

auf ihre zentralen Fragestellungen als „die einzigen aussagekräftigen Quellen“ (S. 28) betrachtet. Vor dem Hintergrund ihrer Quellenwahl thematisiert B. die Problematik von Oral History-Zeugnissen als historisch valide Quelle und nähert sich im Sinne Christopher R. Brownings den Gemeinsamkeiten – dem „Kern der geteilten Erinnerung“⁴ – der Selbstzeugnisse an. Hierbei berücksichtigt B. insbesondere die divergenten und instabilen Rahmenbedingungen der Lebenssituation von Kindern und Jugendlichen in den drei untersuchten Lagern und stellt ihren Analysen jeweils eine Kurzdarstellung dieser Hintergrundinformationen voran, was speziell für Leser und Leserinnen, die mit der Geschichte der Konzentrationslager weniger vertraut sind, von großem Interesse sein kann. „Doch trotz in allen drei Lagern ungleicher Existenzbedingungen,“ so stellt B. fest, „existierten ähnliche Faktoren, die für das Überleben eines Großteils der inhaftierten Minderjährigen maßgeblich waren“ (S. 271). Eine schnelle „Anpassungsleistung“ (S. 272) an die Lagerbedingungen, die Unterbringung in einem Kommando mit leichter Arbeit, die Protektion und Hilfsmaßnahmen erwachsener Häftlinge, „psychische Unterstützungsleistungen“ (S. 274), bestimmte Verhaltensweisen, aber auch schlicht „Glück und Zufall“ (S. 271) konnten B. zufolge dazu beitragen, dass sich die Überlebenschancen der Kinder und Jugendlichen in den Konzentrationslagern erhöhten. „Deutlich wird [jedoch]“, so ihr Fazit, „dass die ehemals minderjährigen Häftlinge individuelle und subjektive Antworten auf die Frage nach den Gründen ihres Überlebens gefunden haben“, so dass sich aus den Zeitzeugenberichten „allenfalls Gemeinsamkeiten“ (S. 271) herausfiltern ließen.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass diese – von B. aus der breiten Materialbasis präzise herausgearbeiteten – Faktoren die komplexen Strukturen innerhalb eines Konzentrationslagers deutlich werden lassen und ihr Werk zu einem interessanten und lesenswerten Beitrag innerhalb der Holocaustforschung machen.

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⁴ CHRISTOPHER R. BROWNING: *Collected Memories. Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, Wisconsin 2003, S. 46.

Jan Grabowski: Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu. [Judenjagd. Manhunt for Jews, 1942-1945. Study on the History of a County.] Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów. Warszawa 2011. 262 pp. ISBN 978-83-932202-3-6. (PLN 34,-.)

Judenjagd by Jan Grabowski is another publication discussing the problem of the alleged joint responsibility of Polish society in the extermination of the Jewish population on German occupied Polish territory during World War II. The reviewed study is part of trend in Polish historiography initiated by Jan Tomasz Gross' *Neighbors* in 2001¹ describing the extermination of Jews by Polish peasants and other Polish social groups.

The study by G. discusses events in the Dąbrowa Tarnowska region (powiat), which was inhabited (so the author claims; p. 53) by 5500-6000 Jews before their deportation and by 57 730 Poles according to the 1943 census (p. 39). This historical monograph is the result of a micro-study that cannot form the basis for farther reaching generalisations. However, when reading the reviewed work, it seems that the author aims at proving the thesis that Poles to some extent took part in the genocide of the Jewish nation, which was initiated and consistently controlled until its completion by the Third Reich. Any doubts

¹ JAN T. GROSS: *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*, Sejny 2000; English edition: *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton 2001.

disappear after reading the Conclusion (p. 169), in which G. refers to an article² in *Der Spiegel*. According to authors thereof, the Holocaust was carried out not only by Germans, but also by their supporters of different nationalities, including Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Frenchmen, Belgians and Poles living in Jedwabne or Radziłów. It is, therefore, to be stated clearly that the following facts are true: representatives of one or another nation (for example Latvians or Ukrainians, see p. 58), to some extent, did take part in the extermination of Jews in the areas occupied by Wehrmacht. The thing is, however, that stating this fact leaves aside the complexity of human nature, capable of cruelty or kindness, depending on the type and cultural formation of individual entities and circumstances they were exposed to. In fact, Adolf Hitler and his supporters, being in control of the state machinery of the Third Reich, did not need the permission of the occupied nations to implement the “final solution of the Jewish problem” (“Endlösung der Judenfrage”). It is worth reminding ourselves that long before the aggression of Hitler’s Germany in September 1939, the Nazi regime, without the help of representatives of other nations, had carried out various criminal undertakings.

