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EVERYDAY LIVES IN OCCUPIED POLAND. SOME IDEAS FOR A (SLIGHTLY) DIFFERENT VIEW

Abstract

This article (or rather this essay) demonstrates several possibilities for a slightly different perspective on not so much everyday life during the occupation but on everyday lives. Only within the framework of the German occupation, which from the summer of 1941 covered almost the entire pre-war territory of Poland, the range of differences, both between administrative units (e.g., the General Government, the Wartheland or the Eastern Borderlands) as well as within them, between city and countryside, between individual social, professional, ethnic and age groups, was vast. The occupation was not a static and homogeneous phenomenon but a diverse and dynamic one, full of complex interactions. This text, based variously on the subject literature, published and archival sources (Polish and German), clandestine and official press, focuses on the following phenomena: the situation of Polish officials working for the occupation administration, mobility (both spatial and social – horizontal and vertical), relations between the city and the countryside, the breakdown of social norms, the wartime economy (with a greater than usually considered subjectivity of Polish actors) or the process of ‘taming’ the occupation (including terror), both materially and psychologically. The text may be treated as encouragement and invitation to interdisciplinary, methodologically innovative, cross-sectional research on Polish society during the Second World War.

Keywords: Poland, the Second World War, occupation, everyday life, city, countryside, Poles, Germans, Jews

In January 1945, a physical inventory was carried out at the Izaak Mingelgrün Cosmetics Wholesale Store in Cracow (21 Krakowska Street), showing the range of goods in its possession as of 31 December 1944. Among several hundred products, the company carried various types of perfumes (including the French ‘Soir de Paris’), powders (among others, ‘Chanel’ and ‘Jordan’), creams (such as the promising ‘Podhale

Blossom'), four kinds of lipsticks, shampoos, floral waters, brilliantine, eyebrow pencils, liquid blushes, soaps (from curd to luxury), nail polishes, depilatory products, suede stone for shoes, a large selection of toiletries such as brushes, tweezers or tins for cosmetics (down, velour and plush) and more exotic (to us) products such as Pajerski's dandruff gel, Seeger brilliantine, dry perfume or almond bran. Most of these products were supplied not so much by large German or French cosmetic companies but by manufacturers located in the General Government, including those in Cracow ('Miraculum', 'Olimpia'), Warsaw and Częstochowa.¹

This document, probably not unique, may be a starting point for a slightly different look at everyday life under the occupation, or rather – as I indicated in the title – of daily lives. It shows social diversity, not only poverty but also prosperity. It allows us to see the meticulously overlooked corners of the occupation economy, needs and emotions, youth and beauty, and constant functioning on the threshold of different worlds, mainly Polish, German, and Jewish. The following text does not aspire to the rank of an in-depth historical, anthropological, or economic analysis; it is somewhat closer to an essay bird's view of a few poorly cultivated or even forgotten fallow fields of history of the occupation. It may be treated as encouragement and an invitation to interdisciplinary, methodologically innovative, cross-sectional research on Polish society during the Second World War.

The vast literature which has grown around 'everyday life' exempts the author from the obligation of a typical theoretical introduction, except for the most general statement that it is "something like a shapeless sack" (Eric Hobsbawm), into which one can throw virtually anything. In the case of Polish everyday life under occupation, the content of this sack is both relatively modest and predominantly random. Entering the keyword 'everyday life' (3 January 2022) into the combined catalogues of the Polish National Library resulted in 9633 items, of which 'everyday life – Poland – 1939–1945' amounted to only 368. The change of Poland to Warsaw gave 186 results, Cracow – 41, Poznań – 13, Łódź – 26, Lviv – 18, Katowice – 8, city – 53, countryside – 39. Entering the search word 'Poles' yielded 84 results,

¹ Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (hereinafter: ANK), Zbiór Zespołów Szczątkowych (hereinafter: ZZS), 29/426/44, n.p.

'Jews' – 122, 'workers' – 9, 'peasants' – 5, 'landowners' – 25. Due to the unpredictability of the catalogue algorithm, mixing multi-volume works and short articles, monographs and memoirs, one can argue about the credibility and representativeness of these results. Still, they allow us to draw more general yet not very encouraging conclusions.

While there are many monographs on everyday life in Warsaw, Vilnius, Lviv, Poznań or Katowice, there are no holistic, comparative studies that would break down the existing boundaries, including geographic ones.² Polish, Jewish, or (more recently) German³ everyday life is presented separately, while Belarusian or Ukrainian everyday life is practically ignored in Polish historiography. While there is a growing interest in the countryside (especially in the landowners),⁴ the workers (except for forced labour workers⁵) and the (petty) bourgeoisie remain deep in the shadows. The focus remains on the General Government, especially Warsaw. In its case, the most distinctive group are popular texts about the Warsaw Uprising, in which the line between popularisation and trivialisation is sometimes thin. On the other hand, popular depictions cannot be dismissed, as exemplified by Aleksandra Zaprutko-Janicka's *Okupacja od kuchni. Kobięca sztuka przetrwania* [Occupation from the Kitchen. The Female Art of Survival; Kraków, 2015], which could be bought at gas stations and at the same time offered a slightly different, discussion-provoking perspective.

² The validity of such an approach is demonstrated by the monumental (1,374 pages) primary source edition devoted to provisioning and the fight against hunger in all occupied Europe. The 600 documents translated into English have been arranged not geographically or problematically, but chronologically. Tatjana Tönsmeier, Peter Haslinger, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stefan Martens, and Irina Sherbakova (eds), in cooperation with Francis Igrave and Agnes Laba, *Fighting Hunger, Dealing with Shortage. Everyday Life under Occupation in World War II Europe: A Source Edition*, i-ii (Leiden–Boston, 2021).

³ *I.a.*, Stephen Lehnstaedt, *Besatzeralldag in Warschau und Minsk 1939–1944* (München, 2010); Monika Bednarek and Katarzyna Zimmerer, *Okupanci. Niemcy w Krakowie 1939–1945* (Kraków, 2017).

⁴ Cf. Janusz Gmitruk and Ewa Leniart (eds), *Represje wobec wsi i ruchu ludowego (1939–1945). Wieś polska między dwoma totalitaryzmami*, iii (Warszawa, 2009); especially: Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, 'Dzień powszedni na wsi polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką', in *ibid.*, 139–52, and Włodzimierz Ważniewski, 'Dzień powszedni na wsi polskiej pod okupacją sowiecką', in *ibid.*, 153–70.

⁵ Cf. Katarzyna Woniak, *Zwangswelten. Emotions- und Alltagsgeschichte polnischer 'Zivilarbeiter' in Berlin 1939–1945* (Paderborn, 2020).

