer Sprache erinnert daran, dass hier einmal das Gestapogefängnis war. Pahors Buch ist somit eine Art virtuelles, lebendiges Gedenkmal, das das Schweigen mit einer Vielzahl von Stimmen durchbricht. Er verknüpft slowenische Gedichte, Volkslieder, Zeitungsartikel, Zeugenaussagen, Briefe und dokumentarisches Material zu einem Plädoyer gegen das Vergessen. In meinem Buch *The Historical Uncanny* arbeite ich mit einem ausgeweiteten Begriff des Erinnerungsortes, der nicht nur geografisch bestimmt ist, sondern auch Kunstwerke, Literatur, Musik und andere kulturelle Erzeugnisse und Ereignisse mit einschließt. Hier stütze ich mich einerseits auf die Arbeit des französischen Historikers Pierre Nora und andererseits auf die des Literaturwissenschaftlers Michael Rothberg, der in seinem Buch *Multidirectional Memory*⁴⁴ gegen eine Auffassung von Erinnerung als Wettstreit und Nullsummenspiel argumentiert, wie sie beispielsweise im Kampf zwischen der Risiera und der Foiba zum Ausdruck kommt, als ob nur die eine oder andere gelten könnte. Die Erinnerung und die Vergangenheit sind immer viel komplizierter, widersprüchlicher und unheimlicher als man vielleicht an einer Gedenkstätte darstellen kann. Hier kommt die Literatur zum Tragen, eben weil sie mit Widersprüchen und Mehrdeutigkeiten umgehen und diese aushalten kann, ohne sie zu vereinfachen oder aufheben zu wollen. Die Heimat wird nur dann unheimlich, wenn man meint, dass sie harmonisch, idyllisch, ja utopisch sein muss, denn jeder Versuch, sie sozusagen ‚rein‘ zu halten, setzt einen Verdrängungsprozess voraus, der wiederum verleugnet oder geheim gehalten werden muss. Somit erweisen sich die Narrative in der Risiera und in Basovizza als Begleiterscheinungen oder Symptome der verdrängten Erinnerung an den Faschismus in Italien. Die Literatur jedoch vermag das Unheimliche für eine Auseinandersetzung mit der kollektiven Vergangenheit produktiv zu machen. Es ist kein Zufall, dass es gerade die Triestiner Literatur der klassischen Moderne (Italo Svevo, Umberto Saba, usw.) war, welche die Psychoanalyse nach Italien gebracht hat.⁴⁵ Und es ist weiterhin die Literatur der Region, welche die eigentliche Erinnerungsarbeit leistet. In der Literatur ist diese Heimat schon immer unheimlich gewesen.

44 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009.

45 Vgl. Katia Pizzi, *A City in Search of an Author. The Literary Identity of Trieste*, London 2001; Laura Gandolfi, *Freud in Trieste: Journey to an Ambiguous City*, in: *Psychoanalysis and History* 12 (2010) 2, 129–151.

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Zitierweise: Susanne C. Knittel, Unheimliche Heimat. Triest als Erinnerungsraum,
in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 115-128.

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SWL-Reader – Reader der Simon Wiesenthal Lectures

Lektorat: Philipp Rohrbach/Jana Starek

Laura Almagor

Story for J.

In late 2013, I was a visiting researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles. By pure chance, a local professor put me in touch with the granddaughter of a Dutch member of the Jewish Territorialist movement, which looked for places of settlement for Jews outside of Palestine until well into the 1950s. What was more, the woman's mother – the territorialist's daughter – was still alive, aged 96! What followed was a remarkable visit to the two women's Los Angeles home. Afterwards, I put some thoughts and reflections to paper, without academic intentions, but as part of a letter to a close friend.

The story recently resurfaced in my thoughts while I was working on an article about Jewish Territorialism's Dutch connection, and this regenerated some unresolved questions. I posed these questions to my colleagues at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute during a recurring internal sources and methodology workshop. I was thrilled to find myself as part of a fruitful and thought-provoking exchange.

The main issue discussed was the question of how a scholar could or should deal with unexpected encounters with people related to his or her subject matter. More often than not, such meetings do not lead to archival findings of importance and their contribution is thus not directly measurable in the 'end product'. Still, thinking back to my LA experience and other such events during my research endeavours so far (yes, there were others!), I realise that these had a greater impact on the way I thought about the subject of my research than I initially expected. Should one, therefore, enter into such conversations with an open mind and few expectations, or should one try to get as much 'relevant' material out of it as possible? And lastly, what place does a more 'literary' account, such as the one given below, have within the larger scope of our academic work? How far can we go in blurring the lines between scholarly and literary approaches and writing styles? How do different national academic (cultural) contexts define the extent of such liberties?

Such a frail thing, as she is lying there in the bed, in the corner of the dimly lit living room. Next to her, on the grand piano, as a tribute to her former beauty, stands a wide collection of photographs taken in different eras. And stunning she was, in her evening dress, her hair tied up elegantly, while she smiled her broad smile into the camera. "The dress had a red ribbon on the back", her daughter tells me. "Scarlet", the old woman corrects her.

1917. That was when she was born, the eldest child to a well-to-do Dutch-Jewish business family, one of the old elite clans. I have read so many of her father's letters that I feel I have gotten to know him a bit, and I hope that she feels that, while I sit next to her and talk, not really knowing what to say. She wants to practice her Dutch (rusty and archaic, and after some sentences I see it wears her out, so we switch back to English). It has been so long since she spoke Dutch. It was, after all, her mother tongue, the language spoken at home, with her parents and her five siblings, the language in which she studied medicine in Leiden, until that fateful day in 1940 when

her father sent her off to join her mother and brothers and sisters in the United States. There was no future in Europe.