In the case of the Dąbrowa Tarnowska region, located within the borders of the Generalgouvernement and created by the Third Reich in Polish occupied territory, the living conditions were, in fact, horrible. One could be sentenced to death (p. 75) for helping Jews or providing refuge for them, and this penalty was, indeed, carried out. Apart from that, group responsibility was utilised, so, as a result, not only the person helping Jews but also their whole family or the village population could be punished. In other words, the mass fear visible in Poland facilitated pathological behaviours, in this case, catching extermination survivors hiding in forest bunkers or village buildings.

G. refers to other forms of repression for helping Jews in the area of the Generalgouvernement as well (p. 75); he also mentions the responsibilities forced upon village communities, rural district council heads and borough leaders in the Dąbrowa Tarnowska region connected with catching escaped Jews. These responsibilities included organising the guarding of captured persons “posing a threat to the German nation”. Jews also belonged to this category (p. 73); upon their capture, they had to be delivered to the nearest military police or regular police station. To discourage villagers from freeing Jews being transported to the extermination camps, village authorities were forced to name a few farmers from every village that were to be kept as hostages. All this information is provided the reader of *Judenjagd*, but I consider the phrases “levy en masse” and “cooperation” (p. 85) as inappropriate for describing the participation of villagers in the Dąbrowa County in manhunts for hidden Jews. “Levy en masse” is a term used to describe the general movement of the Polish gentry to fight for the country in pre-Partition times; and “cooperation” is collaboration and voluntary. Therefore, the forced participation of peasants as guards in the manhunts for Jews cannot be considered cooperation with the German occupying forces.

In fact, the participation of villagers in manhunts or the killing of hiding Jews in the region of study constituted only a peripheral activity in this region. Numbers quoted by the author confirm this. As a result of such manhunts in Dąbrowa County in the years 1942-1945, 239 Jews were killed (p. 67); of these 99 murders are attributed by G. to Poles, both to the Blue Police and peasants. The latter committed as many as six murders (p. 69). Although every single death is to be mourned, it must be said that the numbers quoted in no way provide the basis for considering the activity as “cooperation” of the local people with the Nazi occupying forces; even the 99 victims of the *Judenjagd* by Poles constituted a mere 1.65 per cent of total number of Jews inhabiting Dąbrowa County before the initiation of the “Final Solution”.³

² GEORG BÖNISCH, JAN FRIEDMANN, CORDULA MEYER, MICHAEL SONTHEIMER, KLAUS WIEGREFE: *Der dunkle Kontinent*, in: *Der Spiegel* vom 18.05.2009.

³ Assuming that until May 1943, the region was inhabited by 6000 Jews.

The section on Poles helping Jews (pp. 153-168) raises reservations. The author differentiates between disinterested help and paid help; what is significant, though, is that he does not mention the dramatic economic situation in Poland under German occupation. Notabene, it was the raising of prices by the Germans and not greed of Poles that explains the practice of collecting ever larger sums of money from Jews for issuing fake documents to them.⁴ It should not be expected from extremely poor and often starving villagers to provide a refuge for Jews that could lead to a death sentence. The situation in the cities was even more difficult – rationed food meant only a few hundred calories per day, and prices on the black market were horrendous. In fact, helping one Jew involved several people; in the case of 50 to 150 Jews, as in Dąbrowa County (p. 53), hundreds of people had to be involved. How do the numbers presented relate to the alleged “cooperation” of villagers with German occupying forces?

What also raises my doubts as a reviewer is the chapter devoted to the anti-Semitic campaigning of the national camp in Poland in the 1930's. These doubts are not founded in the facts presented therein, namely the increasing radicalism of Polish society before World War II; they are all too well-known. Rather they are on the intentions of the author, who suggests a cause-and-effect correlation between Polish and Jewish animosity before the war and the participation of Poles in the “manhunts for Jews”. In fact, the correlation between pre-war anti-Semitism in Poland and concrete attitude of Poles towards Jews is uncertain. Consider this example: At the end of October 1938, as a result of the so-called “Polenaktion”, i.e. the forced deportation of Jews from the Third Reich a number of 17 000 destitute Polish Jews suddenly found themselves banished to the Second Polish Republic. Over 7000 of them found refuge in the border town of Zbąszyń in the Wielkopolska region. It was a region in which the national camp had significant influence; in January 1939 the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe) won the City Council elections in Zbąszyń. Despite this political situation, the Jewish refugees coming from Germany received first help from the local Polish community: from the local authorities, the landed gentry and ordinary citizens.⁵

If the author is looking for a correlation between anti-Jewish agitation on the one side and the manifestation of antisemitism among Poles in Dąbrowa County during World War II on the other, it is remarkable that he has devoted only four sentences to anti-Jewish propaganda (films, magazines, exhibition tours and posters) in Poland by the German occupying forces. There is enough literature available on this topic⁶; what is more, G. himself has contributed to it.⁷ Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda was far more destructive and effective – since it was organised by Germany – than the pre-war agitation of Polish anti-Semites, which was suppressed by Poland, examples of which can be found in *Judenjagd* (p. 27).