I
HOW MANY OCCUPATIONS?

But even that work, although advertised as “the first book about the culinary resourcefulness of Polish women during the Second World War”, rarely goes beyond the borders of Warsaw, still giving direction to the narrative about the entire occupation. Meanwhile, there was no ‘one’ occupation and no ‘one’ experience of it, and thus no single ‘everyday life’. The differences between the German and Soviet occupations are usually noted (see footnotes 4 and 6), but not those within the German occupation.⁶ Meanwhile, the palette of differences, sometimes even endemic, not only between individual administrative units of the occupied country, the General Government, the Wartheland, Pomerania, Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, Silesia or the Eastern Borderlands, but also within them, between the city and the countryside, between particular social, professional, ethnic, and age groups, was broad.

The very terminology of the occupation geography points to differences – for a citizen of Warsaw, Poznań was in the Reich; for the citizen of Poznań, Warsaw was in the Protectorate. At the same time, mutual knowledge was considerable, and for a Polish inhabitant of the Wartheland, the General Government, despite the immensity of terror and exploitation, was a kind of promised land where one could speak Polish without fear, go to Polish churches, learn, read Polish newspapers, and participate in economic life as a subject, not an object. Most peasants maintained their farms, landowners – estates, clergy – churches, and petty bourgeoisie – workshops and stores. It is no wonder that a Poznań railwayman, unknown by name, withdrew from the deportation transport to the General Government due to his profession, recalled in 1946: “We are waiting for the next time. Unfortunately, they did not come. We had to live with this bunch for so many years!”⁷ However, there was no shortage of more creative, mobile, and courageous individuals who flexibly adapted to changing conditions, knowing how to take advantage of the occupation regula-

⁶ Marek Wierzbicki, ‘Życie codzienne Polaków pod okupacjami: wymiar materialny i psychologiczny’, in Tomasz Schramm and Paweł Skubisz (eds), *Jak Polacy przeżywali wojny światowe* (Szczecin, 2016), 191–220.

⁷ Instytut Zachodni w Poznaniu (hereinafter: IZ), *Archiwum II Wojny Światowej*, II-171, 2.

tions, analysing opportunities, and taking risks. The typical attitude was that of a Poznań inhabitant who, seeing no possibility of surviving in his hometown, decided at the turn of 1939 and 1940:

to go to Lublin [in the General Government], where ... Poles traded relatively peacefully. ... There, I leased a commercial space from a Jew and travelled to Łódź to buy textile products ..., and in this way, I created an existence for myself. My wife wrote me desperate letters from Poznań about the deportations of Poles. ... Thanks to my connections, I obtained passes in Lublin for my family and me in Poznań. I took those passes to Poznań, and that's how I took my family to Lublin.⁸

II

THE FACES OF MOBILITY

This is illustrated by several phenomena that are as common as they are barely noticed, from the role of social networks to mobility, both in traditional, spatial, and social terms, as well as social horizontal and vertical mobility. While the geographical mobility during the occupation is primarily associated with a whole range of forced migrations, we rarely notice the scale of more or less voluntary movements, economic (work, trade), social, or related to the psychological necessity of changing the environment. Although travelling during the occupation was a traumatic experience, a considerable part of the population, especially city dwellers, was in constant motion, both within 'their' wartime administrative units and crossing the borders between them *en masse*, legally and illegally. This was a necessity in life, as the boundaries were drawn up without regard for previous divisions and social or economic ties (e.g., the border between the General Government and Regierungsbezirk Zichenau ran less than 20 kilometres from Warsaw).

There were also individuals able to travel literally across all of occupied Europe, creatively exploiting German regulations and infrastructure and treating the Organisation Todt (OT) as a travel agency.

"While others saw in OT only a fascist oppressor and explorer", wrote Leopold Tyrmand in his autobiographical short story,

⁸ *Ibid.*, II-63, Stanisław Krzymański, 'Wspomnienia z czasów okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945 r.'.

Poles saw something else in it, namely, the possibility of great business. ... Jan Majewski would sign up voluntarily at the OT recruitment point in Warsaw. As a volunteer, he had the right to choose his place of work. He would take "Marschbefehl" ... to Kursk or Voronezh, stock up on a few kilos of lard, a few hundred cigarettes, and go. In the lonely depths of Russia, he would sell food and vodka to drunken, bestial SS-men, taking payment from them in gold earrings and wedding bands, looted in Polish ghettos and death camps. Then he would forge ... a holiday pass and travel across Europe, stopping as far as Paris, where he would buy a shipment of perfume in the black-market havens on rue de Rivoli, with which he would return to Warsaw. Everywhere, of course, travelling in a railroad carriage "für OT Arbeiter", taking food at the train stations from OT cauldrons ... equipped with any scrap of paper ... stating that its owner is a railway worker ("Bahnaushilfsarbeiter x...") in town X in France, Russia, or Yugoslavia and that's where he's going.⁹

Of course, it is difficult to assess the scale of the phenomenon, but it is confirmed both by the memoirs of Józef Makowski, who wandered (and traded) between Minsk, Warsaw, Vienna, and Paris,¹⁰ and by the case of the Spaniard Marian Sanchez, who resided in Paris after the end of the civil war. Employed in Vichy at the local BMW branch, he was transferred to Warsaw in November 1942. While working, among others, for the Luftwaffe, he "received passes from the Germans, which allowed him to travel to Paris several times ..., where he also ... would buy various haberdashery materials, then selling them in Warsaw".¹¹

Jan Szczepański, a sociologist, was a good example of a mobile 'forward-looking strategy'. Stemming from Cieszyn Silesia, incorporated into the Reich, he was subjected to several kinds of threats – as a Polish intellectual, he was condemned to exclusion or extermination, threatened with deportation to the General Government, the Volksliste (and with it the possibility of conscription to the Wehrmacht), and finally forced labour. He chose the latter, but on his terms, arranging for himself employment in Vienna. He went there with his family,

⁹ Leopold Tyrmand, *Hotel Ansgar i inne opowiadania* (Warszawa, 2001), 68; cf. Emilia Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza w Organizacji Todt w Norwegii i Finlandii w latach 1941–1945* (Toruń, 1999).

¹⁰ Józef Makowski, *Wehrmachtgefolge* (Warszawa, 1961).