She was a daddy's girl, the daughter told me on the way here. Her mother was so excited by the prospect of talking to me about him. It was only many years after her departure from the Netherlands, the war, and his survival in Bergen-Belsen that she would see her father again in the New World, where she had started a new life, first as a student at Johns Hopkins and later as a psychotherapist in Los Angeles. It is the old life I am interested in, so I gently push this woman, this living history, to reminisce. Yes, she remembers them all, Nathan Birnbaum and his son Uriël (who had a crush on her), Frederik Weinreb, Daniël Wolf, all those names dancing through so many of the documents I have collected. They are just everyday memories to her. "Have you ever heard of Godfried Bomans?" the daughter asks me. Of course I have. He was one of the most famous Dutch writers of the twentieth century and a prominent Catholic figure during a time of imminent social change. "Well, he was my mother's boyfriend and he was the one who put her on the ship to America. They would've gotten married if she had not left." I wonder aloud if that would not have posed grave problems, considering that he was a staunch and public Catholic and she the daughter of an observant Jew. "I'd imagine it would have", the old lady replies, smilingly.

But the father, the silent absentee, that enigmatic figure, loved by many for his warm character, frowned upon by others for his political views and harsh criticism of the Zionist movement and the young State of Israel after its establishment in May 1948 – she does not really speak about him. The daughter, as it turns out a left-wing Jewish activist, does most of the talking and reveals how parts of the family have rejected her for her interpretation of "Opa's" attitude towards Zionism. But all of this is not important to the old lady. One of the pictures on the piano shows her as a young girl, entangled in a warm embrace with her father on the beach of Scheveningen, a place I have come to know so well myself.

And this is what I get from this visit. Surely, there are some letters, some newspaper articles, but mostly history has shown itself to me today as a trivial thing, almost banal, in the shape of this 96-year-old woman, sharing space and tea with me, calling for the Mexican help to use 'the pan', closing her eyes (but still hearing everything that is being said!) as a sign that it is possibly time for me to leave. History is life, and life goes on. 96 years and counting. It is more than I could have hoped for.

When I finally do pack up my things, the ladies have a present for me: an orange tin with the portraits of the former queen and the new king and queen. And as if that were not enough Dutchness: inside there is orange *hagelslag*. When I return home, I immediately look up a letter that I remember having seen during one of my archival trips. Its solemn sadness is burnt into my memory. In 1945, upon learning that he was still alive, Uriël Birnbaum, a surviving son of the nowadays almost forgotten Nathan Birnbaum, wrote to the father. After a lengthy description of sorrow upon sorrow, Uriël enquires about K. (I now see before me her smiling image and the dress with the invisible scarlet ribbon), who, he heard, made her way to far-away California. He hopes she is well.

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Quotation: Laura Almagor, Story for J, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation
3 (2016) 1, 129-131.

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Essay

Copy Editor: Miha Tavcar

Miloslav Szabó

Antijüdische Provokationen

Amtsberichte zur politischen Radikalisierung in der ČSR
am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkriegs

In der Forschung gilt die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als eine Insel der Demokratie und ein Eiland religiöser wie ethnischer Toleranz, die von autoritären und antisemitischen Regimes umzingelt gewesen sei. Diese weitgehend positive Einschätzung jedoch gilt nur bedingt für die aus dem ungarischen Teil der Monarchie ausgeschiedene Slowakei, wo der Antisemitismus die politische Kultur tiefer als in den böhmischen Ländern geprägt hatte.¹ Dennoch wird der slowakische Antisemitismus in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik fast ausschließlich im Kontext der ‚neuen Judenfrage‘ in der zweiten Hälfte der 1930er-Jahre verortet und mit der Oppositionspolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSĽS) beziehungsweise der Anhängern der Faschistischen Volksgemeinschaft (Národná obec fašistická, NOF) in Verbindung gebracht.² Inwiefern der Antisemitismus die sogenannten staatstragenden Parteien oder gar die Justiz und Staatsverwaltung in der Slowakei beeinflusste, wird hingegen nur selten thematisiert.³ Dies sticht vor allem angesichts der Tatsache ins Auge, dass es sich hierbei um entscheidende Faktoren der antisemitischen Radikalisierung nach der Ausrufung der slowakischen Autonomie im Herbst 1938 handelte.⁴

Anhand von zwei Quellen amtlicher Provenienz soll illustriert werden, dass Ansätze für eine solche Entwicklung bereits unter den Bedingungen der parlamentarischen Demokratie bestanden. Beide stammen aus dem Slowakischen Nationalarchiv und wurden vom Kreisamt in Humenné ans Landesamt des slowakischen Teils der ČSR adressiert.⁵ Sie betreffen „antijüdische und antikatholische Aktionen“ im ostslowakischen Humenné zwischen Juni und Juli 1937. In der Nacht vom 16. auf 17. Juni 1937 wurden in Humenné antijüdische Flugblätter mit Texten wie „Juden raus“, „Vertreiben wir die Juden nach Palästina“, „Christen, vereinigt euch!“ aufgefunden. In der Nacht vom 12. auf den 13. Juli 1937 beschmierte zudem jemand Häuser mit ähnlich klingenden antijüdischen Parolen. Darüber hinaus wurden Drohbriefe an führende Repräsentanten der jüdischen Gemeinde und katholischen Kirche, an den Schulinspektor sowie an den Kreisvorsteher adressiert. Den Höhepunkt der Kam-

1 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of Eastern Central Europe between the World Wars*, Bloomington 1983, 131-140.

2 Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia*, Bloomington 2015, 133-142; Ivan Kamenec, *Prenikanie fašistickej ideológie a organizácii Národnej obce fašistickej do slovenského politického života v medzivojnovom období* [Verbreitung der faschistischen Ideologie und der Organisationen der Faschistischen Volksgemeinschaft im slowakischen politischen Leben in der Zwischenkriegszeit], in: *Historické štúdie* [Historische Studien] 24 (1980), 43-71.

3 Miloslav Szabó, *Auf dem Weg zum Holocaust? Der slowakische Antisemitismus in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik*, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention, Methods, Documentation 2 (2015) 1, 11-24.

