

Das Buch endet mit dem Jahr 1939, während die Einleitung noch mit rückblickenden Zitaten von Paprocki, Kedryn und Haffka aus den Jahren bis 1942 aufgewartet hatte. Dieser Faden wird nicht wieder aufgenommen, was bedauerlich ist, denn er hätte interessanten Aufschluss darüber geboten, in welchen Medien und Netzwerken überlebende Akteure wie Kedryn oder Haffka in den nordamerikanischen Diasporen ihre Narrative veränderten, um sich nicht mehr als loyale Staatsbürger der Zweiten Republik darstellen zu müssen. Mit der Auslassung der Nachkriegsschicksale fällt es auch schwer, in der Arbeit einen biografischen Zugang zu erkennen, den St. in der Einleitung angekündigt hat, wenn auch in der zurückhaltenden Formulierung, die „Wechselwirkungen zwischen biographisch geprägten Handlungsmustern und institutionellen Sachzwängen“ zu untersuchen (S. 19). Aber hierfür stellt die Arbeit zu wenig Material zu Herkunft, Ausbildung oder außerberuflichem Leben der Akteure bereit. Es ist methodisch fraglich, ob ein akteurszentrierter Zugang mit einem biografischen Zugang gleichzusetzen ist. Die Akteure sind vor allem durch ihre Überlegungen zur Nationalitätenpolitik im Sinne der in der polnischen Historiografie zeitweise sehr beliebten Studien zum politischen Denken präsent. Schließlich sei angemerkt, dass die Studie überwiegend den Literaturstand von 2014 abbildet.

Mit dieser Arbeit liegt eine sehr ausgewogene, lesens- und bedenkenswerte Perspektive auf die Geschichte Polens in der Zwischenkriegszeit vor, deren Anliegen, die „Suche nach einer konsensualen Lösung der Nationalitätenproblematik“ (S. 14) neu ins historische Bewusstsein zu heben, von höchst aktueller Relevanz auch für heutige von Migration und Multiethnizität geprägte Gesellschaften ist.

Dresden

Stephanie Zloch

Jadwiga Biskupska: Survivors. Warsaw under Nazi Occupation. (Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare.) Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 2022. 320 S., Ill. ISBN 978-1-316-51558-7. (£ 75,-)

In her 2022 book, Jadwiga Biskupska offers a significant contribution to the historiography of World War II by addressing a critical research gap on the experiences of Warsaw's intelligentsia during this period. Over the course of five years, Warsaw—symbolizing the heart of Polish identity—emerged as the epicenter of the increasingly radical violence perpetrated by the German occupiers who aimed to annihilate the Polish nation. By Christmas 1944, the city once celebrated as the “Paris of the East” had been reduced to little more than a heap of rubble.

The study is divided into nine chapters. The first four focus on the occupier's persecution of Warsaw's elites, while chapters five through nine examine the responses of Warsaw elites to German terror. The first chapter begins with the siege of Warsaw in September 1939, during which the government, military leaders, and the Catholic Church fled, leaving the city in the hands of those elite members who chose to remain. Among them was the city president, Stefan Starzyński, who effectively galvanized the population through radio broadcasts and established a city committee that united all opposition parties, laying the foundations for the future underground state. On 27 September, General Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski launched the “Service for Poland's Victory.” Allegedly on the same day, Aleksander Kamiński and Stanisław Broniewski founded the “Grey Ranks,” drawing upon the scouting network. The scouts played a crucial role during the siege, rescuing the elderly, extinguishing fires, and saving Polish artworks from the burning Royal Castle. Kamiński would later become a prominent figure in the Polish underground press.

The second chapter addresses the murders carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* during *Operation Tannenberg* and the *Intelligenzaktion*. B. argues that the German occupiers ultimately failed to achieve their aim of eradicating the Polish elite, although they murdered thousands of Polish citizens. It is important to note that, contrary to its self-perpetuated

myth, the Gestapo was largely indiscriminate and unprofessional in its efforts to combat political enemies in Poland.

The third chapter centers on Pawiak prison, which, alongside the Gestapo headquarters on Aleja Szucha, became a hub for the repression of political dissent in Warsaw. The prison quickly became severely overcrowded. As a result, it increasingly functioned as a transit station for many prisoners en route to a concentration camp or to the execution site at Palmiry. Simultaneously, Pawiak galvanized the opposition—firstly through its mere existence, which transformed many previously apolitical Warsaw residents into staunch conspirators, and secondly by uniting within its walls those already active in the resistance. The prison hospital and its staff, particularly physician Zygmunt Śliwicki, played a crucial role in this process.

B. devotes the fourth chapter to the ghetto established in northwest Warsaw. Tens of thousands of Jews from other districts were forcibly relocated there. The ghetto was sealed off in the autumn of 1940 and faced severe shortages of food and coal, leading to mass deaths from hunger and disease. Despite the inhumane conditions, a vibrant cultural life flourished in the ghetto, sustained primarily by the Jewish elites. Facing total annihilation, efforts like those of Emanuel Ringelblum sought to document the Jewish plight. Between July and September 1942, the occupiers deported 265,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka where they were immediately killed in the gas chambers. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 was a final, determined act of resistance by the remaining Jews before their ultimate extermination.