¹¹ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (hereinafter: AIPN), 00231/195, i, 63–4, Information on Marian Sanchez, 3 June 1955.

leading a life that did not differ from that of an average Viennese (if such a person regularly visited the National Library), and the entries in his diary are far from typical narratives about forced labour. “Yesterday after lunch”, he wrote on 23 August 1942, “the beach, a cinema with singing, and then comfortable armchairs on the square in front of the Votivkirche ..., Vienna and our compensation in captivity”.¹²

By choosing spatial mobility, Szczepański avoided horizontal, intergroup mobility, which involved a voluntary or forced, and more or less apparent change of (ethnic) identity: a Jew most often became a Pole (although, for example, Leopold Tyrmand became a Frenchman), a Pole – a German, Ukrainian or Goral Highlander [*góral*]. These were both natural and automatic decisions motivated by national consciousness, as well as opportunism or those determined on physical survival. This phenomenon has already been well described (although there is no study, for example, of the everyday life of the Volksdeutsche, either in the territories annexed to the Reich or in the General Government). But there were also, still poorly researched, peculiar intermediate stages, inspired both by the occupiers and the occupied’s conscious choice. The former include, for example, the ‘Union of Efficient Poles’ [Verband der Leistungspolen], initiated in 1942, primarily in the Wartheland, and to a lesser extent in Silesia and Pomerania, whose members – ‘honestly working’ Poles – received higher wages and rations. The reaction of the Polish society was, in most cases, hostile, and those enrolled were called, after the letters LP on their ID cards, ‘Lousy Poles’ or ‘Lumpen-Polen’. Eventually, for example, in the Cegielski Plants in Poznań, out of 14 thousand Polish workers, about 2 per cent were in the ranks of ‘Leistungspolen’. In 1943, the action was practically abandoned.¹³ On the other hand, such ‘intermediate groups’ formed spontaneously (albeit under the conditions created by the occupying power), for example, among Polish forced labourers who

¹² Jan Szczepański, *Dzienniki z lat 1935–1945*, ed. Daniel Kadłubiec (Ustroń, 2009), 155.

¹³ Mieczysław Adamczyk, Janusz Gmitruk, and Władysław Ważniewski (eds), *Ziemia Zachodnie: październik 1942 – czerwiec 1944. Raporty Sekcji Zachodniej Delegatury Rządu na Kraj o sytuacji ludności polskiej i polityce okupanta* (Warszawa, 2004), 71–3, 101, 121. Paradoxically, we know more about the reckoning of ‘Leistungspolen’ after the war than about their experiences during the occupation. Krzysztof Strykowski, ‘Położenie Polaków “wydajnie pracujących” (Leistungspolen) w Wielkopolsce w latach 1945–1946’, *Poznański Rocznik Archiwalno-Historyczny*, viii/ix (2001/2002), 165–79.

were by no means monolithic. The stratification, primarily on a regional basis, was probably a spontaneous process, although undoubtedly convenient for and accepted by the employers. As it was reported at the beginning of 1944, especially the inhabitants of Poznań, who,

thanks to their knowledge of the German language, resourcefulness, and practical sense, they were able ... usually to take relatively privileged, often supervisory, positions with respect to Poles. Hence the bitterness of other Poles towards them, particularly common among inhabitants of Warsaw, Łódź and other representatives of the former 'Congress Poland' [Kongresówka]. They accuse Poles from the Poznań Voivodeship that, to secure a comfortable material position, they do not shy away from ridiculing, openly criticising, and allegedly sometimes even denouncing other Poles to the supervisors and German supervisory personnel. ... One also often hears the accusation that 'they maintain too familiar relations with German women'.¹⁴

While in the case of Jews, the change of identity gave them a chance for survival, in the case of Poles, it allowed them to mitigate the effects of probably the most common type of mobility during the occupation – a vertical one, which involved, among other things, mass, instantaneous relegations or promotions, pauperisation or enrichment. The war and occupation overturned the old social ladder, pauperised, and equalised the society, but did not erase the differences between the 'everyday life' of the intelligentsia, the remnants of the bourgeoisie (sic!), landowners, petty bourgeoisie, workers, or peasants, while at the same time delineating new and deepening old divisions both between individual groups and within them. Our knowledge of these phenomena is still incomplete, even in the case of the most identified intelligentsia. But even what we do know is primarily based on skilful self-presentation. Warsaw lawyers can serve as an example.

On the one hand, they suffered enormous losses from the beginning of the war, playing an important role in the underground.¹⁵ On the

¹⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Delegatura Rządu na Kraj (hereinafter: AAN, DRnK), 202/V-2, 26-7; Cf. Woniak, *Zwangswelten*, 248–93. On similar situations among 'free' workers, see IZ, II-213, Kazimierz Józef Krenz, 'Wspomnienia własnych przeżyć', 52–5.

¹⁵ Witold Bayer, 'Samorząd adwokacki w dobie walki z okupacją hitlerowską: (przyczynki do dziejów adwokatury polskiej w okresie 1939–1945)', *Palestra*, xii, 11 (1968), 35–57; Jerzy Dębski, *Polscy adwokaci w obozie koncentracyjnym Auschwitz 1940–1945* (Oświęcim, 2016).

other, when in the spring of 1940, the occupying authorities asked 718 Polish advocates in Warsaw about their attitude towards their Jewish colleagues, 579 said they were in favour of their outright exclusion, 10 were against, 89 in favour of *numerus clausus*, 11 abstained, 29 did not take part in the survey.¹⁶ Although the organisers described it as “completely objective” [*durchaus objektive Befragung*], it is difficult to assess both this fact and the respondents’ intentions. On the other hand, the arrest of advocates (such as, for example, on 17 April 1940 in the cafeteria of the Warsaw Bar Council) did not stop some of their colleagues who remained free from profitably administering the ‘Aryanised’ tenements (in April 1941 – 3477: 2675 on the ‘Aryan side’ and 1069 in the ghetto).¹⁷

III

ON THE JOB: BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

While the everyday life of ‘independent intellectuals’ has been well diagnosed, there are still groups suspended between the occupiers and the occupied: judges, policemen, postal workers, tax collectors, mayors and village heads, and engineering staff in armaments plants.¹⁸ We still know little about their motivations, fears, ambitions, hopes and frustrations. They found themselves between Scylla and Charybdis, the occupation legislation and repression on the one hand, and loyalty to their fellow citizens, the Polish state and its authorities operating in exile or underground on the other. It was a difficult choice, threatened with punishment from all sides: loss of employment, camp or even death, at the hands of both the occupiers and the Polish underground, intentionally (like the commander of the Warsaw Polish Police, Colonel Aleksander Reszczyński, shot on 5 March 1943 by a People’s Guard militia) or accidentally (as, for example, the Polish officials of the Issuing Bank killed during the so-called ‘Highlander’ action

¹⁶ AIPN, Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich (hereinafter: GK), 196/271, Report of the Head of the Warsaw District, 11 March – 10 April 1940, 163.