4 Eduard Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokraciou a slovenským štátom v stredoeurópskom kontexte* [Die jüdische Gemeinde in der Slowakei zwischen der tschechoslowakischen parlamentarischen Demokratie und dem Slowakischen Staat im mitteleuropäischen Kontext], Prešov 1999.

5 Slovenský národný archív [Slowakisches Nationalarchiv], Bestand Krajinský úrad [Landesamt], Kreisamt in Humenné an das Präsidium des Landesamtes in Bratislava, 17. Juli 1937 und 30. Juli 1937.

pagne brachte die Nacht vom 16. auf 17. Juli 1937, als unbekannte Täter vom Hof der römisch-katholischen Kirche das Missionskreuz entfernten.

Der erste Bericht des Kreisvorstehers Vojtech Kováts vom 17. Juli 1937 stellt ein Musterbeispiel amtlicher Gewissenhaftigkeit dar, die von Bemühungen um die Aufrechterhaltung der öffentlichen Ruhe geleitet ist. Dies zeigt sich durch die eindeutige Verurteilung der Ereignisse, „deren Ziel es ist, die bisher geordneten, guten Beziehungen zwischen den Konfessionen und ihren Mitgliedern zu stören“. Die mutmaßlichen Täter hätten sich dem Kreisvorsteher zufolge „nur aus staatsfeindlichen Elementen gruppieren (zusammenrotten?)“ können. Dass diese Vermutung ganz konkret gemeint war, erschließt sich aus der Beobachtung, dass „allein bei örtlichen frommen Katholiken und Anhängern von Hlinkas Volkspartei [...] sich Empörung beobachten [lässt], denn diese möchten die oben geschilderten Ereignisse politisch zu ihren Gunsten nutzen“. Aus diesem Grund wies Kováts den Geistlichen der katholischen Kirche an, „von der Kanzel seine Gläubigen zu beruhigen und ihnen zu erklären, es handle sich um eine unüberlegte Tat staatsfeindlicher Elemente und nicht etwa der Juden oder anderer, bei denen eine solche Tat kaum vorauszusetzen wäre“.

Kováts' Bericht vom 30. Juli 1937 liest sich dagegen als Bestätigung der unter der katholischen Bevölkerung grassierenden Schuldzuweisungen an die Juden. Der erste Grund ist eine Strafanzeige gegen Maximilian Ziegler und Martin Grossmann, „die im begründeten Verdacht stehen, in der Nacht auf den 17. Juli 1937 gegen Religion und ihre freie Ausübung verstoßen zu haben“. Wie aus dem Polizeiprotokoll hervorgeht, handelte es sich in Wirklichkeit um zwei junge Zionisten, die im Auftrag der jüdischen Gemeinde auf der Kirchenstraße patrouillierten und denen als Motive „Böswilligkeit, Rachegeleüste und Reaktion auf die antijüdische Aktion“ unterstellt wurden. Dies lud die ohnehin gegen die Juden aufgebrachte Stimmung in Humenné und den Nachbargemeinden noch mehr auf. Anlässlich einer Wallfahrt am nächsten Tag und der neuen Weihe des geschändeten Kreuzes drohten in Humenné anti-jüdische Ausschreitungen.⁶

Die gegen Juden aufgebrachte Atmosphäre bestritt der Bezirksvorsteher vehement, worin er sich zusätzlich durch einen Artikel der einflussreichen ungarischsprachigen Tageszeitung *Magyar Ujság* bestätigt fühlte, in dem vom „Aufhetzen zum Pogrom“ die Rede war. Nicht zuletzt deswegen scheint er die in der Slowakei nach wie vor geläufige Infragestellung der Loyalität der Juden zum tschechoslowakischen Staat auf die jüdische Gemeinde von Humenné zu projizieren. Die Juden nähmen „an nationalen und staatlichen Feiern nicht in ausreichender Zahl“ teil, redeten „auch heute noch auf der Straße meistens Ungarisch“ usw. Hierin spiegelte sich die für die tschechoslowakische politische Kultur grundlegende Verwirrung der Vorstellungen und Konzeptionen von Assimilation und Loyalität wider: Viele slowakischen Juden hielten zwar am Ungarischen weitgehend fest, sie waren jedoch keineswegs als „Agenten der Magyarisierung“ im Sinne des Schreckbildes aus der Zeit vor 1918 zu bezeichnen.⁷ Die Juden von Humenné hätten aus dieser Perspektive sogar noch positiver beurteilt werden müssen – hatte sich doch die überwiegende Mehrheit von ihnen bereits 1930 zur „tschechoslowakischen Nationalität“ bekannt.⁸

6 Szabó, Auf dem Weg zum Holocaust?, 21.

7 Éva Kovács, Identität oder Loyalität. Die Juden von Košice (Kaschau, Kassa) von der Ziehung der tschechoslowakisch-ungarischen Grenze bis zum ersten Wiener Schiedspruch, in: Peter Haslinger (Hg.), Die Grenze im Kopf. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Grenze in Ostmitteleuropa, Frankfurt am Main u. a. 1999, 103-114.

8 Milan Belej, Politické pomery v Humennom v období predmníchovskej Československej republiky [Politische Lage in Humenné während der Tschechoslowakischen Republik in der Zeit vor dem Münchener Abkommen], in: Martin Pekár (Hg.), Zlomky z dejín Slovenska v 19. a 20. storočí [Fragmente aus der Geschichte der Slowakei im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert], Košice 2015, 47-93, hier 57.