In the fifth chapter, which belongs to the most compelling parts of the study, B. underscores the critical role of information, which the occupiers sought to completely suppress among the Warsaw populace. All Polish and Yiddish newspapers were banned and replaced by the so-called reptile press—German propaganda translated into Polish. Radio receivers were strictly prohibited with mere possession punishable by death. Couriers became vital at all levels: those travelling from Warsaw to London, such as Jan Karski; thousands of members of the Polish resistance moving between Warsaw and Soviet-occupied territories, or the territories annexed by Germany. Local couriers, particularly women and even children, played a crucial role in delivering messages within Warsaw. The information gathered was disseminated through underground newspapers like *Polska Żyje* and *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, which not only aimed to sustain morale and encourage perseverance but also to shape the behavior of the occupied population. For instance, in the 1 November 1940 issue of the *Biuletyn*, Kamiński urged the population to engage in “petty” sabotage. The goal was to disrupt the daily lives of the occupiers through small, everyday acts such as working slowly, making deliberate mistakes, providing false information to German occupation personnel, or playing pranks like anonymously denouncing overzealous collaborators to the Gestapo.

Women were not only central to communication but also to underground education, a subject elaborated in the sixth chapter. They constituted the majority of teachers and accounted for 80 percent of the student body. The occupiers permitted only minimal education, leading schools and universities to increasingly operate underground. This, too, involved significant risk as the occupying forces severely restricted the movement of Warsaw’s population.

The seventh chapter focuses on matters of faith, with particular emphasis on the Catholic Church and its followers. While the leaders of the Catholic Church largely avoided criticizing the occupiers, it was primarily the Catholic youth, along with many priests and nuns, who actively participated in the resistance and consequently endured severe persecution. Many members of the Polish elite were driven by their Catholic faith in their resistance efforts. B. highlights the intriguing case of the writer Zofia Kossak, who played a significant role in the underground press and in various charitable initiatives. She co-founded *Żegota*, an organization that saved thousands of Jewish children from certain death. This is particularly striking, given that Kossak was openly anti-Semitic, yet she still

criticized Warsaw's non-Jewish population for completely neglecting their Jewish neighbors as they faced extermination (pp. 123–124).

In the eighth chapter, B. outlines the evolution of the Polish resistance in Warsaw which was notably fragmented. In November 1939, on the initiative of the Polish government-in-exile, the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) was established, asserting itself as the sole legitimate organization to unify the resistance, focusing on building underground structures. To prevent reprisals against the civilian population the government-in-exile prohibited armed actions.

By the summer of 1943, the ZWZ—in 1942 renamed Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*)—had successfully established its dominance over the Polish underground and shifted its strategy towards open terror against the German occupiers, a key focus of the ninth chapter. “Operation Heads” targeted particularly brutal members of the occupying forces, including Franz Kutschera. The attempt to liberate the city from German control through an uprising, in hopes of avoiding “liberation” by the Red Army, ultimately ended in disaster. The Home Army leadership had underestimated the strength of the German forces while overestimating the Allies’ willingness to support Poland. The Warsaw Uprising claimed the lives of about 200,000 people, including 180,000 civilians, and drove thousands of the elite into exile. Many who had fought for the Polish government-in-exile against the German occupiers, like Witold Pilecki and Władysław Bartoszewski, were later persecuted by the Soviet “liberators.” Ultimately, the Warsaw elite managed to thwart the occupiers’ efforts to destroy the Polish nation. However, I do not fully concur with B.’s conclusion that the fate of the people of Warsaw was fundamentally different from that of Poles outside the city (pp. 275–276). In the Lublin district, for instance, the German occupation terror escalated dramatically, particularly during and after “Aktion Zamosc.”¹

Though B. draws on a wide array of literature and sources for her study, there are a few minor shortcomings. For instance, the approach and research question in the introduction are somewhat vague. In particular, a more detailed elaboration of the concept of “elite” would have been beneficial, given its central role in the study. It is somewhat perplexing that B. criticizes the concept of resistance for being too vague and morally charged, yet simultaneously uses the highly politicized term “genocide” to describe the murder of the Polish elite. The 1948 UN Genocide Convention does not cover social groups like the Polish elite.

Overall, however, this study makes an exceptionally valuable contribution to Eastern European research, particularly by shedding light on the extremely repressive German (and Austrian) occupation of Warsaw. Moreover, it highlights the crucial role of the Polish elites in organizing an underground state, an effort unmatched elsewhere in occupied Europe during World War II.

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- 1 Cf. CZESŁAW MADAJCZYK (ed.): *Zamojszczyzna—Sonderlaboratorium SS: Zbiór dokumentów polskich i niemieckich z okresu okupacji hitlerowskiej* [Zamocść Region—Sonderlaboratorium SS: A Collection of Polish and German Documents from the Nazi Occupation Period, 2 vol., Warszawa 1977.

Roland Borchers: Auf der Suche nach Anerkennung. Erinnerungen polnischer NS-Zwangsarbeiter:innen. (Edition NS-Zwangsarbeit, Bd. 2.) Metropol. Berlin 2023. 508 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-86331-720-1. (€ 36,-)

Seit etwa zwei Dekaden gehört das Thema „NS-Zwangsarbeit“ zum Mainstream der historischen Forschung, wobei dies nicht für alle seine Bereiche gleichermaßen gilt: Während die Ereignisgeschichte insbesondere in lokaler und regionaler Hinsicht etliche Studien hervorgebracht hatte, stellte die sog. Geschichte des zweiten Grades bisher nur ein Randthema dar. Der Historiker Roland Borchers hat dieses Defizit erkannt und für seine