¹⁷ AIPN, GK 196/281, Report of the Governor of the Warsaw District for April 1941, 12 May 1941, 78.

¹⁸ On architects, see Małgorzata Popiołek-Roßkamp, ‘Architects in the General Government: Activities, Reckoning, Memory’, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, lxx, 4 (2021), 663–88.

on 12 August 1943).¹⁹ The underground authorities took a flexible approach to the problem of loyalty and pledges made by the officials to the German authorities, noting that such declarations had no legal force whatsoever; but, on the other hand, they set the boundary of opportunism.²⁰

In the case of professional groups such as policemen or tax officials, also behaviours loyal to fellow citizens were somewhat automatically put under the whipping post of Polish opinion and placed on the brink of exclusion. For example, even ordinances and interventions by the Polish policemen were deliberately ignored, while, at the same time, “German police and gendarmerie stations are inundated with complaints, denunciations, and anonymous letters. The most trivial matters are handed over to the Germans for decision, the occupier is called to intervene in all kinds of disputes and quarrels”.²¹ It often led to a wait-and-see, possibly neutral position. This was noted, for example, by Zygmunt Klukowski, an insightful observer of the occupation reality, after the attack (on 4 August 1942) on the Municipal Savings Bank [Komunalna Kasa Oszczędności, KKO] in Szczepczeszyn:

It is worth noting a characteristic detail: the owner of the Materna tobacco warehouse, who lived almost opposite the KKO, having seen that armed people were standing in the street near the Bank, telephoned the post office, but the clerk on duty was afraid to report this to the police or gendarmerie station. So, we are living under multiple terrors – German, Bolshevik, Polish partisans, and ordinary bandits.²²

On the other hand, the privileged position was used to such an extent that in December 1942, the *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, the most important Polish underground weekly, reported on the increasingly ruthless bribery practices of Polish public functionaries.

The whole of Poland knows these people’s difficult material situation and is willingly happy to help when it can voluntarily. **But what deserves the**

¹⁹ Incidentally, the management of the Issuing Bank [Bank Emisyjny] used the death of its employees as an argument in application to the occupation authorities for larger ration cards allocations, AAN, Bank Emisyjny w Polsce, 77, Zarząd Główny BE do Arbeitsamtu w Krakowie, 21 Sept. 1943, 3–4.

²⁰ *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (hereinafter: BI), 12 Dec. 1940 and 16 Jan. 1941.

²¹ BI, 26 April 1940.

²² Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna 1918–1959* (Warszawa, 2017), 315.

strongest condemnation is the ruthless exploitation by many clerks and public officials of their position to extort ruinous bribes and ransoms from their fellow citizens.²³

Business people who collaborated with the occupiers had already been criticised much earlier. “What we have in mind here”, wrote the *Biuletyn Informacyjny* of 5 December 1940,

is the servility of, for example, Marian Turski (director of an export institute, whose wife Bandrowska-Turska sings in one of the Warsaw theatres for no good reason) and Stanisław Rudzyński (head of a department of the Ministry of Industry and Trade). These gentlemen hold well-paid positions in agencies of the Bacon Association, which – under the commissary management of Mr Litwinowicz – organises the production of canned food, exclusive purchase of leather and valuable slaughter waste – for the Reich, of course. The Turski mentioned above went so far as to print himself business cards “von Turski”, which is supposed to facilitate his relations with the occupying authorities. Disgusting!²⁴

IV THE EXCLUDED ECONOMY

This prompts us to look at a virtually unknown corner of the occupation economy, which we naturally and understandably perceive, through the prism of exploitation, on the one hand, destruction and forced labour, and social resistance on the other. In the ‘Polish’ context, it is associated with objectivity rather than subjectivity, not so much with the agency as with various degrees of subordination. Meanwhile, above all, in the General Government, there existed opportunities for legal or quasi-legal economic activity and a large group of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, owners of manufacturing, trading, service, and construction companies, acting both individually and as part of or under the guise of a cooperative (such as the rapidly growing ‘Społem’), were able to generate sometimes enormous profits during the occupation. These could be either companies remaining in the hands of their former owners, or those (Polish and Jewish) taken over by *Treuhänder*,²⁵

²³ BI, 10 Dec. 1942 [emphasis in original].

²⁴ BI, 5 Dec. 1940.

²⁵ Cf. Jan Grabowski, ‘Polscy zarządcy powierniczy majątku żydowskiego. Zarys problematyki’, *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 1 (2005), 253–60; *id.*, ‘Zarząd Powierniczy

who often, also in the territories incorporated into the Reich, played a more or less facile role, leaving the Polish – and until a certain time also Jewish – personnel a relatively large amount of freedom. Often the function of trustees was assumed by Polish resettlers from Greater Poland or Pomerania, in whose competence and loyalty the occupying forces had more confidence than in the local people, entangled in local networks. In any case, in mid-1942, 220 trustees administered 913 plants taken over in the Warsaw district: 85 Poles, 70 Reichs- and 51 Volksdeutsche, one Russian and one Ukrainian.²⁶

The functioning of both legal, semi-legal and completely illegal businesses required a great deal of material and social capital, creativity and mobility, the establishment of widely branched social networks, often supra-regional or even transnational, with frequent close cooperation with the occupier (including services for the Wehrmacht, etc.) and daily violations of the laws established by the occupier. It is estimated that around 5,000 illegal factories were operating in Warsaw alone – alcohol, food, textiles, leather, household goods, furniture, and cosmetics. Characteristically, this illegal production:

was carried out in a completely irrational manner, in private homes, such as, for example, the production of textiles in small handicraft workshops, the preparation of tobacco and production of cigarettes, ... fabrication of specific chemical and pharmaceutical products, primitive tanning of leather, etc. Interestingly, this organisational primitivism did not always go hand in hand with the primitivism of technical methods; on the contrary, these methods were sometimes extremely ingenious and sophisticated, producing a high-quality product.²⁷

A look at the occupation's 'excluded economy'²⁸ allows for a better understanding of both the assortment of the above-mentioned Cracow

i nieruchomości żydowskie w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie. "Co można skonfiskować? W zasadzie wszystko", in Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka (eds), *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warszawa, 2014), 73–112; Adam Puławski, 'Funkcjonowanie urzędu powierniczego na przykładzie Chełma', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 13 (2017), 399–436.

²⁶ AIPN, GK 196/285, Report of the Governor of the Warsaw District for June and July 1942, 15 Aug. 1942, 184.