Doch der Kreisvorsteher Vojtech Kováts ging bei seinen Generalisierungen sogar noch viel weiter. Er beschwerte sich über die „Ausbeutung des slowakischen Volkes“ seitens der jüdischen Kaufleute und Anwälte und schreckte nicht einmal davor zurück, die durch „Staatsfeinde“ von der HSĽS und NOF kolportierten Stereotype des „Judeobolschewismus“ zu bedienen: „Was die jüdische Jugend angeht, ist sie überwiegend äußerst kommunistischer Gesinnung (bis zu 80 Prozent), darunter sind Anhänger Trotzkis, welche Tatsache bei der Bürgerschaft gleichfalls Misstrauen und Antipathie weckt.“⁹

Zusammenfassend lassen sich die besprochenen Quellen als eine wichtige Grundlage zur Erforschung des slowakischen Antisemitismus auf der lokalen Ebene bezeichnen. Sie sind zwar keineswegs repräsentativ, aber dennoch aussagekräftig. Sie leisten einen Beitrag zum Verständnis der antisemitischen Radikalisierung nach der Ausrufung der slowakischen Autonomie nach dem Münchner Abkommen vom September 1938. Wie die bisherige Forschung herausarbeitete, war die „Lösung der Judenfrage“, wie die antijüdischen Maßnahmen von Anfang an bezeichnet wurden, zwar unbestritten politisch motiviert, allein die Bereitschaft der slowakischen Bevölkerung bzw. der bis zuletzt staatsloyalen Behörden in der Slowakei sich daran zu beteiligen, bedarf mindestens genauso einer Erklärung.“

⁹ Der wirkliche Täter konnte erst Ende September 1937 und eher zufällig – er verriet sich über seine Handschrift – ermittelt werden. Der 24-jährige Julius Andráš, Sohn eines angesehenen Bürgers von Humenné, gestand nach seiner Festnahme, die Drohbriefe und Flugblätter verfasst, die Häuserwände beschmiert und mit einem Mittäter das Missionskreuz entfernt zu haben. Sie hätten außerdem ein Attentat gegen die katholische Kirche geplant, da jedoch ihr Ziel – „bei den Katholiken spontanen Widerstand gegen die Juden“ hervorzurufen – bereits durch die Entfernung des Missionskreuzes erreicht worden sei, hätten sie von ihrem Plan abgesehen. Julius Andráš bezeichnete sich als Anhänger der HSĽS, „slowakischer Nationalsozialist und Bewunderer der Regimes in Polen, Deutschland und Italien“; Szabó, *Auf dem Weg zum Holocaust?*, 22.

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Zitierweise: Miloslav Szabó, Antijüdische Provokationen. Amtsberichte zur politischen Radikalisierung in der ČSR am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkriegs, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 132-135.

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Essay

Lektorat: Béla Rásky/Philipp Rohrbach



Spurensuche an einem vergessenen Ort

Ein Abend in der ehemaligen Synagoge Kaschlgasse
9. November 2010

Ein unwirtlicher Ort: Nunmehr leer, treten lange verschüttete Schichten wieder hervor. Das Parteilokal lässt sich nur mehr erahnen, vom Tanzsaal blieb die monumentale Schank, der Supermarkt zerriss die ursprüngliche Anordnung der Räume, hinterließ einen Geruch von Fleisch, verstaubte Heizgebläse und Sicherungskästen.



Nicht Brauchbares wurde abgemauert, tote Räume entstanden. Allein Spuren an den Wänden, Fehlstellen in der provisorischen Decke, alte Stieggeländer und Schwingtüren erzählen von der tiefsten, der ursprünglichen Schicht.



600 Plätze fasste die 1932 eingeweihte Synagoge des galizischen Bethaus- und Unterstützungsvereins „Bene Berith“. In ein Wohnhaus integriert, entging der im Novemberpogrom verwüstete Bau damals seiner vollkommenen Zerstörung. Dennoch wird die Auslöschung augenscheinlich: Weniger als ein Jahrhundert danach bedarf es archäologischer Methoden und komplexer Simulationen, um den ehemaligen Sakralbau zu erkennen.



Der Abend öffnet für kurze Zeit die vergessenen Räume, legt Spuren frei und lässt Bilder der ursprünglichen Gestalt entstehen, zeigt die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer über das virtuelle hinausweisenden Rekonstruktion.

Es bleibt ein unwirtlicher Ort.



Zur Geschichte der Brigittenauer Immobilie Kaschlgasse 4

Der aktuelle Kenntnisstand zur Geschichte der Synagoge in der Kaschlgasse ist gering. Das Gebäude, in ein Wohnhaus integriert, entging im Novemberpogrom der völligen Zerstörung. Verschiedene Nutzungen und Umbauten haben seine ursprüngliche Anlage aber stark verändert. Von der originalen Ausstattung sind nur Spuren geblieben. Die Geschichte jenseits der materiellen Zeugnisse ist nur in Bruchstücken bekannt. Über den Verein Bene Berith, der die Synagoge errichten ließ, über seine Mitglieder und insbesondere ihr Schicksal nach dem ‚Anschluss‘ gibt es nur vage Angaben: Die wenigen Daten verdichten sich nicht zu einer eigenen Geschichte. Sie zeigen die Totalität der Auslöschung. Die Eigenheit verschwindet hinter dem Wissen um das Allgemeine.

Die Synagoge wurde am 19. Juni 1932 eingeweiht. Der seit 1910 registrierte Bethaus- und Unterstützungsverein Bene Berith war ein Zusammenschluss galizischer Juden und pflegte den polnischen Ritus. 1920 wurde die Liegenschaft in der Kaschlgasse erworben. Den Bau, 1931 begonnen, finanzierte der Verein mit Spenden und



Frauenempore

Blick Richtung Bima (Lesepult) und Vestibül (Eingangsbereich)



Städtebauliche Situation: Doppelwohnhaus zwischen Kaschlgasse 4 und Raffaelgasse 3 – Eingang zur Synagoge im der Kaschlgasse | Eingang Wohngebäude in der Raffaelgasse.