⁴ GRZEGORZ BERENDT: *Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po “aryjskiej stronie”* [The Price of Life – Economic Conditions of Existence for Jews “on the Aryan Side”], in: *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 110-143, here p. 141.

⁵ JERZY TOMASZEWSKI: *Preludium zagłady. Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938* [Prelude to extermination. The Exile of Polish Jews from Germany in 1938], Warszawa 1998, pp. 194-200. German edition: *Auftakt zur Vernichtung: Die Vertreibung polnischer Juden aus Deutschland im Jahre 1938*, Osnabrück 2002.

⁶ KLAUS-PETER FRIEDRICH: *Die deutsche polnischsprachige Presse im Generalgouvernement (1939-1945). NS-Propaganda für die polnische Bevölkerung*, in: *Publizistik* 46 (2001), 2, pp. 162-188.

⁷ See, among others, JAN GRABOWSKI: *Propaganda antyżydowska w Generalnej Guberni, 1939-1945* [Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1945], in: *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 6 (2010), pp. 117-158.

Apart from the above remarks and reservations, I nevertheless consider *Judenjagd* a valuable and useful work. The study constitutes, in fact, a good illustration of changes in local pathology taking place under German occupation in the area of the Generalgouvernement. It is no accident that the sources for *Judenjagd* constitute the testimonies of witnesses and accused made during post-war trials in connection with crimes committed against Jews. In fact, the proceeding files illustrate only a narrow part of social reality. The events described by G. were not relevant to all levels of society, which is confirmed by the fact that none of the murderers in the Dąbrowa tarnowska were teachers, priests or pre-war landowners, namely the social elite in the Polish village. Village authorities, who usually had no education, should not be considered part of the elite; rather, they were *primus inter pares* among village communities. Those sentenced in post-war Polish trials for crimes committed against Jews were usually persons of incomplete primary education, almost illiterate, and the fact that “most of them did not have any criminal past before the war” (p. 91) proves the efficiency of Nazi propaganda and the moral corruption at the hands of the occupying forces, which persecuted Jews and in doing so tried to prove that their lives were worthless.

Gdańsk

Przemysław Różański

Michael Meng: Shattered Spaces. Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland. Harvard Univ. Press. Cambridge/Mass. u.a. 2011. 351 S., 42 Ill., 4 Kt. ISBN 978-0-674-05303-8. (\$ 35,-.)

In this study, Michael Meng explores the story of the material traces of Jewish life in Berlin, Warsaw, Potsdam, Essen, and Wrocław over the postwar period. Focusing mostly on Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, M. connects analyses of urban spaces, historic preservation and memory in intriguing ways. He in turn relates their postwar stories to the evolution of German-Polish-Jewish relations, the growing cultural significance of the Holocaust and the recent rise of what he terms “redemptive cosmopolitanism” (p. 10, *passim*) – meant to provide a sense of closure.

In his first chapter, M. discusses restitution laws and practices, showing how communist Poland and East Germany “never officially returned one single piece of property to its postwar Jewish community” (p. 53). While external pressure made some difference in West Germany, there clearly was no deep societal impetus to return property there either. M. concludes that in this regard societal norms were not that different on the two sides of the Iron Curtain (pp. 58-59). In Chapter Two, M. explains how projects of urban renewal sacrificed Jewish sites: due to the confluent agendas of planners, preservationists, city officials and ordinary citizens, they were “swept away in the euphoria and promise of postwar urban reconstruction” (p. 108). Even though the restorative impulse was much stronger in Warsaw than in the two halves of Berlin that embraced a practical form of modernism, this did not imply significantly different approaches to Jewish spaces.

In Chapter Three, M. broadens his focus to show how in Essen, Potsdam and Wrocław few sites were neglected so thoroughly and destroyed with so little opposition as Jewish ones. Here again, the author demonstrates that due to its selectivity and ethnic biases even the more extensive reconstruction program of Wrocław failed to meaningfully incorporate Jewish sites. In a remarkable case of insensitivity, the monumental and relatively intact synagogue of Essen was transformed into an exhibition hall of industrial products in 1959, only to be turned into an exhibition on “the suffering, persecution, and resistance of the German population as a whole” (p. 203). M. argues that until a revision in the late 1980s, the exhibition in the Essen synagogue repeated the clichés of older anti-fascist interpretations and avoided the question of German involvement in the persecution of Jewish neighbours. In the meantime, Potsdam experienced “noisy” debates about architectural questions but its synagogue was destroyed in “stunning” silence (p. 149). The Polish regime, too, continued to neglect, destroy and even liquidate Jewish cemeteries into the 1980s.