²⁷ Waclaw Jastrzębowski, *Gospodarka niemiecka w Polsce 1939–1944* (Warszawa, 1946), 355.

²⁸ Kazimierz Wyka, 'The Excluded Economy', in Janine R. Wedel (ed.), *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism* (New York, 1992), 23–61.

wholesaler (and probably hundreds of others), and the fact that the unimaginable occupation poverty and pauperisation were accompanied by wealth and luxury, which were inherent features of the occupation in both large cities, Warsaw or Poznań, and in the deep province. “There were traders”, recalled in 1946 Mieczysław Szymański of Poznań,

who made large fortunes during the war. One such guy had about RM ½ million invested in foreign currencies and gold. They were a perfectly harmonious clan. They did not work, sow, or plough, but they harvested. They were most often found in cafés. They were equipped with the most convincing and authentic work cards and other documents allowing them to move freely ‘without fear of roundup for fun’.²⁹

A physician expelled from Pomerania, practising in the tiny (but near an important railway line) town of Pilawa, 50 km from Warsaw, recalled:

The Engineering Company from Warsaw was located near the railway depot in Pilawa, which built large storage halls for the railroad. After their completion, it took over reloading of railroad materials. ... In Pilawa there was a permanent representative of this company, allegedly an engineer, ... [who] often invited me to evening parties, when he received his Warsaw guests. ... The dishes served were exquisite. ... Before the war, I had not encountered such delicious cuisine even in prosperous manors, Warsaw hotels, or first-class restaurants.³⁰

The enormous income from (un)official business or corruption enabled both such ‘luxurious and lucrative feasts’,³¹ as well as the investment of profits in collectable items, real estate, gold, foreign currencies or works of art. Some occupation beneficiaries may seem surprising to us. For example, a janitor in the Warsaw courts building, which was an important route between the ghetto and the ‘Aryan side’ of the city, as early as February 1941, a few months after the establishment of a ‘Jewish quarter’, could buy a plot of land from the writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in the suburban, exclusive Podkowa Leśna.

I had to go ... to the Office of land registry [*Hipoteka*] to sell the plot to a certain court janitor on Leszno [Street] – Iwaszkiewicz noted on

²⁹ IZ, II-316, Szymański, 134.

³⁰ IZ, II-393, Bronisław Truszczyński, ‘Wyjątek autobiografii 1939–1945’, 110.

³¹ ‘Syrena i ...paskarze’, *Nowy Głos Lubelski* (6 May 1942), 103.

23 February 1941, – ... Now there is a lot of traffic in *Hipoteka*, people like my janitor earn some extra money and “secure” their capital by buying real estate. ... After the deed was drawn up – a surprise. My janitor invites me to dinner at his place. He does it in such a way that I can’t get out of anything despite my best efforts. ... Dinner at the janitor’s ... is wonderful: herring as an appetiser with vodka, then red borscht with dumplings, roasted turkey, and compote. Black coffee *eo ipso*, which is rare nowadays. I have not drunk it at home for a long time.³²

This was not the only farewell to stereotypes. Still common, down-right created by underground publications, was the traditional model of the domestic black-market shark, closely collaborating with the occupiers and ruthless towards compatriots. He was usually shown as a self-satisfied, well-dressed (though often old-fashioned), plump man, often against the background of symbols of both luxury (e.g., an elegant restaurant) and wartime poverty, a war invalid beggar and or a woman in rags.³³ However, this portrait was already misleading to a considerable extent. “From the period of the previous war, we always imagine *Nowobogacki* [*Nouveauriche*] as a fat, plump gentleman”, it was noted in the official Lublin daily, “Meanwhile, in various venues, one can see twentysomething youngsters flaunting their easily made money. They are gold and [German] marks dealers from the Napoleon Square, middlemen, sellers of saccharine, bone-in-meat [*rąbanka*], cigarettes. ... Hyenas!”³⁴

The occupation icon – a young man completely involved in the underground, was not at odds with both the existence of the contesting ‘tombac youth’,³⁵ nor with the fact that it was precisely the

³² Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1911–1955*, ed. Agnieszka and Robert Papiescy (Warszawa, 2007), 175–6.

³³ Grzegorz Załęski, *Satyra w konspiracji 1939–1944* (Warszawa, 1958), 45–8; *Warszawa 1939–1944. Satyra konspiracyjna oraz okupacyjna rzeczywistość w rysunkach polskich grafików*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museum of Caricature in Warsaw, February–May 2012 (Warszawa, 2012), 61, 65.

³⁴ ‘Syrena i ... paskarze’.

³⁵ Before the war, young people who put on display their origins from wealthy homes were called ‘golden youth’. During the occupation, the demonstrating youth were only ‘tombac’, meaning a metal alloy imitating gold; Krzysztof Trojanowski, ‘Paryscy “zazous” i warszawska “tombakowa młodzież”’. Fenomen odmienności obyczajowej w dobie niemieckiej okupacji’, in Justyna Żychlińska and Anetta Głowacka-Penczyńska (eds), *Inny, obcy, potwór. Kulturowo-społeczne aspekty odmienności przez wieki* (Bydgoszcz, 2016), 253–60.

youth who adapted to the extreme conditions of war and occupation more quickly than the older generation, breaking ethical and moral barriers more easily. The often-emphasised participation is characteristic of both the ‘junaks’ [young workers] from *Baudienst* and the ‘ordinary’ inhabitants of villages, cities, and towns in capturing and even murdering Jews.³⁶ The participation of the former is more easily explained by confinement in the barracks and coercion, of the latter it is more complicated.

On the one hand, strength, cunning, and violence were components of the traditional habitus of young people in the countryside. On the other hand, widespread social anomie, pauperisation, weakening of family and group control, and premature enforced independence influenced the behaviour of young people, both in the countryside and in the cities. “The deepening impoverishment and disorganisation of life”, it was noted in September 1941 in the report of the Government Delegation for Poland,

influenced in the reporting period the further loosening of the ethical attitude among a considerable number of young people, especially from the poorest spheres, and the intensification of the symptoms of demoralisation and degeneration. It manifested itself, especially in the significant increase of thefts, often connected with an *ad hoc* robbery. ... Young people who are more nationally conscious and in better living conditions still retain a proper attitude.³⁷

“Only the strongest characters resisted the negative influences of wartime”, wrote a parish priest at Przeworsk, summing up the year 1941, “The rest of the citizens, unfortunately, got carried away by the evil wave. Theft, dishonesty, hatred, jealousy, drunkenness, debauchery, and denunciation flowed even wider than in the previous year...”.³⁸

³⁶ Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (eds), *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, ii (Warszawa, 2018), 103, 105, 134. The English edition is forthcoming in 2022 with Indiana University Press.