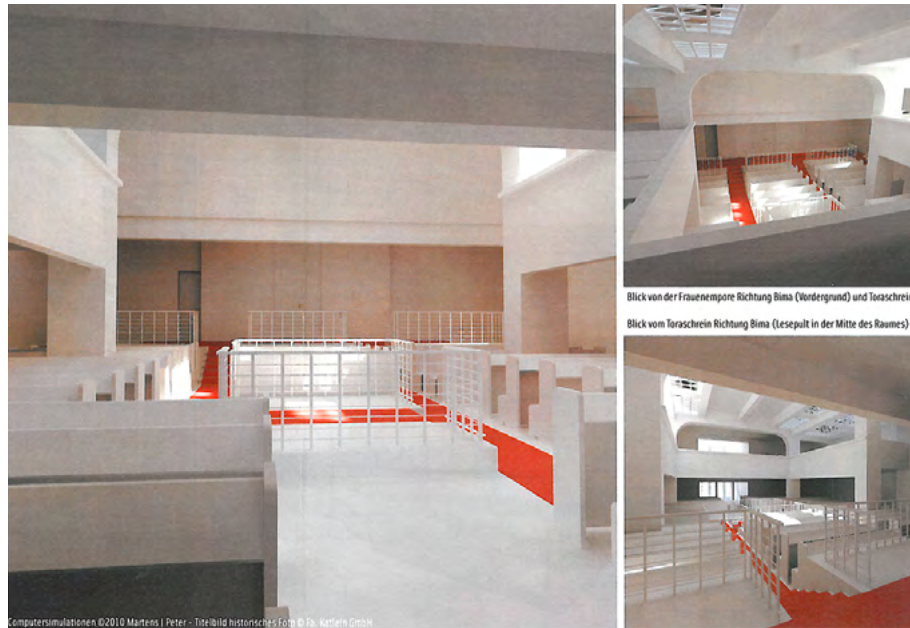


Perspektivschnitt durch die Synagoge



Synagoge Kaschlgasse

Vereinsynagoge des Bethaus- und Unterstützungsvereines „Bene Berith“ (Söhne Israels) | Gründungsjahr: Seit 1910 im Jahresberichten der IKG Wien angeführt | erbaut 1931-32 | Architekt: Franz Kallin (mit Carl Fleischer) | Fassungsvermögen: 258 Frauen- und 344 Männerplätze | Erscheinungsform: „funktionalistischer“ Sakralbau im Erd- und Obergeschoss, mit darauf gestapelter eher unauffälliger Wohnbauten



Kredit. Bis zu dessen Fertigstellung wurde ein Bethaus in der Karajangasse unterhalten. Vereinsobmann war Schmerl Arak, als Rabbiner wirkte Moses Horowitz.

Im Novemberprogramm wurde die Synagoge verwüstet und geplündert. Bene Berith wurde als Verein zwangsweise aufgelöst, die Liegenschaft an die sog. Aufbau- und Vermögensverwaltungsgesellschaft übertragen. Diese verkaufte das Haus 1939 an die Ärztin Christine Palisa. Über die Nutzung der ehemaligen Synagoge in der NS-Zeit ist nichts bekannt.

Unmittelbar nach Kriegsende vermietete Christine Palisa die Räume der Synagoge und einen großen Teil des Hauses an die KPÖ. Ob sie unter Druck gesetzt wurde oder selbst den Schutz der Partei suchte, lässt sich nicht feststellen. In jedem Fall verzögerte es das 1952 eingeleitete Rückstellungsverfahren. Die sowjetischen Stellen verweigerten ihre Zustimmung. Das Verfahren zu Gunsten der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde kam daher erst 1956 zum Abschluss.

Die KPÖ blieb bis 1974 Mieter, vermietete die Räume der Synagoge aber seit den frühen 1960er-Jahren an den Tanz- und Trachtenverein Schneidiger Hauer. Es dauerte mehrere Jahre bis es der Kultusgemeinde gelang, diesen zu einer Räumung zu veranlassen. 1974 wurde die ehemalige Synagoge für einen Schweizer Diskontmarkt umgebaut, 1989 folgte die Filiale einer Supermarktkette.

Seit 2009 stehen die Räume leer.



Spurensuche an einem vergessenen Ort

9. November 2010

Béla Rásky

Es ist dies sicher nicht der Platz, den Sie sich als ideale Veranstaltungslocation eines wissenschaftlichen Instituts vorstellen: unwirtlich, hässlich, herabgekommen, schmutzig – und vor allem eins: kalt und feucht. Vielleicht keine gute Idee, sich gerade hier des 9. November 1938 zu erinnern, werden Sie sich denken.

Gleichzeitig ist dieser Ort aber doch durchaus stimmig mit dem Anlass, dessen wir uns heute erinnern, entspricht der Dramaturgie dieses gemeinsam mit Werner Schwarz konzipierten Abends: Die Protokolle des Brandbuches der Wiener Feuerwehr, aus denen gerade Markus Kupferblum gelesen hat, sind ja ein seltsamer, ein ganz eigentümlicher Text. Vordergründig halten sie die für eine Brandbekämpfung wichtigen Ereignisse fest. Es sind monotone, sich strukturell immer wieder wiederholende, extrem lakonische, ja fast lapidare Berichte, der Dramatik der Nacht so unangebracht. Als wäre eigentlich nichts geschehen, als hätte es eben nur in einigen Bezirken in Wien gebrannt, man sei ausgerückt, hätte alles unter Kontrolle gebracht, sei wieder abmarschiert. Präzise beschreiben sie den Ablauf eines Einsatzes, die Uhrzeit der Meldung, den Einsatz selbst, das eingesetzte Gerät und Material, die Mannschaft, das Legen der Schläuche, manchmal sogar den geschätzten Schaden des Brandes, am Schluss alles korrekt vom jeweiligen Einsatzleiter unterfertigt: eben „business as usual“.



Wahrscheinlich unterscheiden sie sich auch durch nichts von den Einsatzberichten anderer Nächte, die Häufigkeit von Bränden in dieser Nacht vielleicht einmal ausgenommen: Eine Exekutive führt eben korrekt Protokoll über ihre Tätigkeit, zeichnet auf, hält sich sachlich-kühl zurück, erweckt den Anschein der Alltäglichkeit, der Normalität. Die Männer der Feuerwehr und ihre Einsatzleiter zeigen keine Emotionen angesichts der Vernichtung, Zerstörung und Gefahr. Es bleibt wohl keine Zeit, sich mit der Tragik der Dinge, die hinter diesen Berichten stecken, auseinanderzusetzen, dies stünde wohl im Widerspruch zur Professionalität.

Aber zur Pogromnacht selbst, was in dieser Nacht und danach um diese Brände herum geschieht, schweigt das Brandbuch, mag dies vielleicht auch in einigen Berichten eben sehr beredt geschehen. Es spricht nicht über Behinderungen bei den Löscharbeiten, nicht über den losgetretenen offenen Terror dieser Nacht, nicht über den HJ-Mob, nicht über eingreifende Parteiformationen. Vielleicht kann man zwischen den Zeilen doch etwas hören (wenn man will), oder eben auch nicht, wenn

man nicht will – alles bleibt der Interpretation, der Spekulation überlassen. Oder eben dem eigenen historischen Wissen.

Allein ein einzelner Bericht aus Mödling – seit dem 1. Oktober 1938 zu Wien gehörig – wagt es, zu erwähnen, dass die Löschaktionen von Parteiformationen und dem NSDAP-Kreisleiter behindert wurde, dass man die „Feuerwehrzentrale Am Hof“ angerufen habe, und wo man angewiesen habe, nur dann zu löschen, wenn andere Gebäude unmittelbar in Gefahr seien. Ein einzelnes Dokument, eine Kopie im Archiv der Wiener Feuerwehr. Erst die Augenzeugenberichte der Betroffenen, wie zum Beispiel jene, die in der Bibliothek des Jewish Central Office von Alfred Wiener liegen, die sie auch gerade eben hören konnten, zeigen die Emotionalität, die Aufgeregtheit dieser und der folgenden Nächte – als es nicht mehr brannte, aber der Terror gegen die Juden auf den Straßen und in den Polizeikommissariaten Wiens erst richtig losging.

Und genauso wie mit dem Brandbuch der Wiener Feuerwehr verhält es sich auch mit diesem Ort hier, dieser herabgekommen, entleerten Supermarktfiliale: Denn zu aller erst einmal schweigt er, gibt nichts über seine wahre Identität, seine alten Spuren preis, legt auf den ersten Blick nicht Zeugnis ab. Es scheint, als glaube er, er müsse sich noch immer verstecken. Und wir müssen erst vieles wissen, Erzähltem zuhören, Vorinformationen haben, um zu verstehen, um zu sehen, um zu entdecken. Nein, dieser Ort wurde damals nicht endgültig zerstört; nein, dieser Ort ging am 9. November nicht in Flammen auf. Aber auch wenn die Synagoge Kaschlgasse damals „nur“ geplündert und verwüstet wurde, so sind die Spuren der Zerstörung, der Auslöschung paradoxerweise gerade hier vielleicht noch viel augenscheinlicher, als andernorts.

Es mag ein wenig großspurig klingen, ein wenig übertrieben, wenn wir in der Einladung behaupten, dass es schon heute archäologischer Methoden bedarf, um die ursprüngliche Schicht dieser Räume aufzuspüren. Aber je mehr wir uns in den Aufbauarbeiten für diese Veranstaltung hier aufgehalten haben, und je mehr wir als gelernte Historiker daran verzweifelten, wie wenig wir über die Geschichte dieses Raumes, dieses Ortes an konkreten Tatsachen aufspüren konnten, wie wenig wir für diesen Abend hieb- und stichfest rekonstruieren konnten, umso mehr bewahrheitete sich unsere anfänglich nur salopp formulierte These. Mit jedem Abtragen einer Schicht, einer später eingezogenen Abdeckung oder eines Einbauelements – sei es der Supermarkt, der vorherige Drogeriediskonter, das Tanzetablisement oder das Parteilokal – kam eine tiefere zum Vorschein, und zeigte am Ende das ungeheuerliche Ausmaß der Schändung der eigentlichen Funktion dieses Ortes: Eben auch ohne das am Anfang der heutigen Veranstaltung stehende Feuer, nämlich einfach nur durch das Vergessen, dadurch, dass nach 1945 niemand mehr da war, dem diese ursprüngliche Schicht noch etwas bedeutet hätte, der dem Raum seine ursprüngliche Sakralität wieder hätte zurück geben können.

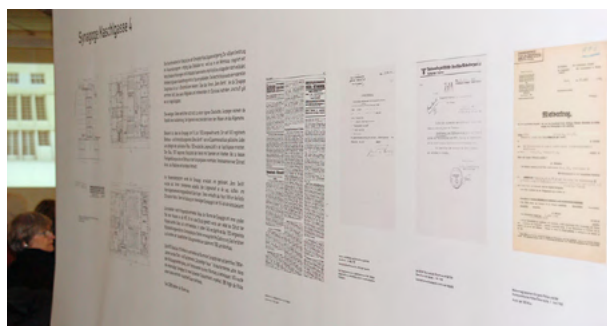
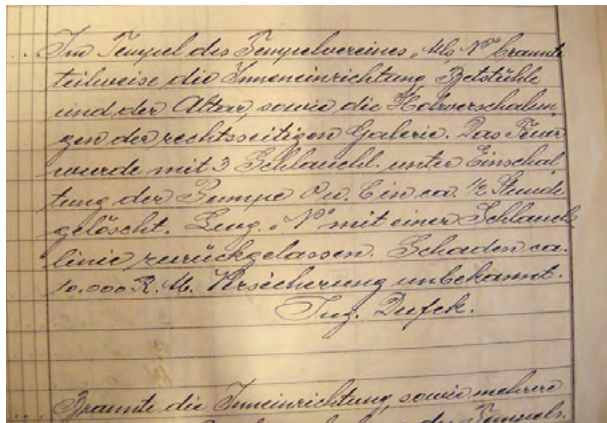
Damit erinnern wir uns heute Abend zwar des Novemberpogroms, zollen aber vor allem auch einem ganz speziellen Ort hier in der Brigittenau unseren Tribut: Ein konkreter Ort, der einmal eine Synagoge gewesen ist, ein sakraler Raum, der nur knapp der totalen Zerstörung entgangen ist, und den wir uns dank der virtuellen Rekonstruktion von Herbert Peter und Bob Martens nun zumindest wieder vorstellen können.