³⁷ AAN, DRnK, 202/VIII-4, social situation, 20 Sept. 1941, 30.

³⁸ „Kronika” ks. Romana Pencza proboszcza w Przeworsku. *Lata 1939–1944*, ed. Szczepan Kozak (Przeworsk, 2018), 94.

V
IMAGE OF LIMITED GOODS

The following year, along with the liquidation of ghettos and the culmination of the Holocaust, widespread participation in the plunder of Jewish property was added to this catalogue of plagues. When explaining this phenomenon, Marcin Zaremba recalled George M. Foster's classic concept of an "image of limited goods",³⁹ according to which a Polish peasant or a city proletarian could improve their situation not so much by social advancement, but only at the expense of others, in this case, Jews.⁴⁰ It seems necessary to view this problem more broadly, also as a reaction of the lower social classes to the lost statehood and the lack of a sense of belonging to 'civil society'. Mass robbery (I am not talking here about the 'everyday' common, occupation-era banditry) was characteristic of the entire war, it was by no means limited to the excluded groups, and the arguments 'better us than a stranger' had not only a Jewish context. The plunder of state and private property began as early as September 1939. "Robberies have begun in the city", noted the priest in Przeworsk mentioned above.

A hungry and demoralised soldier smashed closed shops, and the local and surrounding area population, especially various social scum, took advantage of the opportunity. We have been waiting for this for twenty years, some have openly said. Sugar factories and warehouses were primarily attacked. ... There were wagons at the station with grain and livestock. They were fully exploited. Later ... stores and private homes abandoned by their owners were targeted. Not only that. Even houses whose owners had only left for a short while were looted, and sometimes the owner's presence was ignored. ... It was strange and incomprehensible for everyone that the churches were always full on Sundays and holidays ... but all this did not prevent some people from robbing and destroying other people's property. Not only the poor plundered but also the rich.⁴¹

It was similar throughout the entire country, including Warsaw. Later, such scenes were repeated after the escape of the Soviet authorities

³⁹ George M. Foster, 'Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good', *American Anthropologist*, 2 (1965), 293–315.

⁴⁰ Marcin Zaremba, 'Efekt Lucyfera w polskim powieciu', *Przegląd Historyczny*, cx, 1 (2019), 128–9.

⁴¹ „Kronika” ks. Romana Penca, 12, 23.

from the Eastern Borderlands [Kresy Wschodnie] in the summer of 1941, during the withdrawal of the Germans in 1944/45, during the Warsaw Uprising (and after it), with a grand finale in the form of the ‘great looting’ of former German lands after the war.⁴²

VI THE POLES: CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE

While the cities belonged to the losers, those in the countryside were the beneficiary, especially in the General Government, where most of the land remained in the hands of Polish peasants and landowners. They took revenge for the disastrous agricultural policy in the interwar period, degrading the patriarchy of the authorities and low prices of farm products. It is also not surprising that a peasant from Łuków argued in April 1940 to “Your Excellency Governor Franko in Cracow” (although the intended addressee was “Mr Adolf Hytler”) that Polish farmers were satisfied with the current authorities while hatefully recalling pre-war regime, when officials “drove around, took pillows, pigs, and whatever they liked. And in the houses, there were as many tax officials as black crows in a field”. Leaving them on duty after the collapse of the state prompted the peasant to appeal: “we ask the honourable Mr Chancellor Mr Hitler as a customs officer of our country, that the Landrats [starosts, county governors] of the counties should not listen to remaining Polish officials as to how they should govern but govern over them themselves according to their own mind

⁴² “The population shamelessly rushed to plunder the headquarters building in P’s house, Soviet barracks in the rectory and the buildings constructed in the church garden, and finally the cooperative and the cooperative warehouse in M.’s house”, the parish priest of the borderland parish described on the spur of the moment the reactions of his parishioners to the escape of the Soviet authorities – People drove there in wagons, taking everything and tearing apart whatever was there, breaking windows, beating and maiming each other. According to eyewitnesses, a formal orgy of robbery took place there, such that it was repulsive to look at it. Abandoned apartments of Soviet women were plundered, window frames were torn out along with the windows, locks from the doors, also at the presbytery the windows were smashed, everything that could be taken was taken; even at the presbytery, stove doors and door locks were ripped off”; *Życie codzienne pod okupacją sowiecką i niemiecką. Dziennik ks. Mariana Lisa, proboszcza parafii Lubotyń*, ed. Józef Łupiński (Łomża, 2013), 54–5. Cf. Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków, 2012), 280–313.

and we ask for further removing of thieves and bandits because the Polish peasant already sleeps better and even the dogs are calm. ... Long live Hitler”, he concluded, “long live German army and continued good luck to you”.⁴³

The belief that German rule would bring improvement was neither sporadic nor unfounded at the beginning of the occupation. The supply difficulties in the cities grew faster than the size of quotas. The Polish countryside developed defence mechanisms more easily than modern Danish or Dutch agriculture, thanks to natural farming methods. It was more efficient in confusing surveillance, and thanks to corruption, it was easier to reach a compromise with lower levels of the occupation authorities. The countryside now dictated terms and prices to the city, which had to accept this sudden role reversal while sparing no negative, patriarchal comments. A judge from Lublin noted in his diary on 19 March 1940: “They say that the peasants are very happy: they don’t pay taxes. They do not see Germans in their villages, they sell everything for a high price, and they do not feel the war. Maybe it is so, but not for long...”.⁴⁴

A landowner from near Sandomierz echoed him a few weeks later: “The vast majority of the production, all peasant-led, is getting out of control”, he noted on 6 May 1940. “Cities are fed almost exclusively by farms ..., while the peasant is usually insensitive to the misery of his neighbour, he makes money quickly and pays off all his debts”.⁴⁵ Beginning in the second half of 1941, along with the change in the occupiers’ policy towards the countryside, increased burdens and stricter controls, official propaganda joined in the complaints about the peasants. Just as the underground publications perpetuated the above-mentioned stereotypical image of the urban beneficiary of the war, the Polish-language occupation press imposed in the years 1941–2 a pattern, including visual and terminological, of the greedy, ruthless peasant.

Initially, there was an attempt at irony, relying on stereotypes and traditionally treating peasants as lost, wandering children.

⁴³ AAN, Rząd Generalnego Gubernatorstwa, 422/4, Bl. 175–9.

⁴⁴ Remigiusz Moszyński, *Dziennik 1939–1945, Wojna i okupacja w Lublinie w oczach dorosłych i dzieci* (Lublin, 2014), 105.

⁴⁵ Stanisław Turnau, *Pamiętnik z wojny 1939–1945*, ed. Jerzy Gapys (Kielce, 2014), 57.



Our simple yokels, at home (*Gazeta Lwowska*, 24 Sept. 1941)

Your respect for him ... is great. And nothing will diminish this respect. Not even the fact that the farmer is taking advantage of the situation and rips you off. ... This will not change your attitude towards him, because you know that he is unaware of the harm he is doing to his countrymen. ... You know that he only wants to be compensated now for the years when the grain was so cheap that he couldn't buy anything with it. There is much, very much childishness in this present greed of his; he takes advantage of his situation like a child, without considering the consequences of his actions. It's nothing, you say ... and wait for the moment he comes to his senses. ... There is still time to improve, it is still possible to turn back from the wrong path. Peasant, do not disappoint the hopes of your countrymen, come to your senses, be worthy of the respect that surrounds you!⁴⁶

The readers' letters coming to the editorial office made this credible. 'Engineer MM' supposedly wrote in August 1941 to an official Lviv daily:

⁴⁶ 'Oblicze wieśniaka', *Nowy Głos Lubelski*, 143 (22–23 June 1941).

Villagers, as a rule, do not recognise money but only the so-called convertible trade, whereby not only do they engage in insane speculation but also outright brazen plunder. They are not moved by the mothers' tears begging to sell some milk; the main thing is that each of them gets what he demands. In greed, they have surpassed the Jews. The bypast exploitation of the Jews is an angelic idyll compared with the current exploitation of the suburban peasant bringing produce to the city. ... For an oak furniture table – 1 kg of butter, a wardrobe with a mirror – 2 kg of butter, a pair of used shoes – 1 loaf of bread, etc., etc. It's not long before they are cured of this frenzy of speculation. For something monstrous is happening.⁴⁷

The beginning of 1942 brought a new narrative – peasants supplying Jews isolated in the ghettos, obviously at a high price and at the expense of the Polish community.

Unfortunately, the fact is that the countryside continues – and now secretly – to assist the Jews, bringing with its disloyal attitude harm to the entire community and, therefore, to itself. By all possible illegal ways, the countryside uses all its cunning and bypasses the regulations, supplying urban Jewry with all kinds of foodstuffs in any quantity at speculative prices. It sneaks into dirty and filthy Jewish dwellings, where, unhindered by the controlling eye of the authorities, it carries out its despicable transactions. ... It is difficult to tolerate that at a time when the broadest masses of the Aryan population, for the sake of higher goals, reduce their needs to a minimum, the Jewry should lead a luxurious existence with money that was once acquired by the usury and exploitation of Aryan society.⁴⁸

A letter addressed (reportedly) to a Cześćochowa daily was in a similar tone: “For a long time, Jews, despite being forbidden to leave the territory of the Jewish quarter under the penalty of death, have been crossing the ghetto borders at night, going to a village near Cześćochowa”, complained “A regular reader L.Z”,

Jews buy up all kinds of foodstuffs, driving up prices. ... There are scandalous facts that local peasants ... let the lousy sons of Judea sleep overnight in their huts, covering them with sheets, which then serve as bedding for the hosts' children. After the invasions of the “unclean Jewish forces” described above, it is not even worth talking about prices, as they are shamelessly debauched and indecent, and food products cannot be seen because they

⁴⁷ ‘Chłopstwu pod rozwałę’, *Gazeta Lwowska*, 5 (14 Aug. 1941).

⁴⁸ ‘Apel do wsi’, *Gazeta Lwowska*, 84 (11 April 1942).

are hidden, waiting for a new visit from peddlers to wander under Jewish handkerchiefs in the darkness of the night.⁴⁹

With the liquidation of the ghettos, such a message was abandoned; there is no doubt that it left permanent (and worthwhile of investigation) traces.

Even though the wealthier peasants primarily benefited from the economic situation, mainly those who, through corruption, more easily achieved consensus with German and Polish officials and policemen, changes in the countryside were visible.⁵⁰ “The countryside has now achieved a very high level of prosperity, not recorded for a very long time”, informed in mid-1944 the representative of the Government Delegation for Poland. “This prosperity is expressed not only in nutrition and clothing, but above all in the collection of building materials (wood, cinder blocks), in increasing the number and improving the condition of farm equipment, harnesses, wagons, and especially in increasing the number of owned agricultural machines to a record level”.⁵¹

VII

CAN THE OCCUPATION BE TAMED?

There is no doubt that the city also ‘tamed’ the occupation in its own way, both materially and psychologically.⁵² It is worth paying more attention to the latter aspect also in the context of contemporary experiences – the adaptation to life in epidemic conditions. While in the spring of 2020 the media used (on a global scale) the rhetoric of war, and information about fatalities prompted strict isolation, several months later, military references were forgotten, and even the exponential rise of infections and deaths did not encourage people to stay at home. Similarly, during the occupation, even brutal terror

⁴⁹ *Kurier Częstochowski*, 65 (17 March 1942).

⁵⁰ AAN, DRnK, 202/VIII-4, 44. Cf. Arnold Szyfman, *Moja wojenna tułaczka* (Warszawa, 1960), 163.

⁵¹ AAN, DRnK, 202/III-56, 32.

⁵² Jerzy Kochanowski, “‘Życie adaptuje się do tego, co jest’”. Inteligenckie strategie przetrwania 1939–1945. Rekonesans badawczy’, *Przegląd Historyczny*, cvi, 4 (2015), 787–814; Marta Dziedzicka, ‘Oswajanie okupacji. Kontynuacja życia przez polską inteligencję. Rekonesans’, *Przegląd Historyczny*, cix, 4 (2018), 587–610.

was 'tamed'. Characteristic are the observations of Zofia Nałkowska and Ludwik Landau in the last months of 1943, when an unprecedented wave of terror was sweeping through Warsaw. "We live despite this", wrote Nałkowska on 20 October 1943, "we live next to this and within this. There are repeated attacks, and these retaliations are repeated. Life adapts to what is".⁵³ Ludwik Landau noted on 29 November 1943 in his *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji* [The Chronicle of the War and Occupation Years], "The roundups are already almost a permanent background of life. ... People grumble and complain – but in fact, they are also getting used to the fact of how they pass by unimpressed the momentous sounds of explosions that occasionally resound through the city – apparently the sounds of ruins being torn down in the ghetto".⁵⁴

Surviving the occupation would not be possible without various forms of 'use', constituting a break from the grey, ruthless, depressing everyday life. Their analysis would require, without abandoning the material perspective dominant in occupation-era everyday life (kitchen, fashion), to pay more attention to emotional issues, not only fear and effort but also joy and leisure. Tadeusz Neuman recalled shortly after the war:

While in the years 1939–1940 it was rare to see better-dressed Poles on the streets of Warsaw and everyone wore out their pre-war clothes, the following years saw a period of dressing up. Women began to dress elegantly, spent a lot of time and money on outfits, and bought expensive things – even furs and jewellery. Barbershops were overflowing. Some ladies told me that before Saturday and holidays one had to go to the hairdresser before ten in the morning to get in. ... People gathered in large numbers to celebrate name days and these parties allowed the hostesses to show off their culinary skills. There was also a lot of bridge playing at high stakes.⁵⁵

⁵³ Zofia Nałkowska, *Dzienniki czasu wojny*, ed. Hanna Kirchner (Warszawa, 1970), 303.