Mehr können wir heute Abend auch nicht tun.

Programm

Novemberpogrom in Wien

Markus Kupferblum liest aus den Brandbüchern der Wiener Feuerwehr und aus Augenzeugenberichten.



© Jüdisches Museum Wien, Ausstellung "Eine Nacht und ein Tag. Eine Ausstellung zum 9./10. November 1938 in Wien", 10. bis 28. November 2002

Textband zur Chronologie der Ereignisse des 9. November 1938: http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2015-2/2016-1_EVE_Rasky/Textband_JMW.pdf
 Auszüge aus den Brandbuch der Wiener Feuerwehr vom 9. November 1938: http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2015-2/2016-1_EVE_Rasky/Brandbuch1938.pdf

Jüdische Brigittenau

Eleonore Lappin im Gespräch mit Kurt Rosenkranz und Vladimir Vertlib.



Grabungsort Kaschlgasse

Bob Martens und Herbert Peter über die Wiederentdeckung und Möglichkeiten der Rekonstruktion.



© Alex Kubik

Stellwand 1: http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2015-2/2016-1_EVE_Rasky/Stellwand1_Kaschl.pdf

Stellwand 2: http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2015-2/2016-1_EVE_Rasky/Stellwand2_Kaschl.pdf

Spuren des Sakralen

Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek führt durch die ehemalige Synagoge.



Spurensuche an einem vergessenen Ort. Ein Abend in der ehemaligen Synagoge Kaschlgasse. Das Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMFK2kpvaZM>

Idee und Konzept: Béla Rásky/Werner Michael Schwarz
Gestaltung: Alex Kubik/Bob Martens/Herbert Peter

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Zitierweise: Béla Rásky/Werner Michael Schwarz, Spurensuche an einen vergessenen Ort.
Ein Abend in der ehemaligen Synagoge Kaschlgasse, in: S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods.
Documentation. 3 (2016) 1, 136-145.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2016-1/2016-1_EVE_Rasky_Schwarz/
EVE_Rasky_Schwarz01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Events/2016-1/2016-1_EVE_Rasky_Schwarz/EVE_Rasky_Schwarz01.pdf)

Event

Lektorat: Jana Starek

Nevena Daković (ed.)

Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media

Belgrade 2014

Review by Aleksandra Kolaković

The Holocaust is one of the most important themes in historiography – not least for its historic relevance. Within the rich history of the Balkans, marked by wars, shifts of borders, and discontinuity, the Holocaust as a topic was, until recently, only explored by historians. But the picture of the greatest sufferings in human history is constantly changing, meaning that the Holocaust must be examined from various perspectives in order to reach an objective conclusion. The academic conference *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media*, which took place from 2 to 4 October 2014 in Belgrade, investigated new modes of (re)viewing the Holocaust in arts and media. Edited by Nevena Daković, professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Arts, Belgrade, the conference proceedings include 14 academic papers published on various aspects of the topic; the project was financially supported by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, and realised in partnership and cooperation with the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, the Centre for Culture and Cultural Studies in Skopje, the Belgrade Youth Centre and the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris.

As David Bathrick¹ has pointed out, visual representations of the Holocaust have proved to be an absolutely integral but also highly contested means by which to understand and remember the Nazi atrocities of the Second World War. These vehicles of memories and memorial complexes, the black-and-white photographs of the concentration and death camps, as well as the memories of traumatised survivors, are given new meanings in the contexts of arts and media. The conference attempted to map the corpus of different arts and media texts, systematise it, and use it for constructing a multidirectional memory of the Balkans' past. Special attention was paid to the role of the culture of remembrance, the institutionalisation of memory, film, and other aspects of memory and their interpretation. The focus of papers written by eminent researchers and compiled in the conference proceedings *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media* is on the language of arts and media, and the aesthetic, ethical, political, philosophical and historical engagement with the Shoah.

One group of papers is dedicated to representations of the Holocaust in film, radio and television in the Balkans from the Second World War to the present day (former Yugoslavia, Serbia, Bulgaria, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). In the article *(Im)possible Witness: The Revelation of the Himmelkommando*, Nevena Daković reveals how cleverly the eponymous film from 1961 moved the limits of representation.

1 David Bathrick, Introduction: Seeing against the Grain. Re-visualizing the Holocaust, in: David Bathrick/Brad Prager/Michael David Richardson (eds.), *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, Rochester 2008, 1-18, here 1.

The crucial point for Daković is that, through its concept of overt confrontation, the film faces the viewer with the Shoah, trauma, and testimony through the lamination of facts, memories and fiction from three-time perspectives.

In her contribution *The Modest Presence of the Holocaust and Jewish people in Bulgarian Cinema: Facts and Reason*, Gergana Doncheva addresses the problematic issue of the official interpretation of the Holocaust in film and cultural memory in Bulgaria. Doncheva summarises that the scarcity of representation depicting the Holocaust in Bulgarian cinema results from the Holocaust's ambivalent status in Bulgarian history.

Most of the researchers who published their papers in *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media* dealt with the Holocaust in the context of the sites of memory in the sense of Pierre Nora's *lieu de mémoire*. They used the theory of cultural memory, i.e. the process of cultural memorisation, the representation of the past and the way it shapes the future.

As they point out in *Holocaust Sites of Remembrance in Macedonia: How Do We Learn about the Holocaust, or What Should be Remembered to Prevent it From Happening Again*, Mishel Pavlovski and Loreta Georgievska Jakovleva believe that only objective historical facts can reveal the 'true' picture of the Holocaust and that diverse forms of perception of genocide should be given the "right to be heard".

In their paper *From the Contested Past to the Neglected Present: the Cultural Politics of Memory of Belgrade's Staro Sajmište (The Old Fairground)*, Milena Dragičević-Šešić and Ljiljana Rogač-Mijatović explore the concepts and methodologies of cultural politics and curated memory through postmemory and memorial sites; *Staro Sajmište* is the concentration and extermination camp where almost the half of all Serbian Jews were killed by the Nazis. The authors regard this site as a multilayered keeper of memory and paradigmatic space that displays Belgrade's disrupted memories. They also offer an interesting new vision for the future of the Memorial Centre: *Staro Sajmište* could contribute as a group or minority remembrance site to the collective memory of the Serbian (majority) population.

The perception of the Holocaust is essentially based on personal experience or the recomposition of personal experience. Written by Mirjana Nikolić, the paper *The Art of Radio Drama as a Representation of the Holocaust: Searching in Ashes, Radio Beograd (1985)* focuses on personal experience in the light of the necessity of moral choice in the drama *Traganje po pepelu (Searching in the Ashes)*.

Dragana Stojanović and Vera Mevorah examine the Holocaust from a postmemorial perspective, i.e. not only as the memory of an occurrence but as the memory of the period prior to the Holocaust. Their paper *Portraits and Memory of the Jewish Community in Serbia before the Holocaust: Facing the inscription of the Holocaust in the postmemory media representation contexts* deals with some of the issues that came with the representation of the Holocaust in the public online archive, including interviews, photographs and video material collected.

Aleksandra Milovanović's paper *Images of Jasenovac: Rethinking Use of Archive Footage and Voice-over Narration in Documentary Films* addresses the issues of documentary programs and representation of political, social, cultural and historical processes, especially during the wars in former Yugoslavia. The author researched documentary programs produced by Serbian television between 1990 and 1995, archival footage about the tribulations suffered in Jasenovac, the largest concentration camp in the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War.

In *The Anthropological and Ideological Reading of the Holocaust in Hranjenik (The Fed One)*, Boris Petrović writes that film art delivers a rarely powerful and ideolo-

gically charged message, especially if we consider the symbolic power of the Holocaust in all its implications.

Cultural policy and memory policy, as well as their different strategies of forgetting in the Balkans, were at the heart of the conference *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media*. Zlatko Popovski's paper *The Holocaust and Cultural Memory: The Role of the Media and the Arts in the Holocaust Profiling* discusses cultural memory in interaction with media and arts, with a focus on the victims of the Holocaust in Macedonia.

Starting from Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory of memory, Nataša Delač wrote the case study *Remembering the Novi Sad Raid: the Film The Monument by Miroslav Antić* based on a mixture of collective and individual memories of the Novi Sad raid during the Second World War.

Memory is never shaped in a vacuum; therefore, it is important to explore the ways in which information on the Holocaust is distributed in a culture through media. In *Representation of the Holocaust in Comics and Graphic Novels*, Lazar Jovanović comments on the ties between the narrative strategies of Holocaust representation in two pieces produced by Serbian authors – *The letters of Hilda Daitch*, drawn and written by Aleksandar Zograf, and *Triangle Rose*, drawn by Milorad Vicanović in cooperation with the writer Michel Dufranne – and their relation to Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*.

In her case study *Places of Suffering, Sites of Memory and Digital Media*, Biljana Mitrović gives a review and analysis of the paths and contents of digital media in presenting and contextualising places of suffering, memorial parks and monuments in Serbia (Jajinci, Museum of the Banjica Concentration Camp, Topovske Šupe, Staro Sajmište).

Tijana Lukić sheds a light on the role of music in the reconstruction of collective memory of the Holocaust in the area of digital media (*Reinterpretation of the Past in the Digital Media: Staro Sajmište in the New Media Space and the Role of Music in the Reconstruction of Collective Memory*).

Paul Bernard-Nauraud deals with visual arts and art history in the aftermath of Auschwitz (*Auschwitz and its After-Images: an Approach to the Visual Arts and Art History*). He argues that Auschwitz, understood as equivalent to the Holocaust and its memory, influenced modern art in two different ways: it produced the artistic trends of modernity and provoked a rupture with them.

Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media offered a comprehensive overview of significant facts and events related to the multiple ways in which the 'Final Solution' was implemented in the Balkans. The reconstruction of the past in arts, film, media and ordinary life may lead to a serious distortion of history and yield ideologically deviating versions of the Holocaust. The conference offered new insights, topics and debates, as well as a new perception and perspective of the joint past of the Balkans. The papers were well-presented, solidly substantiated and of great social relevance. *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media* gave an idea of the importance of preserving memory in the Balkans' modern states by enabling the production of contemporary – and by preserving existing – media texts on the Holocaust in the Balkans. Nourishing cultural memory represents an important step towards keeping up the tolerance and stability in the region.

The contributions to the conference were compiled in accordance with contemporary methodological requirements in the conference proceedings, which provide valuable knowledge about the horrors of the Holocaust. They contain the papers of both highly acclaimed and young scholars, thus enabling an intergenerational dia-

logue and exchange of ideas and opinions. Because of their readability and attractive design, the conference proceedings of *Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media* will be read not only by film and media scholars and historians, but by a broader audience.

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Quotation: Aleksandra Kolaković, Nevena Daković (ed.), Representation of the Holocaust in the Balkans in Arts and Media, Belgrade 2014, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation 3 (2016) 1, 146-150.

[http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Reviews/2016-1/2016-1_REV_Kolakovic/
REV_Kolakovic01.pdf](http://simon.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Reviews/2016-1/2016-1_REV_Kolakovic/REV_Kolakovic01.pdf)

Review

Copy Editor: Miha Tavcar