⁵⁴ Ludwik Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, iii: *Lipiec 1943 – luty 1944*, ed. Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warszawa, 1963), 438. Cf. the entries of 12 Dec. 1943: "... people have already become so accustomed to roundups that ... they are beginning to worry about bombings" (iii, 473), and of 9 December: "The roundups continue. ... People are sighing, talking about uncertainty of existence, about the impossibility of living in these conditions – but in fact they have already become accustomed to it all" (iii, 467).

⁵⁵ Tadeusz Neuman, *Oficjalnie nie figuruje. Pamiętnik 1939–1945*, ed. Marta Janczewska (Warszawa, 2021), 89.

Before the war, Neuman was a wealthy man, which allowed him, even in hiding, to survive the occupation at a relatively high level. But it is enough to look at much more egalitarian announcement pages of the occupation press to see how important a role fashion and beauty care played.⁵⁶

Reading the occupation-era correspondence of Kazimierz Wyka with, among others Jerzy Andrzejewski, Karol Irzykowski, Czesław Miłosz or Jerzy Turowicz, shows that for this group of sophisticates, a broad intellectual horizon was as much a condition of survival as lard bought on the black market.⁵⁷ Occupation-era diaries and family accounts are not only full of fear but also smaller joys related to the occupation, readings (the readership skyrocketed!), excursions, theatre and smaller performances (including revues), meticulously celebrated name days and birthdays (although the gift was often a piece of white cheese or lard). One of the last pieces of information about Warsaw published in *Gazeta Lwowska* is devoted to the depopulation of the city due to summer vacation.

The best evidence of Warsaw's depopulation is that wherever you go or call, someone is always on holiday. Until now, most people who left Warsaw are women and children, and then there are liberal professions, tradesmen, etc. represented in large numbers in nearer and more distant summer resorts. From time immemorial, many tradesmen, peddlers, butchers, and other 'seasonal' traders have also allowed themselves a longer vacation. In contrast to other vacationers, these 'elites' are only interested in reputable and elegant summer resorts, "must-have a bathroom and gas" ... So, there is no wonder now that despite the prevailing high prices, the summer resorts near Warsaw are extremely crowded.⁵⁸

It is difficult to say whether 100,000 Varsovians actually left; in any case, my father's family of five returned from a few weeks' vacations in the suburban town of Józefów just before the Warsaw Uprising.

* * *

⁵⁶ Sebastian Piątkowski, *Życie codzienne Polaków w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w świetle ogłoszeń drobnych polskojęzycznej prasy niemieckiej* (Warszawa, 2021).

⁵⁷ Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stefania Baczyńska, Tadeusz Gajcy, Karol Irzykowski, Karol Ludwik Koniński, Czesław Miłosz, Jerzy Turowicz, and Kazimierz Wyka, *Pod okupacją. Listy*, introd. Marta Wyka, ed. Maciej Urbanowski (Warszawa, 2014).

⁵⁸ 'Ponad 100.000 osób wyjechało już z Warszawy na letniska', *Gazeta Lwowska*, 133 (14 July 1944).

Two parallels do not intersect only in Euclidean geometry, but it is permissible in other geometry types, such as elliptical geometry. This is how the occupation should be treated. It was not a static and homogeneous phenomenon but a diverse and dynamic one, more charged with complex interactions, convergences, and differences than we usually think. Their analysis requires leaving our own safe trenches, searching for new sources, and reinterpreting old ones, which will be facilitated by broad, macro-historical comparative studies and micro-historical case studies.

The above are just a few examples of topics that could use a new perspective. The list could be extended, of course. Previous narratives focusing on large cities and the countryside downplayed the small towns dominating the Polish landscape, where occupation was a radically different experience. On the one hand, many of them suddenly lost half or more of their inhabitants, sometimes with the complicity of the others. On the other hand, the surviving accounts reveal a colourful small-town occupation microcosm. Polish-German-Jewish relations, economics and circulation of information, mobility and fear, help and violence, morality and ethics, religiosity and social networks, taming and adapting were all different from those in Warsaw or Cracow... Paradoxically, fragments of this little-known world can be viewed through the prism of research on various aspects of the history of small-town Jewish communities and their extermination during the occupation, such as the works mentioned above by the Polish Center for Holocaust Research: *Klucze i kasa* or *Dalej jest noc*.

The problem of family awaits researchers: not only the daily struggle for survival but also intergenerational relations, and conflicts, not to mention the whole 'gender' palette. For a historian (sociologist, anthropologist ...), await social networks under occupation and language – for a linguist. Seeing that during the Warsaw Uprising, districts cut off from each other used separate vocabulary, it might be time for a comprehensive Polish occupation dictionary. What were the information channels, access to which was fundamental for the survival of both Jews and Poles? I would also consider the long duration of everyday life under the occupation, surpassing the political and military boundaries of the war. The Cracow drugstore that opens this text is a case in point. The name of its pre-war (and partly occupation-era) Jewish owner was retained in the business name both after its 'Aryanisation' during the occupation and taking over by the

German overseer, and immediately after the war. The same suppliers (from Cracow, Warsaw, Częstochowa) supplied the drugstore before, during and after the war (only the Warsaw companies changed the addresses). The activities of the new management, operating from the end of January 1945 under the Polish state administration, also say a lot. On 1 March 1945, they appealed to the Cracow Provincial Office:

We kindly ask you to give an order to reopen our company immediately. We dare to note that our company has been beautifully expanded and created a turnover that demonstrates its superiority in the industry it represents. The current decommissioning of the company for an extended period creates a great risk of losing our customers to competing companies.⁵⁹

One thing is sure – everyday life under the occupation will provide topics for many more generations of researchers. And they will not even have to compete; let's hope they want to.

transl. Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin

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